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Decoding the District Development Model to understand decentralised governance in South Africa

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University of the Witwatersrand
School of Governance

Decoding the District Development Model to understand decentralised governance in South Africa

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Abstract

This thesis contributes to the literature on decentralisation and the intergovernmental relations framework. This contribution is relevant based on current scholarly debates on the contested idealised notions of decentralisation reforms, especially in developing countries such as those on the African continent. The thesis was concerned with exploring the institutional, political, and contextual factors of decentralised governance in South Africa. While much scholarly work on decentralisation in South Africa and on the African continent has been undertaken, new perspectives are needed. Firstly, decentralisation is often associated with normative views, for instance, the good governance perspective espoused by the Bretton Woods Institutions based on structural adjustments policies. Secondly, scholarly work tends to focus on an instrumentalist approach to decentralisation, which concerns itself with administration, delivery of services, and governance challenges at the local level. Thirdly, the political science approach focuses on the structural and social dimensions of decentralisation. This structural dimension considers the actions of political actors and society, which contends that decentralisation limits central states from subsuming all state power. However, this study outlines fundamental deficiencies in this argument by positing that constitutional imperatives on decentralisation do not necessarily constitute compliance. The study argues that political actors can exercise power outside formal, coded institutional structures such as the Constitution. Indeed, power often rests outside of formal intentions and plans if the diffuse realities of power are accepted. The approach of this thesis, however, is theory-driven. Through empirical evidence, this thesis provides insights into the complex power dynamics, the shifting governance, and volatile and contrasting outcomes inherent in decentralisation systems. The study found that while decentralisation in South Africa created new institutions and disperses power to the sub-national levels, it also, paradoxically, solidified power at the local level. These autonomous centres of power have led to an uncooperative, incoherent, multi-layered governance system that constrains rather than

facilitates service delivery. Thus, decentralisation creates a window of opportunity for different actors to exercise their political power. The study adopted the District Development Model (DDM) as a case study to illuminate the governance interplay among the three spheres of government. The DDM is a multi-sphere development programme designed to improve service delivery and eliminate the pattern of operating in silos by the different levels of government. The study concludes that through the DDM, a new pattern of governance is emerging, altering central-local relations. The strong presence of the central government apparatus within the DDM suggests a process of recentralisation and reconfigured power relations. This thesis theorises that major changes in political and governance systems are not always violent or dramatic. Rather, these changes can be slow and subtle, masked as decentralisation while concealing centralisation tendencies, as revealed by this study. Further, this thesis argues that decentralisation is often fashioned on the premise that the political cultures of developing countries, such as South Africa, are mature enough to deal with the conflicting interests of political actors and institutional variations. The central argument of this thesis is that the conflict-avoiding negotiations during the Convention for a Democratic South Africa have accommodated starkly incongruous and incompatible political cultures, resulting in multiple power centres, thus effacing the claimed benefits of decentralisation. These insights were informed through a detailed case study approach employing face-to-face semi-structured interviews with participants from the three spheres of government.

Key themes: decentralisation, recentralisation, centralisation, governance, intergovernmental relations, sub-national governments

Declaration

I declare that this study is my own work. I also declare that I have not previously in its entirety or partially submitted it for obtaining any qualification with any degree or examination in any other university.

_____

Pogisho Godfrey Kgosinyane

Dedication

“It’s all the love you want to give but cannot. All that unspent love gathers up in the corners of your eyes, the lump in your throat, and in that hollow part of your chest. Grief is just love with no place to go”, Jamie Anderson. To my father, mother, and siblings. Even though I have accepted, your departure has burned out a hole where you once were. May you rest in eternal peace.

“I am weak this day, yet I am a king” 2 Samuel 3:39

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"It always seems impossible, until it is done" Nelson Mandela

Acronyms

AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act
ANC	African National Congress
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
COGTA	Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
DA	Democratic Alliance
DDM	District Development Model
DPME	Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IGR	Intergovernmental Relations
ISRDP	Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme
JDMA	Joint District and Metro Approach
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
MSA	Municipal Structures Act
MSA	Municipal Systems Act
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
URP	Urban Renewal Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction

"'Every day I wake up at 4am to collect water before the cows and pigs get a chance to drink from the stream', says 80-year-old Nonambala Ngxongonya." (Steyn & Sizani, 2022)

"Amathole [district] Municipality and [national] Department of Water blame each other for leaving villages dry. The Amathole mayor says the Department has failed to deliver the water scheme. But the Department says the municipality is to blame for not releasing funds for the project timeously." (Steyn & Sizani, 2022)

Equality Collective director Tess Peacock says, "National government tends to intervene too late in municipalities when the municipality is already in total crisis." (Steyn & Sizani, 2022)

"An intervention by the national government in the dire state of Durban and its surrounds is like overthrowing the municipality. This was eThekwini Mayor Mxolisi Kaunda's reaction after he kicked up a fuss at the national and provincial government's planned intervention in the troubled municipality…wherein essentially a concern was raised that the terms of reference…transgress the constitutional demarcation of responsibilities for the three spheres of government and encroach on the independence of municipalities." (Maliti, 2023)

"The DA [Democratic Alliance] rejects the ANC's [African National Congress] hostile takeover of municipalities through the District Development Model…The DA strongly rejects this Soviet-era inspired idea of central planning. In short, the ANC wants to directly interfere in the running of municipalities in violation of the separation of governance responsibilities between, national, provincial, and local government." (DA, 2023)

Decentralisation is often fashioned as a grandiose policy reform that aims to reconstitute and reorganise governments for better service delivery. Yet the above statements militate against the dominant narrative, which seeks to present an ideological mirage of decentralisation. Indeed, decentralisation "is now part of the well-worn lexicon of development clichés – it has palpably failed in many instances to deliver the results claimed of it" (Chaumba et al., 2008, p. 1).

This observation is confirmed by 80-year-old Nonambala Ngxongonya in the above quote, who must wake up early "before the cows and pigs get a chance to drink from the stream" (Steyn & Sizani, 2022) because, "in many cases, decentralization is a narrowly political process run by actors who are, (at least partially) governed by self-interest, and not (exclusively) by the aspirations of stability, democracy, and development" (Riedl & Dickovick, 2014, p. 8). Given its shortcomings, Chaumba et al. (2008) posed the question, "Why then is it so popular and what does it entail in practice?" According to Curbelo, cited in Slater (1989), its popularity can be linked to its ambiguity and capacity to conceal more than it reveals. Further, "its facile justification from purely technocratic points of view and the political instrumentality that it potentially engenders" makes it a popular concept (Slater, 1989, p. 501).

This thesis attempts to critically explore the concealed characteristics of decentralisation. Much of the literature on decentralisation focuses on its desired outcomes and the institutional mechanisms by which such outcomes are to be achieved. Such an approach is based on the presumption that institutions and governance actors constitute an unproblematic component of decentralisation that mediates rather than constrains. Further, such approaches assume an undifferentiated, consensual, integrated polity willing to work in a coordinated and coherent fashion. The findings of this thesis, however, argue that the political culture in South Africa is not mature enough to make decentralisation practical. It is a system defined by an unstable, fluid body of political actors and institutions representing particular power nodes, as demonstrated by the failures of coalition governments in South Africa.

This thesis thus argues that the failure of decentralisation can be attributed to political cultures primarily centred on incongruent and incompatible ideologies and practices, and the nature of power relations among the governance actors. The thesis, therefore, aims to critically explore the underlying assumptions about decentralisation that projects it as an empowerment tool while concealing the deeply contested and contrasting environment in which it operates.

Much scholarly work on decentralisation in South Africa and on the African continent has been undertaken. However, new perspectives are needed. Firstly, this thesis argues that normative views on decentralisation are obsolete. For instance, the good governance perspectives as espoused by the Bretton Woods Institutions, which are based on structural adjustment policies. For instance, in the South African context, decentralisation was adopted as an internally mediated process rather than an externally imposed one. Secondly, mainstream scholarly work adopts an instrumentalist approach to decentralisation, which is concerned with administration, delivery of services, and governance challenges at the local level. Thirdly, the political science approach focuses on the structural and social dimensions of decentralisation. The structural dimension considers institutional arrangements, advancing the notion that decentralisation limits the central state's reach by diffusing power.

With few exceptions, for instance, Riedl & Dickovick (2014) and Chilenga-Butao (2020), these approaches are predominantly technocratic and instrumentalist. They mainly assume that service delivery will improve once management and fiscal challenges are resolved. However, this study goes beyond the technocratic and instrumentalist methodology employed by such approaches to critically explore certain contextual factors, political choices, and constraining or mediating practices. Thus, a more theoretical exploration is employed.

The present study attempts to address this gap and makes a theoretical contribution to the idealised notions of decentralisation by (1) challenging the structural arguments that because decentralisation is built into national constitutions, it therefore limits political actors' power. As noted in Chapters 7 and 8, the thesis argues that political actors can exercise power outside formal,

coded institutional structures such as the Constitution. In the South African context, this is exacerbated by variations in the interpretations of the Constitution, as shown in Chapter 2; (2) arguing that decentralisation is often fashioned on the assumption that the political cultures of developing countries, such as South Africa, are matured enough to deal with the conflicting interests of political actors and institutional variations; (3) further arguing that major changes in political and governance systems are not always violent or dramatic, and can occur in a slow and subtle way, often masked as decentralisation while concealing centralisation tendencies.

It is within this context that the thesis explores the District Development Model (DDM), a national government-driven development programme that cuts across the three spheres of government. The DDM has been selected as a case study to explore the dynamic and volatile political environment embedded within decentralisation systems. The DDM, with its 'One Plan, One Budget' approach, depicts a misleading model of intergovernmental harmony that contradicts persistent, inevitable contestations inherent in multi-level systems of government.

This thesis draws from the fields of public administration, political science, and political geography. Thus, the thesis has taken an interdisciplinary approach as this facilitates and synthesises concepts that are central, which are the state, power, and governance. As Oliveira (2018) has explained, sovereignty is linked to the political power of legal organisations that the state has over its territories and its inhabitants. Regarding power in geography, Allen, as cited by Oliveira (2018, p. 3), emphasises that "it is about power that, and consequently, political geography studies the use of power to manage, control, and order territories". Hence, these concepts informed the study's theoretical framework.

1.1.1. Thesis statement

This thesis posits three related arguments. Firstly, the current decentralised governance arrangements in South Africa are based on conflict-avoiding CODESA (Convention for a Democratic South Africa) negotiations rather than transformative political engagements, thus ensuring continuity as much as

change. Because of these continuities, the different political cultures and power centres continued to shape the post-1994 governance arrangements.

Secondly, decentralisation is fashioned on the assumption that the political cultures of South Africa, and indeed developing countries, are mature enough to deal with political actors' contrasting interests and institutional variations. Thirdly, following the different political cultures, governance is underpinned by power, which is exercised within both coded and uncoded frameworks driven by variations in the interpretation of the Constitution.

Therefore, this thesis' central argument is that the conflict-avoiding negotiations during CODESA accommodated starkly incongruous and incompatible political cultures, resulting in multiple power centres, and effacing the claimed benefits of decentralisation. These arguments provide a foundation for the discussions in the case in Chapters 6, 7, and 8. The following section provides a conceptual discussion on decentralisation with specific reference to South Africa, which further extends into the theoretical chapters.

1.2. Background to the study

Decentralisation has three elements: administrative, which refers to the transfer of administrative responsibilities to sub-national governments for policy implementation; political, which refers to the election of local politicians; and fiscal, which refers to the allocation of budgets to sub-national governments (Figure 1).

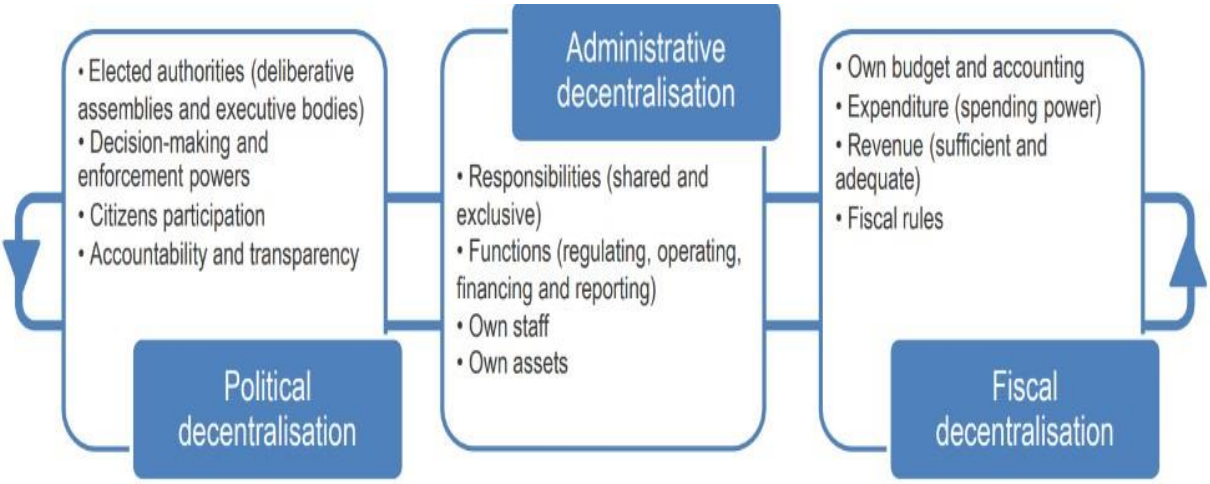


Figure 1: Political, administrative, and fiscal decentralisation

Source: OECD, 2019

Decentralisation has been hailed as one of the most important political reforms and catalysts in institutional designs worldwide. It is noteworthy not only in terms of the number of countries that have implemented and are still implementing it but also its potential implication on governance. As stated by Faguet (2014), the importance of these reforms goes far beyond the number of experiments. At its core, decentralisation aims to reconstitute governments from the hierarchical, systems of top-down approaches to systems of self-governments. This is achieved by devolving power to local governments, as they are deemed to be closer to communities. Various literature indicates that this multi-level form of government improves governance as it offers better accountability to the local communities. (Faguet, 2009, 2014) through deepening democracy (Saunders, 2019).

In the South African context, governance is structured into three distinct, interdependent, and interrelated spheres, which are national, provincial, and local governments. This structure is described by Van Wyk (2013, p. 288) as “somewhat unusual” as all spheres are treated as equal. This arrangement creates a complexity because, as Van Wyk argued, instead of conventional levels where the lower level is beholden to the higher level, all spheres are accorded the same legislative and executive powers.

However, emerging literature questions the claimed benefits of decentralisation (see Treisman, 2007). Indeed, according to Erk (2014, p. 539), empirical research on decentralisation "failed to leave a dent on the international consensus around its promises. The picture is not very different on the African continent." According to Erk (2014, p. 536), after its introduction on the African continent, decentralisation has lost "some of its sheen and mutates in unexpected direction". This mutation is described by Dickovick (2011, p. 2) as a "reverse wave of recentralisation", further discussed in the subsection below.

1.2.1. Recentralisation and the reduction of sub-national autonomy

Literature suggests a slow process of recentralisation as central governments take power back from sub-national units (Erk, 2014). Various reasons have been cited, for example, lack of capacity by sub-national governments, fiscal constraints, and political interference (Erk, 2014; Resnick, 2014; Chilenga-Butao, 2020).

Furthermore, Resnick explains that when national and sub-national governments are under the authority of the same political party, it is expected that the national government will encourage service delivery. Exceptions might apply if intra-party conflicts are present. However, under politically divided authorities, strategies of subversion may occur because the national government benefit little from helping sub-national governments led by opposition parties to deliver services. These strategies are often disguised through large development programmes and infrastructure projects. According to Resnick (2014), central governments claim these interventions are necessary to improve local development. Other strategies include divesting certain administrative responsibilities and limiting the fiscal abilities of sub-national officials. Limiting fiscal abilities of sub-national governments has been characterised by Dickovick (2011) as a form of recentralisation (see also Dickovick & Riedl, 2010). According Dickovict and Riedl, sub-national autonomy remains restricted on the African continent. This is especially evident in fiscal decentralisation where sub-national units are unable to raise their own taxes and thus rely on revenue transfers from central governments.

Furthermore, Steytler (2003) argues that the powers and functions of both the district and local municipalities have now been subsumed by the executive.

To foster better relations between central governments and their sub-national units, a system of intergovernmental relations (IGRs) is required. Intergovernmental relations, thus, are a mechanism created to deal with conflicts within a multi-level political system, such as in South Africa. As Phillimore (2013) indicated, IGRs are an integral and pervasive part of modern political systems that deal with the complexities of modern governance.

South Africa, however, has a complex, multi-layered system of intergovernmental relations, which, paradoxically, is an impediment to service delivery (Mbecke & Mokoena, 2016). As Pieterse (2019) further argues, the IGRs of developing countries are an impediment to local development. According to De Visser (2009), the lack of transparency regarding the intergovernmental relations framework is at the core of many problems besetting municipalities in South Africa. Furthermore, De Visser (2009) argues that this is caused by the way the South African Constitution expresses strong municipal autonomy with a weak definition of their functional areas**.**

Thus, even though decentralisation is about power sharing between central governments and their sub-national units, it is not without contest and complexities. Some of the contestations are caused by the apparent paradox that while decentralisation has many benefits, the system also tends to be centralised over time. Indeed, as Pierre and Peters (2019) observed, for instance, Scandinavian countries' fascination with decentralised government is fading, and a slow, subtle process of recentralisation is taking place. Similarly, on the African continent, according to Erk (2014), the decentralisation reforms that have taken place have slowly given way to recentralisation. Another paradox is that, in some instances, sub-national units themselves turn into independent centres of power, what Gervasoni (2010, p. 302) describes as "authoritarian sub-national enclaves". Therefore, various factors, codified and uncodified, coalesce in a complex interplay that diminishes the deemed benefits of decentralised governance.

The codified factors are the institutional, legislative, and constitutional frameworks. For example, the Constitution of 1996 declared South Africa a unitary state but then adopted a "weak form of federalism" (Murray and Simeon, 2012; Steytler, 2017, p. 330). The outcome was considerable autonomy to sub-national levels of government. However, while the Constitution guarantees sub-national autonomy, it also makes provision for recentralisation through Section 100, which empowers national government to intervene in a province should such a province not fulfil its constitutional mandate. This is achieved in two ways: in terms of Section 100 (a), "the National Executive can issue a directive to the province with specific steps that must be taken by the province to meet their constitutional obligations, or through Section 100 (b), the National Executive can take over the province's function under certain circumstances" (RSA, 1998). Furthermore, Section 139 of the Constitution empowers Provincial Executives to intervene in local governments if such local governments are unable to fulfil their constitutional mandates. This is achieved in three ways:

(a) "Issuing a directive to the Municipal Council, describing the extent of the failure to fulfil its obligations, and stating any steps required to meet its obligations.
(b) Assuming responsibility for the relevant obligation in that municipality to the extent necessary to (i) maintain essential national standards or meet established minimum standards for the rendering of a service; (ii) prevent that Municipal Council from taking unreasonable action that is prejudicial to the interests of another municipality or to the province as a whole; or (iii) maintain economic unity or
(c) Dissolving the Municipal Council and appointing an administrator until a newly elected Municipal Council has been declared elected if exceptional circumstances warrant such a step" (RSA, 1998).

However, Van Der Walt (2016) argues that service delivery and governance are not exclusive reasons for such interventions. Rather, interventions are driven by political factors and factionalism. Indeed, Munzhedzi (2014, p. 701) argued that "intervention is not always innocent…it may be motivated by either

national or provincial politics". Thus, such restorative measures designed to capacitate local governments become a "punitive manoeuvre" employed to discipline sub-national governments (Chilenga-Butao, 2020, p. 9). Indeed, as Steytler (2017) indicated, the Constitution has become "the institution of last resort when politics fail" (p. 347).

The uncodified factors are structural, for instance, the capacity of sub-national governments and the political dynamics that "seem isolated to the national sphere [but] are actually decentralised to sub-national governments" (Chilenga-Butao, 2020, p. 17). According to Wittenberg (2003), while decentralisation systems work at the formal level, that is, the legal frameworks, the financial systems, bureaucratic systems, and the monitoring mechanisms, the practice is crucially influenced by the African National Congress' (ANC) political domination. In addition, as stated by Erk (2014), "new decentralised institutions only add to the pre-existing complexity and fluidity of local politics" (2014, p. 539). In South Africa, for instance, Chilenga-Butao (2020) explains that democratic decentralisation was undertaken amid longstanding governance structures that only slightly underwent adjustment through the apartheid era yet continued into the democratic transition. Therefore, among others, it is hoped that this thesis will contribute to the unfinished transition of South Africa from apartheid to democracy.

The study critically explores the interplay between the various coded and uncoded factors as they intersect and interact in governance amongst the three spheres of government and various political parties. As Erk (2014) argued, looking at the formal coded institutional and constitutional frameworks only will not give a clear understanding of decentralised governance. Moreover, according to Chilenga-Butao (2020), political dynamics are absent in most debates about decentralisation. To unpack these complexities, the study adopted the DDM as a case study in the Gauteng and Western Cape provinces. Through the DDM, the study sought to analyse the governance architecture and the complex interplay at different levels of the state within a decentralised political system. The DDM represents a reconfigured governance arrangement in which central government takes centre stage in local government affairs. The

arguments of this study are that the DDM represents a recentralised governance arrangement that subordinates local government to non-influential positions.

However, new forms of governance do not necessarily displace the old governance arrangements but rather awkwardly interact with them (Newman, 2005). Olivier de Sardan (2011, p. 2) describes this situation as the “piling up” of power, whereby new forms of political authorities do not substitute layers of existing institutional arrangements already in place but add to them. This creates political tensions and dilemmas that must be maturely dealt with by political actors to ensure successful policy making and implementation (Kjær, 2011). It is through governance that these dynamics should be explored. Smit (2018) indicated that using a governance lens is essential when exploring the relationship between different governance actors.

As Pierre and Peters (2019) have noted, governance is not so much about structures but more about the interactions among the structures. The diversity of governance actors and interests within the DDM complicates the real issues it sets out to achieve. In addition, it raises questions in what way, if any, and manner, local government autonomy might be reduced, its impact on accountability, and the fiscal sustainability of local government.

Indeed, the DDM represents what Rhodes (2007, p. 11) describes as a “governance dilemma”, as it seems to add another governance layer within an already contested political terrain. According to Rhodes (2007), an institution experiences a dilemma when a new idea opposes established beliefs and practices which forces such an institution to reconsider its long-held beliefs and traditions. Similarly, dilemmas occurring through a process of decentralisation and recentralisation can lead to political and institutional changes. As Fenwick (2010) has stated, these institutional changes do not necessarily take place as a result of a crisis but rather reflect a slow evolutionary process of change. Critiquing the DDM, the shadow Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) minister in the opposition Democratic Alliance (DA), Cilliers

Brink, claimed that the Model is how the ruling ANC recentralises power (Brink, 2021).

Methodological Approach

The study explored the dynamics of decentralisation among the three spheres of government. The revised methodological approach excludes the sub-national governments in the province of Gauteng due to challenges in obtaining permission. These challenges have been highlighted in Chapter 4. Nevertheless, the thesis also relied on government documents, such policy documents on the DDM from the national COGTA, the JDMA documents form the Western Cape Local Government Department. In addition, policy documents and conference resolutions from the ANC have been used. Various pieces of legislation, the Constitution, Municipal Systems Act, Municipal Structures Act, Intergovernmental Relations Act, Government Gazettes (2023), press statements, and opinion pieces have been used. The study was exploratory in nature and employed inductive reasoning thus making conclusions based on observable patterns. According to Hayes and Swendsen (2010), inductive reasoning involves making predictions about novel situations based on existing knowledge, that is, how knowledge is generalised from known to unknown cases. The study findings can thus, be incorporated into existing theories or build new theories.

Thus, despite methodological challenges, the study was able to capture valuable insights that richly captured the inter- and intra-governmental contestation among the three spheres of government. The study revealed, among others that:

(1) Even within supposedly 'vertically unified authorities' such as in the Western Cape, intergovernmental tensions and non-convergence due to inter-party conflict exists.
(2) Despite Resnick's (2014) arguments that multi-party democracy in Africa has led to 'vertically divided authorities' leading to intergovernmental contestations, this study argues that vertically unified authorities are incompatible with democratic political systems.

Content analysis method was employed to analyse the data. The findings presented in this thesis are based on a case study undertaken in the Gauteng and Western Cape provinces of South Africa between 2022 and 2023. The research strategy identified strategic institutions and participants within the three spheres of government, clustering participants according to the national, provincial, and local government spheres in both provinces. The selection of the cases was done deliberately to obtain different perspectives at different levels of the state and in different provinces. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 participants who are experts occupying different positions in the state bureaucracy. These interviews were complemented by government documents, legislation, as well as political party documents.

1.3. Problem statement

Decentralisation, in its different forms of subsidiarity, devolution, and federalism, is optimistically perceived to be more responsive to the governed by promoting accountability, increased efficiency (Putnam et al., 1994), and improved governance (Faguet, 2014). Additionally, Faguet (2014) argues that most studies on decentralisation relates to its impact on public sector outputs, while few studies explore its effects on the quality of governance.

Further, much of the debates on governance focusses on public sector-related outcomes and processes, for example, managerial and administrative aspects. Fukuyama (2013, 2016), for instance, argues that the best way to evaluate governance is focusing attention on governance processes, and the independence of the bureaucrats. Critiquing Fukuyama's approach, Boardman (2014) argues that rather than concentrating on processes, it is useful to concentrate on governance outcomes**.**

However, these approaches to governance are problematic because of their narrow approach to state performance and outputs and, therefore, devoid of theoretical underpinnings. Moreover, as Obeng-Odoom (2017) argued**,** the binary views of 'process versus output', as advanced by both Fukuyama (2016 p. 98) and Boardman (2014), are problematic because they equate governance with the performance of the government. These approaches leave out a broad

range of actors and processes. For instance, the roles played by opposition political parties or the tensions between local level officials and national level leaders in political regimes who belong to different political parties (Resnick, 2014; Obeng-Odoom, 2017). Accordingly, these political tensions expose the underlying challenges of decentralisation policies that have given rise to multi-party politics, especially on the African continent. Political decentralisation has resulted in vertically divided authorities, resulting in political competition among political opponents (Faguet, 2011; Resnick, 2014).

In the South African context, for example, the trend of vertically divided authorities can be observed in the provincial governments of the Western Cape and Gauteng. The Western Cape province is under the political control of the opposition DA, while Gauteng is under the nationally governing ANC. To complicate matters further, various municipalities in both provinces and, indeed, other provinces are under the political control of political parties other than the ANC and the DA. As Obeng-Odoom (2017 stated, in such cases, disagreements may arise between local government leaders and national leaders where the other seeks to gain political advantage.

Indeed, in recent times, such disagreements have been highlighted within various municipalities, especially in the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality. These contestations have received extensive media attention. For instance, in an article in the *Mail and Guardian,* Morisson (2023) indicates that some analysts attribute some of the reasons for coalition failures, especially in the metropolitans, to weak leadership, difficulties in finding common purpose, and political interference in administration. But, according to the *Mail and Guardian*, one factor not mentioned is that “some political parties struggle to be “good-faith coalition partners” (para. 13. Thus, it is important to ask whether South Africa’s political culture is mature enough to navigate the intricacies of decentralisation, which has given rise to multi-party democracy.

It is, therefore, important that in analysing decentralised governance, its context and its often-neglected subtleties are highlighted. In South Africa, for instance, Van Wyk (2013) has noted that the Constitution has unusually provided the

three spheres of government equal legislative authority. Much of the challenges relate to the division of responsibilities and poor coordination, which, in turn, affects the implementation of policies. This study, therefore, argues that the fragmented and decentralised nature of the South African government can create obstacles in implementing national policies. In addition, the complex IGRs system negatively impacts how sub-national governments deliver services (Cameron, 2014).

Three broad scholarly works on decentralisation on the African continent have emerged in recent years. Firstly, decentralisation was brought about due to conditions imposed by international donor organisations as part of the 'good governance' reforms. Thus, the adoption of decentralisation policies was an external imposition on the continent by supranational organisations. Secondly, building on the 'good governance' approach, bodies of research focused on an instrumentalist approach, such as service delivery and local governance challenges. Thirdly, other scholarly work focused on decentralisation as part of political settlements after periods of internal conflicts. Thus, in this context, the process was internally driven by domestic political actors (see Chapter 2 of the thesis and the analysis in Chapter 6 for the South African context).

However, unlike other African countries, adopting decentralisation reforms in South Africa was not the result of external influences; rather, they were mediated through internal power deployments. Thus, this thesis explores the antecedents of governance that shape the current conjuncture. The thesis further critically explores the power dynamics, the shifting patterns of governance, and the contentious intergovernmental relations. This approach differs from the instrumentalist approach, which relates rather than empirically explore the internal power dynamics in the adoption of decentralisation reforms. As Bakker and Morinville (2013) argue, analysing governance in technical or rigid terms risks overlooking the contextual and power dynamics that shape governance. The thesis goes beyond the instrumentalist approach and situates decentralisation within the realm of differing political cultures and power centres. It is in this environment that the study explored the District Development Model. While the DDM spells out developmental strategies, this

study argues that the political settings and institutional variations have not received much focus in its design. With its 'One Plan, One Budget' approach, it attempts to promote a country-wide consensus in an environment marked by contrasting political and ideological views, inter- and intra-party conflicts, and differing visions on urban and rural developments. With 'collaborative governance' as the new operating lexicon, the DDM appears to be a new method of central state power and recentralisation.

Thus, building on other bodies of scholarly works, this thesis makes a theoretical contribution that brings new perspectives to the decentralisation literature.

1.3.1. Research purpose

This qualitative case study is a critical exploration to understand decentralised governance in South Africa. Decentralised governance assumes that the interests of governance actors are homogenous and subject to common interpretation and are, therefore, aligned. This is clearly expressed in the aspirations of the DDM, which, with its 'One Plan, One Budget' approach, presupposes that there are no significant political differences among government and governance actors. However, when one considers the power contestations within coalition governments in municipalities, there is sufficient evidence to question whether the political culture in South Africa is conducive to decentralised governance arrangements.

1.3.2. Research objectives

The study explored:

(a) the institutional and political factors of decentralisation in South Africa and how they influence policy outcomes;

(b) the autonomous centres of power and their interaction within a paternalistic cooperative governance framework; and

(c) the shifting power dynamics and the changed governance landscape in South Africa within the spheres of government.

To achieve the research objectives, the study was guided by the following research questions.

1.3.3. Research questions

This study asks the following main research question:

What are the institutional, political, and contextual factors of decentralised governance in South Africa?

The study further asks the following sub-questions:

(a) Does decentralisation create autonomous centres of power? If so, does it play a facilitative or constraining role in policy outcomes?

(b) How have the shifting power dynamics within the spheres of government changed the governance landscape in South Africa?

1.4. Structure of the thesis

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the dynamics of decentralised governance and the IGRs framework in South Africa. The study adopted the DDM as a case study. It is hoped that lessons learned will contribute to better relations among central governments and their sub-national units and, therefore, better policy outcomes. Chapter 1 laid the foundation for the study by introducing and providing a background and framing the research problem and questions.

Chapter 2 outlines the various epochs in South Africa's history. The chapter argues that the three governance modes, centralist, balkanisation, and recentralisation, create a layered and fractious governance historiography in South Africa that has and will have implications in the current context. The chapter situates the study within the political and governance arrangements from the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. The Union of South Africa was created out of the merger of four settler colonies known as republics: The Cape, Orange Free State, Transvaal, and Natal. The chapter then moves to the second period of grand apartheid, which led to the balkanisation of South Africa into an ethnically based system of independent homelands. An overview of the constitutional architecture details the political settlement that led to the current structure of the South African state. This is followed by an overview of the DDM, which has been adopted as a case study to decode decentralisation.

The chapter concludes by providing the profiles of the two provinces where the study was conducted, Gauteng and the Western Cape.

Chapter 3 builds on Chapter 2 and provides a detailed discussion of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guide the study. Thus, while Chapter 2 is context-specific, Chapter 3 offers a more theoretical grounding. This chapter centres the state as a 'weighty actor', offering a conceptual analysis of the state, governance, IGRs, federalism, decentralisation, and theories on power. A distinction is drawn from the literature on the narrower term of 'government', as opposed to 'governance'. Government places the state at the centre of policy-making and service delivery. Governance, on the other hand, decentres the state and involves a range of institutions and relationships. A distinction is also drawn between federalism and decentralisation. From the review of literature, a conceptual framework is developed to analyse the study's empirical data. Both Chapters 2 and 3, therefore, form part of the literature review.

Chapter 4 presents a detailed discussion of the research strategy, approach, and design. It documents the challenges encountered during data collection in the two provinces under study. Chapter 5 presents the findings of the empirical research results.

Chapter 6 opens the discussions on the study's empirical findings. It explores the institutional, political, and contextual factors of decentralisation in South Africa. The chapter argues that the decentralisation policy was not a well-considered political strategy to address the skewed developmental challenges facing the country, but rather, it was adopted as a political settlement. As a result, the South African experience of post-colonialism and post-apartheid is more of a continuity than a change. The chapter's central arguments are that two main influences have defined the governance architecture of post-1994 South Africa: its colonial and apartheid legacy and political choices made during the CODESA negotiations.

In Chapter 7, the formation of centres of power is explored, and how these centres have led to a contentious cooperative governance system is discussed.

While the central government has launched a national programme, the DDM, a counterplan, the JDMA (Joint District and Metro Approach), was also launched by the Western Cape provincial government. However, while this development implies that the DDM is not universally accepted among the spheres of government, the study reveals that the JDMA, too, is not universally accepted within the Western Cape province. This not only reveals inter- and intra-party conflicts but also the complex nature of decentralised governance and how such a system constrains rather than facilitates the delivery of services to communities. Further, the study sheds light on the contestations and manipulation of meanings, which exacerbated an already volatile relationship between district and local municipalities. The chapter, thus, further explores political terminology and discourse employed to cause confusion for political ends. The chapter's main argument is that while decentralisation disperses power, it paradoxically solidifies it at the sub-national level.

Chapter 8 explores whether the DDM diffuses or recentralises power. The chapter argues that a new form of governance is emerging that reconfigures the relationship and power structures among the spheres of government. While decentralisation has led to the formation of centres of power, as discussed in Chapter 7, a process of recentralisation is underway. This thesis makes a hypothetical statement that the DDM is a form of recentralisation which will see the central government playing a more prominent role in the delivery of services, thus relegating local governments to non-influential positions. After analysing the data and reviewing the DDM's characteristics, particularly its 'One Plan, One Budget' approach, the study observes that the DDM is a prototype of recentralisation. The chapter's main argument is, thus, that major political changes are sometimes not accompanied by violent action or high drama, as demonstrated by the launch of the DDM.

I present the study's conclusions, recommendations, limitations, and future research directions in Chapter 9.

The following chapter outlines the various epochs in South Africa's history. It reflects on South Africa's governance architecture through different political

epochs, that is, the pre-1994 and post-1994 periods. The chapter identifies the three governance modes through the various historical epochs, centralist, balkanisation, and recentralisation, and argues that these modes of governance create a layered and fractious governance historiography in South Africa that has and will have implications in the current context.

Chapter 2. REFLECTIONS ON THE GOVERNANCE ARCHITECTURE OF SOUTH AFRICA

Introduction

This chapter outlines the various epochs in South Africa's history. The chapter argues that the three governance modes – centralist, balkanisation, and recentralisation – create a layered and fractious governance historiography in South Africa that has and will have implications in the current context. Three narratives can be employed to explain the governance architecture of South Africa. The first narrative is the pre-1994 colonial and apartheid governance architecture, the second one is the post-apartheid democratic governance architecture, and the third narrative documents the shifting patterns in governance. The three narratives demonstrate how certain practices have been carried over from one regime to the other. Thus, the post-colonial and apartheid South Africa has shown continuity as much as change in its governance architecture. These historical patterns demonstrate that South Africa has and is undergoing a cyclical governance transformation. While, in the main, decentralised governance can still be observed, the central government has gradually recentralised power, as noted in sub-section 2.2.3 of this thesis.

This chapter, which documents South Africa's experiences through different political regimes, makes several empirical and theoretical contributions to existing literature. South Africa's experiences, as outlined in this thesis, provide an alternative discourse on decentralisation reforms on the African continent. While the adoption of such reforms was mostly influenced by two factors, structural adjustment programmes and political settlements, in South Africa, it was the latter. Thus, while in other African countries, decentralisation was externally imposed through structural adjustment programmes, in South Africa, it was an internally mediated process. This internally mediated process, which retains much of the elements from the previous "order of things" (see Fanon, 2002, p. 52), laid down the template for the current governance arrangements.

Hereunder follow a brief clarification of the concept of governance. A detailed discussion on governance is provided in the theoretical frameworks chapter.

Governance

Governance is described by Pierre and Peters (2019, p. 7) as “notoriously slippery” and a “very plurivalent term” by Olivier de Sardan (2014, p. 1). This study, therefore, attempts to analyse the governance architecture and the interplay at different levels of the state within a decentralised political system. As Smit (2018) noted, political parties are closely linked with the various spheres of government. Additionally, vital governance responsibilities are often fragmented among different government stakeholders with varying capacities and divergent interests. Key governance stakeholders include all spheres of government, private sector organisations, political parties, civil society, formal and informal business organisations, and international agencies. This study will, however, focus on governance among the spheres of government and political parties. The thesis posits that governance, like power, is not necessarily exercised within the coded, formal constitutional frameworks, as argued in Chapter 8.

2.1.1. The pre-1994 governance architecture

Decentralisation policy is not a foreign concept in South Africa. According to Wittenberg (2003), the apartheid system could be regarded as a form of decentralisation, though its intentions were to reduce accountability to most citizens of South Africa. As explained by Wittenberg (2003), the pre-1994 governance arrangements in South Africa “can be traced to two elements” (p. 10), which are the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910 out of the merger of four settler colonies known as republics: The Cape, Orange Free State, Transvaal, and Natal. The “second element was a period of grand apartheid, a process of subjugation, incorporation, and control of the various indigenous polities” (2003, p. 10), which fragmented South Africa into ‘independent states which can be seen as a particularly radical form of decentralisation” (ibid). During this period, Black people were subjected to what weNkosi referres to as “Ontological Nowhereness” (weNkosi, 2023, 19). In his book ‘*These Potatoes Look Like Humans’* which documents land dispossession in South Africa, weNkosi indicates that “dispossession made most Black people [to] belong nowhere” (p. 19).

Following the end of the Second Anglo-Boer War from 1899 to 1902, Britain controlled all four settler colonies. These territories were combined into the Union of South Africa, a dominion of the British Empire, in 1910 (Alexander, 2019). As further explained by Binza (2005), the Union of South Africa came into being after the enactment of the South African Act of 1909, which was the first Constitution promulgated in South Africa. According to Tsatsire *et al*. (2009), this Act was introduced by the British parliament because South Africa did not have a parliament then. The South African Act introduced the Westminster system of government. The four colonies (Cape, Orange Free State, Transvaal, and Natal) became provinces with their own elected provincial councils and executive committees. An administrator appointed by the central government was the final executive authority. It was in terms of the Cape Municipal Ordinance (Ordinance 9 of 1836) that provision was made for the establishment of local authorities in the four provinces. Section 85 of the South African Act of 1909 further made Provincial Councils responsible for municipal and other local authorities. The Act also gave voting powers to Whites only, while non-Whites were excluded from participating in decision-making processes (Binza, 2005). Indeed, Nelson Mandela, in his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom,* described the events of 1909 as “not a tribute to democracy but a betrayal of it, for none of the representatives there that day was black” (Mandela, 2004, p. 712).

When South Africa was granted Republican status by the British Crown, in terms of the Republic of South African Act 32 of 1961, municipalities remained under the authorities of provinces. The types of local authorities that existed after the formation of the Union of South Africa were Rural Local Authorities, which were found in both the jurisdictions of the Union and the Bantustans; the Peri-urban Local Authorities, which were classified into rural and urban areas; the Urban Local Authorities, which were established in terms of the provincial legislation; the Local Government Ordinance, 1945 (Ordinance 17 of 1945); and, finally, the Black Local Authorities, which existed in all four provinces of the Union. Their formation was meant to strengthen the apartheid policy of segregation (Binza, 2005).

According to Worrall (cited in Binza, 2005), during the Union of South Africa, municipalities varied according to size, area of jurisdictions, powers, and functions and lacked uniformity. According to De Visser (2009), each province configured local government as it deemed fit. At a later stage, a tri-cameral system of government was introduced as per the Republic of South Africa Act, 110 of 1983. The Act allowed for Whites to be served by White Local Authorities, while Management Committees, also called Local Affairs Committees, served the Coloureds and Indians. The Black Local Authorities Act, 102 of 1982, served the black areas, which could not be incorporated into any Bantustan areas. According to Wittenberg (2003), an example of such an area is the Southwestern Township, commonly known as Soweto.

However, the apartheid-era local governments were mere subordinate creatures of provincial governments; in other words, they lacked constitutional status (SALGA, n.d.; De Visser, 2009). Local governments then had powers and rights granted to them by the various provinces. This implied that their powers and rights could be reviewed or revoked by the provinces. Indeed, as stated by Wittenberg (2003), during apartheid, because South Africa was a unitary state, it was relatively easy to abolish provincial governments.

According to Wittenberg (2003), certain geographical areas were designated as “native reserves” and would later play a central political function” (2003, p. 15) in South African politics. The Native Administration Act of 1927 created the framework within which Blacks in these reserves would be ruled indirectly through tribal authorities. This Act was further elaborated on through various Acts, such as the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, Natives Affairs Act of 1955, and Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959. Through these Acts, a hierarchy of tribal, regional, and ultimately territorial authorities was established along linguistic lines. Out of this process, homelands were created with legislative powers, for example, to establish their own police forces and Public Service Commissions. All in all, ten homelands, each for a specific ‘tribe’ or ethnic grouping, were established, see Table 1, and Figure 2.

Table 1: Ethnic designation for each homeland

Homeland	Ethnic group/Tribe
Boputhatswana	BaTswana
Ciskei and Transkei	Xhosa
Gazankulu	Shangaan and Tsonga
KwaZulu	Zulu
Lebowa	BaPedi and Northern Ndebele
Qwa Qwa	BaSotho
Venda	Venda

Source: Author's design based on information from Southafrica-info.com, 2018

According to Wittenberg (2003), these homelands had more powers than the provinces. Ultimately, 'independence' was conferred on these homelands, so-called TBVC states, which were Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei, by the apartheid regime through various Acts: the Status of Transkei Act, 1976 (Act 100 of 1976), Status of Bophuthatswana Act, 1977 (Act 89 of 1977), Status of Venda Act, 1979 (Act 107 of 1979), and Status of Ciskei Act, 1981 (Act 110 of 1981). According to Wittenberg (2003), "these decentralisation experiments by the apartheid regime were, paradoxically, an attempt to maintain central control" (2003, p. 24). Thus, according to Chilenga-Butao (2020), the apartheid period could be considered as oscillating between centralisation and decentralisation.

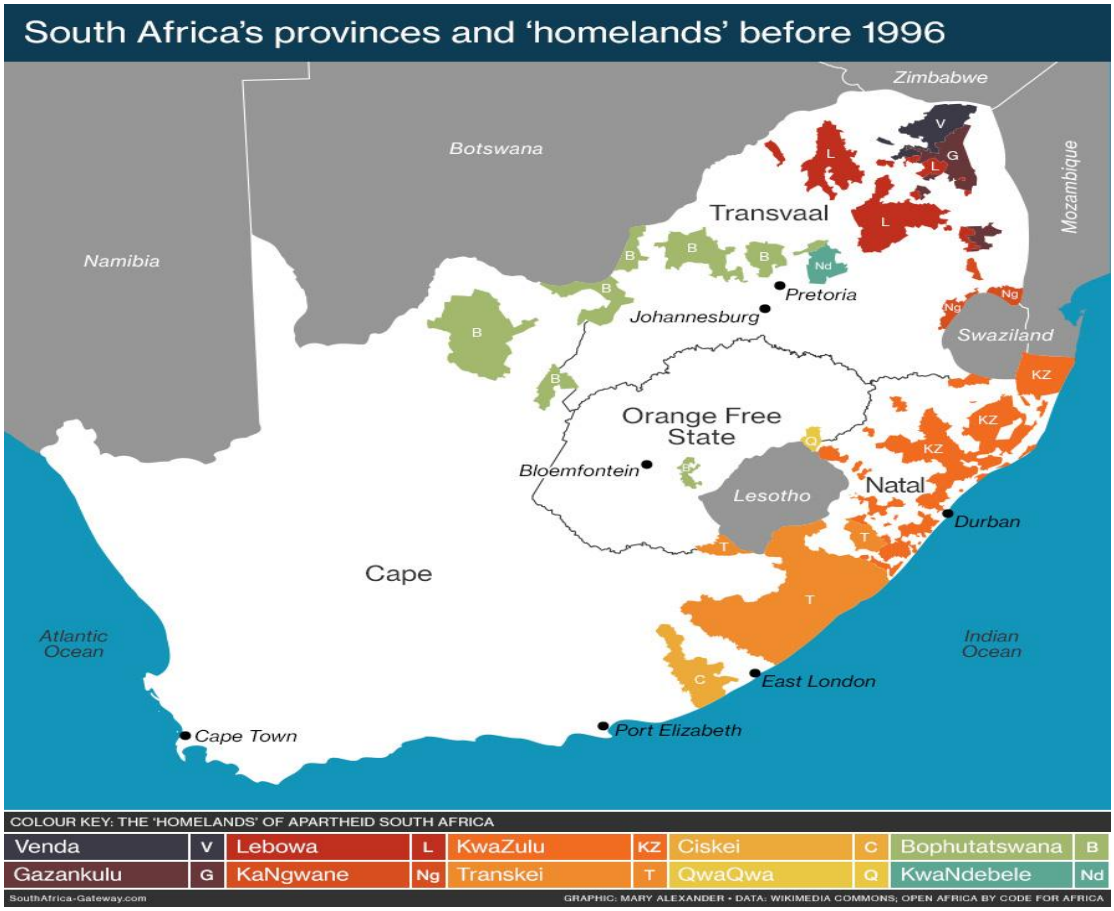


Figure 2: South Africa's provinces and 'homelands' before 1996

Source: Southafrica-info.com, 2018

2.1.2. 'Decentralised despotism'

During both the colonial and apartheid periods, certain geographical areas were designated as 'native reserves' and would later form a crucial component of South African politics (Wittenberg, 2003). The native reserves were areas under the communal chiefs in South Africa. These areas would later play a role in the establishment of homelands known as 'Bantustans'. Further, according to Tomlinson and Hyslop, (1986), the industrial decentralisation policies designed for economic growth were also tools used by the apartheid regime to further its ideology and for labour and social control (Tomlinson & Hyslop, 1986). The movement of Blacks into urban areas was controlled through The Native Act (21 of 1923). According to this Act, the number of natives would be limited to the labour requirements of such areas while the families of such migrants would remain in the native reserves. Blacks dispersed among the

homelands pose less risk to White hegemony than an urbanised and potentially unionised workforce. The Act also provided for the withdrawal of surplus natives from the urban areas back to the Bantustans. Thus, according to Tomlinson and Hyslop (1986), the policy of industrial decentralisation transformed from one supporting the reproduction cost of labour to a system of social control.

However, according to Mamdani (1996, p. 18), the reason for the establishment of the native reserves, later the homelands, was a response of the colonial state, including the apartheid state, to "a central and overriding dilemma…the native question". The native question, according to Mamdani (1996, p. 18), was, "How can a tiny and foreign minority rule over an indigenous majority?" The answer to this question was through a system of what Mamdani (1996) refers to as direct and indirect rule. With direct rule, the colonial state controlled the urban subjects centrally using European laws, whereas, with indirect rule, the colonial state controlled the rural subjects through tribal leadership using customary laws. Thus, the civilised laws of Europe would establish a single legal order. In this arrangement, no native institutions would be recognised by the colonial authorities.

This dual mode of rule, referred to as the 'bifurcated state', relied on the "dualism of power" and was exercised differently in both the urban and rural areas. As Mamdani (1996, p. 18) points out, "Direct rule was the form of urban civil power. It was about the exclusion of natives from civil freedoms guaranteed to citizens in civil society. Indirect rule however, signified rural tribal authority. It was about incorporating natives into a state and forced customary order." For Mamdani, "direct and indirect rule are better understood as variants of despotism: the former centralized, the latter decentralized" (ibid).

Meanwhile, despite these controls, because of industrial job opportunities in the urban areas, the Black urban population grew rapidly (Tomlinson & Hyslop, 2018) and thus posed a threat to racial supremacy. To counter this threat, according to Mamdani (1996), the architect of apartheid's response was to try and rebottle these forces within tribal confines where they would be better contained by traditional authorities supported by the army of the settler state.

Following the National Party's rise to power in 1948, Mamdani (1996) indicates that the apartheid regime set about implementing a programme to restore the autonomy of the tribal authorities. The control of those who remained in the urban areas was removed from the local authorities and centralised under an apparatus of the central state named the Natives Affairs Department. The legal authority of the Natives Affairs Department controlled every aspect of social life including land allocation, regulating movement, administration of justice, and overseeing the domestic affairs of households. Thus, in practice, the department assumed the role of supreme chief in the reserves, while a decentralised form of administration by separate municipalities was exercised for Africans living in the urban areas. However, Mamdani (1996) argues that at independence, while this racially driven rule was deracialised, decentralised despotism remained; thus, for Mamdani (1996), it was continuity as much as change in post-colonial Africa.

2.1.3. The post-1994 governance architecture

The second narrative concerns the post-apartheid governance architecture. Following the first democratic elections, the new Constitution disestablished the homelands and created nine new provinces instead of the original four (Alexander, 2019), see Figure 3. According to Alexander (2019), while Natal and the Orange Free State remained the same territories, they were renamed KwaZulu-Natal and the Free State. The Cape and Transvaal provinces were divided into smaller provinces: the Cape province was divided into the Northern Cape, the Western Cape, the Eastern Cape, and the western part of the North West province. The Transvaal province became Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, and the eastern part of the North West province.



Figure 3: South Africa's nine provinces post-apartheid, showing provincial capitals and major cities

Source: Southafrica-info.com, 2018

Thus, a new decentralised governance system was introduced which organised the structure of the South African state into three distinctive, interdependent, and interrelated spheres. These spheres are the national, provincial, and local governments (Steytler, 2005). As already stated, the provincial sphere consists of nine provinces, while the local sphere is divided into local municipalities. Furthermore, the Constitution required local government for the entire country, the so-called wall-to-wall local government (Steytler, 2005). This means every piece of land in South Africa is under some form of municipality, whether at the metropolitan, district, or local municipal level. The executive, legislative, and judiciary form the centralised units of the national sphere. With the adoption of the new South African Constitution in 1996, local government was elevated to a sphere of government, thus establishing its autonomy. This development is one of the most significant local government reforms and a landmark in decentralised governance. According to Steytler (2003), for the first time, municipalities are able to govern themselves and handle the affairs of its own

communities without central government interference. However, the post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa still faces challenges which have their roots in both the colonial and apartheid period. Conflict avoidance and elitist driven negotiations rather than developmental considerations were the main strategies employed during CODESA. These have reproduced historical inequalities and advanced the interests of the pre-1994 formations and the new elite through elitist consensus. The following subsection discusses the enduring colonial artefacts that continue to influence the current context.

2.1.4. Colonial artefacts

In seeking to explore and analyse factors that influence post-apartheid governance arrangements, it is useful to first consider the historical factors that shape the current context. Following Pierson's (2004) arguments on "path dependency" in the political context, Van Niekerk (2012) posits that political events and institutions established at certain points continue to influence future policy outcomes. According to Friedman (2021, p. xii), Douglass North used the term "path dependence" to describe the powerful influence of the past on the present and the future. As explained by Pierson (2004, p. 262), the reason for this phenomenon is because "political arrangements are unusually hard to change". Contrasting the economic environment with the political environment as an illustration, Pierson argues further:

> "In the economic realm, an individual with a new idea for a product need only secure the financing to put it on the market. If enough consumers (choosing independently) find it sufficiently appealing, the product will be a success. Change can be engineered through competition against existing products. By contrast, the key features of political life—public policies and (especially) formal institutions—are change-resistant. Both are generally designed to be difficult to overturn for two broad reasons: First, those who design institutions and policies may wish to bind their successors. Unlike economic actors, political actors must anticipate that their political rivals may soon control the reins of government. To protect themselves, they may create rules that make pre-existing arrangements

> hard to reverse. And given the way public authority is allocated and exercised in a democracy; they often can only shut out their opponents by shutting themselves out too. In many cases, then, they purposely create structures that even they cannot control. Second, in many cases, political actors also are compelled to bind themselves. The key insight of the 'credible commitments' literature is that actors can often do better, in the short run as well as the long run, if they remove certain options from their future menu." (Pierson, 2004, p. 262)

Indeed, explaining the CODESA negotiations where the post-apartheid governance structures were crafted, Murray and Simeon explain how the incoming democratic government was 'bound':

> "The out-going regime believed that federalism would contribute to limited government and restrain the majority that was about to take office. Some harboured the dream that in a federal South Africa there might be room for an Afrikaans province or homeland." (Murray & Simeon, 2012, p. 233).

Thus, South Africa's decentralisation process was driven by pre-democracy actors who were motivated by the desire to retain much of the old order as possible. Nelson Mandela explains further:

> "Inkatha refused to sign on the grounds that the phrase 'undivided South Africa' implied that a federal system was off limits." (Mandela, 2004, p. 713)

The argument presented in this chapter is that colonial influences have defined both the governance architecture and public policy of the post-1994 South African state. In his seminal work *Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement'*, Ekeh (1975) argued that modern African politics are largely a product of the colonial experience. He writes further:

> "But the colonial experience itself has had a massive impact on modern Africa. It is to the colonial experience that any valid conceptualization of the unique nature of African politics must look. Our post-colonial present

> has been fashioned by our colonial past. It is that colonial past that has defined for us the spheres of morality that have come to dominate our politics." (Ekeh, 1975, p. 93,111)

This statement rings true for post-apartheid South Africa. Writing in *Ethnic Continuities and a State of Exception*, Maré (2020) makes the case that South African political and thought leaders lacked imagination by not demanding a more radical thinking about what a truly post-apartheid social state should look like. For Maré, even though the core of the apartheid regime has been defeated, for instance, political exclusion, certain continuities have persisted. These continuities have, despite the achievement of inclusive democracy, militated against exploring imaginative solutions. According to Maré (2020), the three continuities from the apartheid regime are:

Capitalism: Ideas of a socialist future were central to the struggle against apartheid, with commitments to change the material conditions of the poor and marginalised. However, the adaptation of this continuity has been a de-racialisation of capitalism through gross consumption practices and inequality that are of its systemic essence. This occurred through the Black Economic Empowerment, which, in the changed context of the post-1994 democracy, remains directly linked to maintaining and gaining both political and economic power. Thus, for some, it was a case of enrichment and problems for the majority.

Race thinking: the foundation on which racism is built.

Traditionalism/Ethnicity: a form of structuring power.

Further, Maré asks:

> "What was being ended, and what was to be questioned, however, remained unclear: how was the unexpected and unprepared vacuum to be filled?" (Maré, 2020, p. 57)

The focus of Maré's argument, in the main, is on the ethnic continuities. Contrasting the post-1994 South Africa with the pre-1994 regime, Maré further states:

> "Post 1994 South Africa now demands ethnic identification for those who occupy 'traditional land', rather than through a *dompas* identification indicating race and ethnicity previously carried by all black people." (Maré, 2020, p. 57)

Thus, according to Maré (2020, p. 57), South Africa, in 1994, 'achieved a noteworthy transition rather than a transformation, and certainly not a revolution". The following section briefly discusses local government and local governance structures as key actors in the provision of public goods and services.

2.1.5. Sub-national government and governance

Local government has consistently shaped public policy and local provision of goods and services. Thus, local government and local governance have been, and still are, key parts of national government-designed policies (Alcock et al, 2012). A detailed clarification of the concepts of 'government and governance' is discussed in the theoretical Chapter 3. It is enough, though, to say that in the local government context, government and governance are used to describe the election of local government officials and the methods of delivery of public goods and services, respectively (Alcock et al, 2012).

In South Africa, while sub-national levels of government enjoy constitutionally entrenched autonomy, the central state dominates policymaking while the sub-nation levels are the implementing structures. The main legislative frameworks that govern local government are the Constitution of 1996 (Chapter 7), Municipal Demarcation Act of 1998 (Act 27 of 1998), Municipal Structures Act of 1998 (Act 117 of 1998) (herein referred to as the MSA), Municipal Systems Act of 2000 (Act 32 of 2000); Disaster Management Act of 2002 (Act 57 of 2002), Municipal Finance Management Act of 2003 (Act 41 of 2003), Municipal Property Act of 2004 (Act 6 of 2004), Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act of 2005 (Act 13 of 2005), and Municipal Fiscal Powers and Functions Act of 2007 (Act 12 of 2007). For this study, the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act 13 of 2005 is dealt with in more detail, while the other Acts are used for context only.

The local municipalities are further categorised into three tiers: single-tier Category A (metropolitan municipalities), two-tier Category B (local municipalities) and C (district municipalities). Category C, that is, district municipalities, share jurisdictions with some Category B municipalities, while Category A metropolitan municipalities have exclusive executive and legislative authority in their territories (RSA, 1998). According to Murray and Simeon (2012), the two-tier local government system (local and districts) brings the number of spheres of government to four. This thesis, however, argues that the number of spheres is five when one considers that Category A metropolitan municipalities are "self-standing" municipalities (Steytler, 2003, p. 228). Furthermore, according to the MSA, a "metropolitan municipality means a municipality that has exclusive executive and legislative authority in its area and which is described in Section 155(1) of the Constitution as a Category A municipality" (RSA, 1998, p. 14). Outside the metropolitan areas, 228 local municipalities are grouped into 44 district municipalities, sharing the functional competencies as listed in Schedules 4B and 5B of the Constitution. Thus, a district municipality is comprised of a group of municipalities. The allocation of responsibilities between these two tiers of local government is prescribed by the MSA, which take into consideration provision of municipal services equitably and in a sustainable manner. The MSA achieves this by allocating district municipalities' functions. Those not listed then fall in the scope of Category B local municipalities.

Further, the MSA requires the whole geographic area of a municipality to be further divided into smaller geographic areas called wards. The ward system plays a dual role: to strengthen democracy through public participation and to improve delivery of services. This is achieved through the establishment of mechanisms referred to as Ward Committees. According to COGTA (n.d.), Ward Committees connect Ward Councillors and the municipalities with the communities they serve. In these forums, communities can influence decisions that are important to their needs. This is achieved through participation in the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), which forms an integral part local development and public participation.

As explained above, the two-tier system of local government consists of local and district municipalities. According to the SALGA (2011), the role of district municipalities, as defined in the MSA, envisioned district municipalities playing a supportive, and redistributive role in their jurisdiction areas. The Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (2020), however, indicates that challenges remain within the two tiers, that is, the district and the local level. The challenges relate to the division of responsibilities and poor coordination, which, in turn, affects the implementation of projects. In addition, the complex IGR system negatively impacts how cities deliver services (Cameron, 2014). Similarly, Mbecke and Mokoena (2016) indicate that the IGR has not facilitated service delivery in South Africa, rather rendering cooperative governance ineffective.

According to Steytler (2003), the challenges between these two tiers can be traced back to the amendments to the MSA in 1998. The amendments have resulted in districts being direct service providers to communities, thus deviating from their original constitutional mandates of being coordinators of local municipalities. As further stated by Steytler (2003, p. 228), the district local government model is “place-sensitive” in its approach.

According to Otero-Bahamón (2020), place-sensitive policies take into consideration the characteristics of places and adapt accordingly to facilitate better service delivery by sub-national governments. In contrast, Otero-Bahamón (2020), explain that place-blind policies employ a symmetrical approach, thus disregarding vulnerable communities and therefore worsen inequalities.

According to Steytler (2003), because the district municipality model is place-sensitive, it doesn’t follow the legislative provisions, but its capacity to deliver is rather subjected to assessment by the Executive. This study adopted the DDM as a case study to further explore whether this executive assessment of local government capacity reflects a process of recentralisation by the executive. According to Chilenga-Butao (2020), recentralisation imposes central authority

on local governments while failing to support them (see also Erk, 2014 and Resnick, 2014).

Table 2: Legislation that organises local government in South Africa.

Legislation	Description
Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations Act (1997)	This Act establishes the processes for the equitable division of nationally raised revenue among the spheres of government. Additionally, it establishes the Budget Forum where local government priorities are raised and agreed upon. The Act further requires the annual tabling of a Division of Revenue Bill which sets out how much funding each municipality should receive.
Municipal Structures Act (Act 117 of 1998)	This Act establishes the different types of municipalities and allocates powers and responsibilities between local and district municipalities. Further, it provides regulations for the municipal systems, structures, and the functions of municipal office bearers.
The Municipal Systems Act (2000)	This Act details processes for community participation, local integrated development plans, performance management, administration, service delivery, and collection of municipal debt. The Act also regulates the publication of by-laws and defines the roles of national and provincial governments in setting standards and local government monitoring. Furthermore, the Act regulates the transfer of functions to a municipality from another level of government.
Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act (Act 13 of 2005)	This Act establishes an intergovernmental framework and forums for settling inter-sphere disputes.

Source: Adapted from National Treasury, 2011

However, as argued by Chilenga-Butao (2020), Erk (2014), and Resnick (2014), visions of decentralisation have not been realised. Instead, there have

been attempts to limit local government autonomy in what Dickovick (2011, p. 1) calls “a reverse wave” of recentralisation.

The thesis further argues that while Section 139 of the Constitution makes provision for temporary interventions under specific conditions, these interventions can be manipulated for political ends. Indeed, studies, suggest this legislation has been used for political reasons rather than to improve local governance (Greffrath & Van der Waldt, 2016; Chilenga-Butao, 2020). Furthermore, federal and decentralisation systems go through circular trends of decentralisation and recentralisation. Indeed, an assessment conducted by Dickovick and Riedl (2010) on decentralisation in Africa has argued that, while central governments are justified in seeking to coordinate and monitor the actions of sub-national actors, they observed a degree of control that suggests a continuation of centralised patterns of governance in many cases.

Decentralisation, therefore, is not static, but it is an elastic concept driven by various cyclical forces (See Conlan, 2014; Triesman, 2002). According to Conlan (2014), these cyclical trends have implications for intergovernmental relations and in extreme cases, can even lead to the dissolution of federal systems, as in the former Yugoslavia and Soviet Union.

As Dickovick (2005) asserted, to give effect to true autonomy, decentralisation must be a combination of various types of reforms. For instance, sub-national elections of officials mean nothing if these officials are not given resources to spend and manage. Further, Dickovick argues that elected officials with fiscal resources still possess less power if spending priorities, and budgets are determined by the central government. This is particularly true if the elected officials are subjected to being overruled and monitored by the centre. This is the case if they are relying on the centre for fiscal transfers or have a severely constrained tax base. Decentralisation in such a case cannot be characterised as a real devolution of power, but rather can be classified as deconcentration, that is, sub-national execution of central government prerogative (Dickovick, 2005). The following subsection, thus, discusses fiscal decentralisation.

2.1.6. Fiscal decentralisation

While some literature on federalism and decentralisation focuses on its perceived benefits, for example, protecting democracy and contributing to democratic values (André, 2014; Landau et al, 2020), according to Lecours and Béland (2010) and Fenwick (2010), less focus is being paid to the political dynamics in the fiscal arrangements within federal and decentralised structures. Referring to Canadian federalism, for instance, Lecours and Béland (2010) indicate that less attention is given to the inter-governmental conflicts caused by equalisation policies and fiscal imbalances. The horizontal fiscal redistribution in Canada is highly political, as decisions on redistribution and equalisation are driven more by political support to the federal government than provincial interests to (Lecours & Béland, 2010).

In the case of South American federalism, for instance, Fenwick (2010, p, 160) explains that in trying to understand the "politics of the federal game", it is important to understand the regulations governing sub-national finances. For instance, how such regulations influence the political will of sub-national levels of governments to implement central government policies. Consequently, in such situations, as noted by Arretche (2010, p. 590), distributive policies are unlikely to reduce inequalities because they are driven by "pork barrel politics" (Arretche, 2011, p. 589), where sub-national spending reflect the clientelistic interests of powerful actors in central decision-making processes.

In the South African context, Cameron (2007) advances a similar argument and states that the emergence of local clientelistic and patronage interests have not promoted service delivery to communities was a result of the decentralised system. Maseng (2014, p. 3) defines clientelism as a "mutually beneficial association between the powerful and the weak" and states that the "ANC is a patron that offers public office and security to its clients" (p. 3) who are its officials in state institutions. Maseng claims that these clients assist the ANC to legitimise its actions, whether they are democratic or not.

According to the National Treasury (2011) and Van Niekerk (2012), there are two systems of fiscal decentralisation in South Africa. The first deals with

nationally raised revenue, while the second one deals with revenue raised by sub-national levels of government. The Financial and Fiscal Commission is empowered by the Fiscal Relations Act of 1997 to manage the fiscal transfers to provinces (National Treasury, 2011; Van Niekerk, 2012). The national budget provides for vertical and horizontal allocation, as explained by National Treasury (2011): see also Table 7.

Vertical division

According to the National Treasury (2011), the vertical division of funds among the three spheres of government allocates funds to ensure that each sphere can provide services and perform functions allocated to it under the Constitution. According to the National Treasury (2011), approximately 85% of the provincial budget is spend on primary and secondary education, health, and welfare. Functions such as defence, police, and foreign affairs are national government responsibilities. Local government provides municipal infrastructure and services. The budget also considers each sphere's ability to raise its own revenue. Thus, local government, which largely raises its own revenue, gets a smaller share than the provinces, which have much less revenue collection abilities.

Provincial horizontal division

The provincial equitable share of the budget among the nine provinces is known as horizontal division. According to the National Treasury (2011), the division of funds is calculated based on the provincial demographics and economic profiles. The provincial equitable share formula is made up of six components: education, health, basic, institutional, poverty, and economic activity.

Table 3: An example of the division of nationally raised revenue

DIVISION OF NATIONALLY RAISED REVENUE							
R billion	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	Outcome			Estimate	Medium-term estimates		
DIVISION OF AVAILABLE FUNDS							
National departments	749.8	790.5	823.0	854.4	828.6	835.7	877.9
Provinces	613.4	628.8	660.8	694.6	695.1	720.5	754.7
Local government	123.0	137.1	135.6	147.8	164.0	174.4	183.3
Provisional allocation not assigned to votes	-	-	-	-	1.5	3.9	4.0
Non-interest allocation	**1 486.2**	**1 556.4**	**1 619.4**	**1 696.8**	**1 689.1**	**1 734.4**	**1 819.9**
PERCENTAGE SHARES							
National departments	50.4%	50.8%	50.8%	50.4%	49.1%	48.3%	48.3%
Provinces	41.3%	40.4%	40.8%	40.9%	41.2%	41.6%	41.6%
Local government	8.3%	8.8%	8.4%	8.7%	9.7%	10.1%	10.1%

Source: National Treasury, 2023

According to National Treasury (2011), the Constitution requires that budget-making be the responsibility of all three spheres of government. The Constitution further requires that "nationally raised revenues be divided equitably between the three spheres of government and that the provincial share be equally divided between the nine provincial governments" (p. 1). Additionally, provincial and local governments receive grants from the national share (National Treasury (South Africa) & Gordhan, 2011). Some of these grants may, however, be subjected to conditions.

The provincial formula allocates funds among provinces based on their demographic and economic profiles, considering service delivery requirements, for example, welfare, primary health, and education. According to National Treasury (2011), the local government formula is designed to ensure that municipalities deliver basic services to low-income households at an affordable cost. However, Van Niekerk (2012) states that the provincial equitable share is significantly higher as provinces do not have the ability to raise their own

funding. They, therefore, rely on the central government for revenue, which then creates a problem of accountability and perverse incentives for provinces. Van Niekerk (2012) argues that this is a result of funding being derived from the central government and not from the provincial taxpayers.

In addition, municipalities are largely self-financing through, for example, raising property taxes and other service charges (Koelble & LiPuma, 2010; Cameron, 2014; Pieterse, 2019). However, the disparity in municipal demographics, where municipalities in poorer communities are not able to generate revenue, causes a fiscal imbalance. According to Koelble and LiPuma (2010), to ensure equity among poor and affluent areas, national government replaced the equitable share formula with conditional grants which is a form of cross-subsidisation.

According to Murray and Simeon (2012), Cameron (2014), and Resnick (2014), Due to South Africa's Constitution, fiscal decentralisation appears to be the least prone to the difficulties of vertically divided authority and political shenanigans. However, Cameron (2014) contends that there is often a lack of clarity regarding the role of the different sectors of government. When it comes to budgeting, for instance, Cameron indicates that the national government allocates the infrastructure grant to municipalities, and the housing grant to the provinces.

Further, National Treasury (2011), attribute many of the problems arising from the budget processes to weak management systems that are not adequately adapted for a decentralised system. Even more confusing, according to Van Wyk (2013, p. 288), are the four “opaque” and overlapping functional areas relating to planning as listed in Schedules 4 and 5 of the Constitution, which are “regional planning and development, urban and rural development, provincial planning, and municipal planning”. As observed by Cameron (2014) and Obeng-Odoom (2017), The vertically divided authority creates the possibility of political conflict, particularly concerning high-profile urban services, which are concurrently the responsibility of the three spheres of government.

According to Cameron (2014) and Resnick (2014), in the South African context, fiscal decentralisation is relatively fixed, with no interference from the national government. This is because the rules on subnational finance are much clearer. It is at the level of political decentralisation where there is a lot of contestations because the rules are much more elastic. However, this thesis argues that through the DDM, central government has interfered in the equitable share of local government, as shown in Chapter 8. Though the rules of sub-national finances may be clearer, as indicated by Cameron (2014) and Resnick (2014), this thesis further argues that governance actors are able to exercise power outside the formal constitutional framework. Further, Dickovick (2005) is critical of decentralisation reforms in South Africa. Dickovick argues that central governments still control public finance, regardless of any decentralising reforms. Thus, sub-national elected officials are tightly constrained by a lack of an independent tax authority, mandates on spending, an inability to borrow freely, and an insecure juridical authority. This "mesh of constraints" calls into question the entirety of the decentralisation reforms (p. 207). Therefore, assessing sub-national autonomy through central government revenue transfers or sub-national elections is a red herring if it is not accompanied by decision-making autonomy.

To complement the above discussion, the following section focuses on the constitutional architecture of post-apartheid South Africa as it relates to the division of powers among the three spheres of government. This provides the context for examining the DDM, which will be used to decode and understand decentralised governance in South Africa.

2.2. Overview of the constitutional architecture

While various scholarly works have expounded on the benefits of decentralisation reforms, the system's complexities have also been noted. Various factors, codified and uncodified, coalesce in a complex interplay that diminishes the deemed benefits of decentralised governance. This subsection focuses on the codified factors, which are the constitutional and legislative frameworks. Following a negotiated political settlement at the Convention for

the Democratic South Africa (CODESA) in 1993, a new Constitution was adopted. The outcome of the negotiations delivered a quasi-federal system "showing strong unitary elements" (Steytler, 2017, p. 330). However, the structure sparked debates between the 'unitarists' who claim that South Africa is a unitary state and the 'federalists' or those who insist on sub-national autonomy as entrenched in the Constitution. Both factions quote the Constitution to reinforce their arguments. Those who insist on constitutionally entrenched autonomy exercise their power and even engage in paradiplomacy, notably, the Western Cape provincial government, which is governed by the opposition DA. The unitarists, on the other hand, have insisted that South Africa is a unitary state and not a federal state where provinces can define themselves outside the central government framework. These diverse views play themselves out in policy implementation and thus render intergovernmental relations ineffective. The following section traces the path leading to the adoption of the structure of the South African state.

2.2.1. Multi-level governance

The ANC, in its Policy Guidelines adopted at its National Conference in 1992, declared:

> "South Africa shall be a unitary state in which there shall be government at local, regional and national levels. The Bill of Rights and principles of non-racialism, non-sexism and democratic accountability shall apply at all three levels of government…The ANC favours a parliament consisting of the national assembly and senate. The national assembly will be elected by universal suffrage on a common voter`s roll according to proportional representation. The powers of regional and local government should be harmonised with the powers of central government bearing in mind that in case of conflict the constitution and national legislation should prevail. In essence regional government will have to function broadly within the framework of national policy. Regional government should not be able to contradict national policy as expressed in the laws of the country but should rather influence the shaping of these

> policies and play a significant role in developing mechanism for implementation.
>
> The ANC believes that regional government should have powers to co-ordinate and plan development. But the powers and functions of regional government will need to be balanced with those of the urban and rural local authorities in order to avoid conflict." (ANC, 1992).

Yet, what came out of the negotiations at CODESA was a conflict-avoiding political structure that laid the foundation for an ambiguous polity that would lead to diverse interpretations of its intents and a contentious intergovernmental relation. Thus, this thesis has attempted to unravel the political structure of the South African state. This discussion informs the analysis in Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

The structure of the South African state is highly contestable, with labels ranging from a 'highly decentralised unitary state', 'highly centralised federal state', 'quasi-federal state', and an 'integrated federal state'. Indeed, the structure of the South African state has drawn interest from both local and international scholars. Various descriptions are employed to refer to the South African political system. Some scholars refer to South Africa as a quasi-federal state because it displays both unitary and federal elements (Mello & Maserumule, 2010; OECD, 2016; Cameron, 2014; Gumede, 2019). Notably, Phillimore (2013) and Erk (2014) refer to South Africa as one of the big three federations in Africa, alongside Ethiopia and Nigeria. Thus, there are divergent views on the structure of the South African state, as illustrated by the different opinions. The debate goes further, asking whether South Africa should become a federal state if it is not yet one (Schwella, 2016).

As Murray and Simeon further explain:

> "But when a new constitutional model for a democratic South Africa was first discussed in the early 1990s, the African National Congress (ANC) and others in the freedom movement were deeply suspicious of federalism. It was the out-going, white-dominated apartheid regime and

> the Zulu-nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party that insisted on federalism as a condition of a final constitutional settlement. The out-going regime believed that federalism would contribute to limited government and restrain the majority that was about to take office. Some harboured the dream that in a federal South Africa there might be room for an Afrikaans province or homeland. The ANC acquiesced but remained deeply reluctant federalists. For the ANC, federalism and decentralization were indelibly linked to the apartheid model of Bantustans – quasi-autonomous puppet regimes that would deny Black South Africans full citizenship in the country." (Murray and Simeon, 2012, p. 233)

Indeed, Mandela, writing in his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*, stated that the Inkatha Freedom Party, which is one of the oldest political parties in South Africa, refused to sign the Declaration of Intent that committed all parties to an undivided South Africa.

> "Inkatha refused to sign on the grounds that the phrase 'undivided South Africa' implied that a federal system was off limits." (Mandela, 2004, p. 713)

Although the Constitution of South Africa does not explicitly declare South Africa a federal state, according to Abebe (2013), Steytler (2017), and Murray & Simeon (2012), it established a federal form of government. This is because the Constitution exhibits the main features of federalism which entrenches vertical separation of powers, where provinces are represented in the centre of government. In addition, the Constitutional Court adjudicates on intergovernmental disputes. However, combining federalism and unitarism has created a complex polity that is neither federal nor unitary. This quasi-federal system has led to diverse interpretations of the Constitution, laws, policies, and regulations.

However, as Schwella (2016) noted, there is fair consensus among academics and legal experts that the South African state encompasses strong federal elements incorporated into its governance system. Further, Haysom (2005) persuasively argues that the South African constitutional model, tick most of

the federal checklist. For instance, it has nine sub-national governments with constitutionally entrenched provincial borders. Further, the Constitution requires the establishment of democratically elected provincial legislatures for with accountable executives.

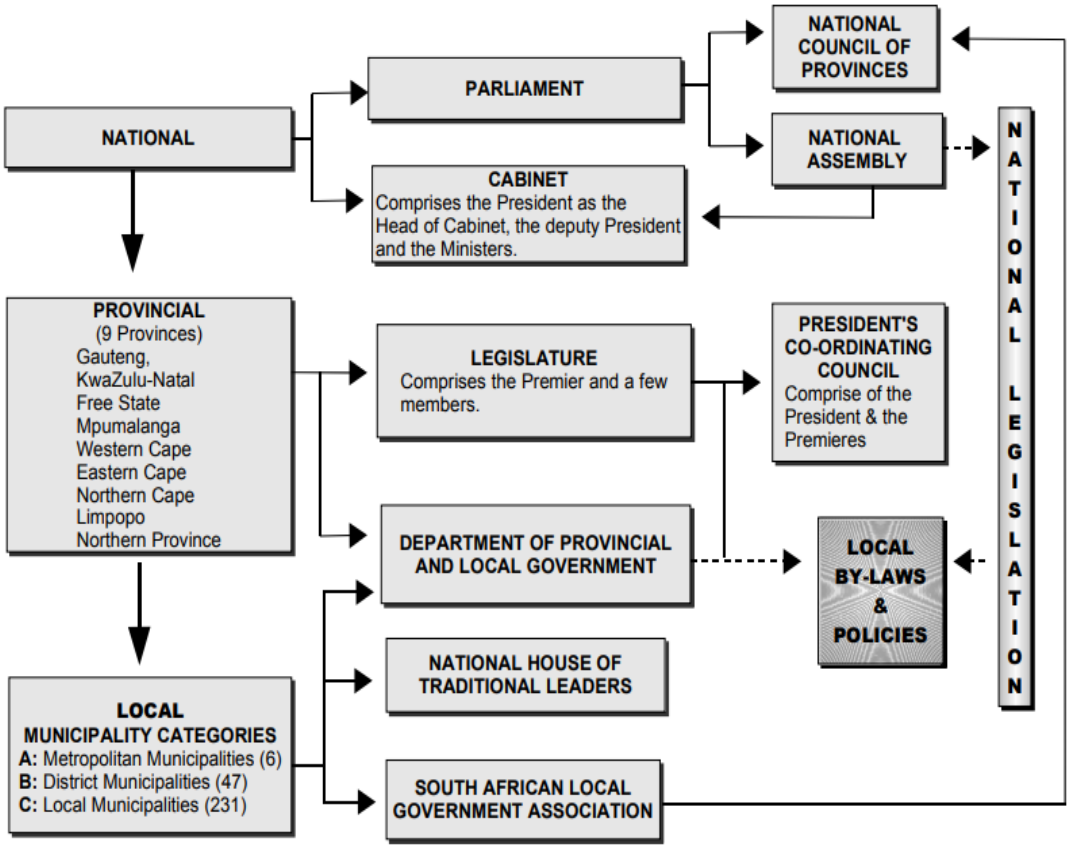


Figure 4: South Africa's political structure

Source: Widmer & Lombard, 2005

As explained by Van Niekerk (2012), during the negotiations at CODESA between the two key negotiators, the ANC and the then National Party-led government, the ANC initially wanted a strong central government sharing power with sub-national units on certain policy areas (see also Erk, 2014; Faguet, 2014; Resnick, 2014). The ANC and other parties within the Struggle movement were deeply suspicious of a federal system of government. As Murray and Simeon (2012) point out, for the ANC, federalism and decentralisation were associated with apartheid Bantustans, a quasi-

autonomous system of the apartheid regime that oppressed and denied Blacks full citizenship (see also Wittenberg, 2003). The ANC wanted to use strong central government power to undo the fragmentation of South Africa by the apartheid regime. Thus, while the ANC supported democratic processes across all levels of government, it also wanted a unitary state with veto powers over provinces.

However, there were a lot of contestations among various political parties on the reorganisation of the new government. For example, in his autobiography, Mandela (2004, p. 713) explains that the Pan Africanist Congress boycotted the negotiations, accusing the ANC of conspiring with the National Party "to set up a multi-racial government". Furthermore, Mandela explains that on the first day of the Convention, the majority of the participants, including the National Party, had endorsed a Declaration of Intent, committing all parties to a united South Africa whose supreme law would be a Constitution protected by a judiciary that is independent.

However, the ANC finally modified their insistence on a unitary state after a visit by its Constitutional Committee to the Federal Republic of Germany (Murray & Simeon, 2012; Van Niekerk, 2012). The ANC was impressed with the concurrent powers between the central state and the German states, known as *Länder.* While the *Länder* are primarily administrative bodies and implement centrally agreed policies, the central state has overriding power in case of conflict (Gunlicks, 2003; Murray and Simeon, 2012; Van Niekerk, 2012). Thus, the ANC's perception of a rather centralised German model of federalism dispelled their fears, with even one member of the ANC reporting back that "Germany is not federal at all" (Murray & Simeon, 2012, p. 239).

According to Van Niekerk (2012), this settlement resulted in the model of cooperative governance that coincided with the National Party's objective of limiting the ANC's state power. The settlement was also a compromise between the Inkatha Freedom Party and former Bantustan leaders who insisted on a federal form of government. The outcome of this "negotiated revolution was a weak form of federalism, showing strong unitary elements" (Steytler, 2017, p.

330). Thus, according to Murray and Simeon (2012, p. 232), the ANC became "reluctant federalists". According to Resnick (2014), decentralisation in South Africa was, therefore, adopted as a way of maintaining political stability during the transition period from apartheid to democracy. Eventually, according to Murray and Simeon (2012), however, South Africa did adopt federalism but carefully avoided using the term. This explanation implies that the Constitution avoided explicitly labelling South Africa as a federal state to avoid perceptions of the re-imposition of the Bantustan regime (Murray & Simeon, 2012; Erk, 2014)**.** In summary, from the above discussions, South Africa can be said to be a highly centralised federal state but also a highly decentralised unitary state, in other words, a hybrid political system.

The new state structure was described by Steytler (2017, p. 328) as the "hourglass federal" system because the national and local government spheres are strong, but the provincial system in the middle enjoys little constitutional protection. Indeed, the Constitution grants considerable autonomy to municipalities. Later, during the local government reforms, a two-tier local government, which consisted of district and local municipalities, was created.

Consequently, the South African Constitution of 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) provided for three distinctive, interdependent, and interrelated spheres of government with a vertical division of power among the three spheres (Abebe, 2013; Van Wyk, 2013; Steytler, 2017). According to Van Wyk (2013, p. 288), this arrangement is "somewhat unusual" because it departed from the norm "where the lower tier is beholden to the higher tier" (p. 288). Instead, the Constitution accords all three spheres of government legislative and executive authority. This multi-sphere design of the South African state is said to be broadly modelled on the German *Bundesregierung* or federal government (see Murray & Simeon, 2012; Van Niekerk, 2012).

According to Steytler (2017), following an integrated federal approach, the allocation of both provincial and municipal powers and functions allows for an integrated and complementary system. For example, most provincial functions are concurrent with the national government. However, except for the provincial

constitution, there are limited exclusive provincial powers. Local government constitutionally entrenched powers, which include, for example, electricity, sanitation, municipal roads, and municipal planning, are not exclusive. On the other hand, Steytler (2017) states that the national legislative powers are almost supreme, with parliament having all residual powers to override competing concurrent provincial legislation. Both national and provincial legislators may regulate constitutionally entrenched local government powers. The Constitution, therefore, constitutes a problematic blending of both decentralisation and centralisation, thus creating tensions between the two concepts. To ameliorate these tensions, the Constitution has established a cooperative form of government that deals with cooperation among the three spheres of government:

Cooperative governance: According to Chapter Three of the Constitution, the three spheres of government are distinctive, interdependent, and interrelated (RSA, 1996). Each sphere is enjoined to observe to these principles while conducting its responsibilities within the parameters of these principles. More importantly, the Constitution situates local government within a system of cooperative government. The Constitution entrenches local government as a sphere of government on its own and not a subordinate of national or provincial government.

Distinctive: Specific powers and functions are allocated for each sphere of government, and such powers and functions can be concurrent (Schedule 4) or exclusive (Schedule 5). Further, Schedules 4B and 5B of the Constitution, allocates the powers and functions of local government. All spheres of government share the legislative authority for Schedule 4 and between provincial and local government for Schedule 5 functions.

Interdependent: In exercising their autonomy, all spheres must cooperate for the common good of South Africa.

Interrelated: The exercise of autonomy by one sphere is overseen by a higher sphere. In the main, national government oversee the provincial sphere, while the provincial government oversee local government. Supervision, thus,

ensures oversight and serves as checks and balances to curtail abuse of power (RSA, 1996).

The cooperative governance model has, however, proven difficult in practice and has often been cited as an impediment to successful service delivery and policy formulation (Van Niekerk, 2010; Murray & Simeon, 2012; Van Wyk, 2013; Gumede, 2019). Additionally, Pieterse (2019) argues that while democratic decentralisation was advocated, the intergovernmental system in most developing countries limits local governments from reaching their developmental potential.

In their critical assessment of the cooperative governance model, Murray and Simeon (2012) argue that rather than being a partnership among the three spheres of government, the model has become more of a "paternalistic, centrally dominated process" (2012, p. 43). While this decentralised, bottom-up model depicts power sharing among the three spheres of government, it also created competition between the national government and its sub-national counterparts.

Moreover, Van Niekerk (2012) indicates that the cooperative governance model has created "conflict, duplication, re-fragmentation of the polity, confusion, and ambiguity over which level of government should be responsible for policy and service delivery" (2012, p. 622-623). Critically, however, Mbecke and Mokoena (2016) claim that the IGR has not facilitated service delivery nor promoted coordination among government spheres. According to Mbecke and Mokoena (2016), this lack of coordination has negatively impacted the Integrated Development Programme (IDP). The IDP is a legislated municipal-wide plan for specific areas and provides an overall developmental framework. Its objective is to promote inter-sphere collaboration and coherence for a better quality of life of the local populace. (Mbecke & Mokoena, 2016; Sebola, 2016). As also indicated by Cameron (2014), the complex IGR system has made it difficult for cities to take full responsibility for service delivery, especially in the housing sector.

The principles of cooperative governance and IGRs enjoins all spheres of government and state organs to respect the constitutional authority, institutional powers, and functions of the other sphere. Further, no sphere may usurp power or functions other than those bestowed by the Constitution. Thus, in exercising its powers and functions, each sphere may not encroach on the functional, institutional, and geographical integrity of another sphere in a spirit of mutual trust and good faith.[1]

The principles of cooperative governance and intergovernmental relations, however, appear to be idealistic rather than realistic. For example, recently, the Premier of the Western Cape province, Allan Winde, led a delegation to the US to convince the US government that the Western Cape province is still committed to the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). This followed threats by the US government to remove South Africa from AGOA because of its stance on the Russian/Ukraine conflict. The Western Cape province is the only province under the political control of the opposition DA. According to a statement on the national government website, the aim of the visit was also to enhance the Western Cape as a trade and investment destination (RSA, 2023). The US Congress approved AGOA in May 2000 in a move to bolster economic relations between the US the sub-Saharan countries. Thus, the programme is an agreement between sub-Saharan central governments and the US government. However, the national government was not pleased with the actions of the Western Cape provincial government. The Department of International Relations and Cooperation expressed displeasure that the province overstepped their mandate on foreign policy by engaging directly with the US federal government on matters that are the exclusively national government responsibilities. As quoted in an article on *News24*, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation spokesperson, Clayson Monyela, argued that “the Constitution is clear that the executive [national government] is charged with the responsibility to formulate and implement the country's foreign policy. Provinces can't adopt a different posture or foreign

[1] The Constitution of South Africa, 1996, Chapter 3, Section 41 (1) (e-h)

policy position from the one adopted by the national government" (Maliti, 2023, para. 6-7).

Indeed, De Lille and Kesson (2017) argued that while the Constitution enjoins the national government to determine the country's relationship and obligations with other countries, this symmetrical approach limits the economic potential of sub-national governments. For example, while national government may dedicate resources to promote the country to international investors, this approach may not take into consideration individual regions' unique circumstances. Citing the City of Cape Town as an example, De Lille and Kesson argue that the city's tourism interests may not be sufficiently promoted by national government. For example, national government may promote tourism for the whole country but not use Cape Town's unique iconic images in their marketing material. De Lille and Kesson (2017), whose book detail their experiences as high-ranking officials within the City of Cape Town, argue further that promoting economic growth is the city's constitutional mandate, and thus, the city is best suited to executive their own growth strategies without relying on other spheres of government.

Indeed, the arguments and reference to the Constitution highlight this thesis argumentation that some of the complexities of decentralised governance emanate from the coded institutional and constitutional factors. Thus, while the Constitution reflects all the hallmarks of federalism, it also displays unitary features, especially in its provision of exclusive central government powers. This display of power is also observable in the design of the DDM, which, while a local government programme, is dominated by national government. As De Lille and Kesson (2017) argued, while it is accepted that those who win national power should shape national interests, there is also the additional truth that power often rests outside of formal intentions and plans if the diffuse realities of power are accepted. Thus, the following subsection documents contemporary trends in policymaking, characterised by cycles of decentralisation and recentralisation. These trends are more subtle than revolutionary and are shown to be inconsistent through different political regimes.

The next section thus provides a brief overview of the macro policy frameworks that underpinned the post-apartheid government. The section examines policy and governance shifts through four political regimes, namely, the Mandela, Mbeki, Zuma, and Ramaphosa presidencies. While these shifts might differ ideologically and coalesce around different agendas, they nevertheless confirm that significant governance changes took place through different regimes. These perspectives offer an analytical framework to observe how the DDM represents a particular shift in governance that significantly alters the relationship between the central government and its constituent units.

2.2.2. Patterns of decentralisation and centralisation

A deeper analysis of policymaking in South Africa reveals an ideological shift characterised by oscillating between left-leaning and neo-liberal policy postures**.** For Sinwell (2011, p. 361)," the people's power" that helped dismantle apartheid and informed the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) through civic participation has been in decline under the ANC government. This inclusive, decentralised approach to policymaking was replaced by the market-driven, neo-liberal Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) Strategy framework in 1996. Indeed, the adoption of the GEAR programme was "a profound shift away from the RDP model of development that sought to reconcile participatory democracy with state-led development to a model of development that sought welfare receipts from a growing capitalist economy" (Bhorat et al., 2017, p. 7).

The discussions of these policies and programmes are undertaken because they embody the governance shifts of the different regimes at different periods. The discussions are, therefore, not undertaken to compare, or to pit one policy or programme against another. Rather, it is a demonstration of how governance shifts are often embedded within developmental programmes or policies. In recent years scholars have properly related these shifts in governance and their socio-economic impacts to implementation of developmental programmes, see for instance, (Fenwick, 2010; Resnick, 2014; Erk, 2014). These shifts, while subtle, are opportunistic and shows how central governments employ coercive

instruments disguised in developmental parlance. Thus, the discussions of these policies and programmes are relevant as they explain decentralisation dynamics and evolution of intergovernmental relations in South Africa. This line of enquiry is in alignment with, for instance, Dickovick (2011) who observed a link between reassertion of central government control over the economy with greater Presidential control in the context of sub-national challenges to central power. Another strategy to undermine sub-national autonomy through recentralisation, is what Dickovick refers to as 'institutional layering' (see also Olivier de Sardan, 2011). According to Dickovick (2011), recentralisation is not a facile process for Presidents, and as a result, it demands certain strategic or tactical approaches that render it more feasible. One of these approaches is institutional layering through which Presidents can undermine sub-national governments by adding new institutions rather than "making a frontal assault on the old" (p. 5). Sub-section 2.2.4 discusses Dickovick's theorisation of institutional layering to demonstrate that, as Dickovick argues, institutional layering shows that institutional change "comes not through overhauls, reforms, or abolition of existing institutions, but rather from a layering through which multiple sets of institutions coexist and influence political behaviour" (p. 5). In instances of institutional layering, "the new institutions, whether organizations, processes, or rules, are added on top of preexisting institutions" (ibid). This thesis has argued in Chapter 8, that sometimes governance shifts do not always require major overhauls like changing the constitution, but can be subtle, like introducing a new programme such as the DDM. Hereunder follows Dickovick's theorisation of institutional layering to lay the ground for exploring governance shifts through different political regimes through their different programmes and policies.

2.2.3. Recentralisation and institutional layering

Dickcovick (2011) theorises that recentralisation can follow multiple different patterns. According to Dickovick (2011), two interrelated variables that have to do with presidencies being the primary institutional actors behind recentralisation have been observed in Brazil and Venezuela. They are the institutional background of the President and top officials, and the strength of

the political position of the national executive, particularly the extent of institutional constraints on presidential action. These institutional constraints can be, for example, democracy, federalism, or constitutional provisions. The two variables reflect the willingness and ability, respectively, of the national executive to push for recentralisation. As Dickovick highlights, these variables are interrelated because presidents from traditional institutional backgrounds are more likely to emerge in more institutionalised environments and to perpetuate those traditional arrangements. On the other hand, "outsider" presidents are more likely, in less-institutionalised environments, to upset existing arrangements. Dickovick (2011) contrasts two Latin American countries, that is, Brazil and Venezuela and the stylistic character of their presidents:

> "For instance, Brazil shows that where national executives come from conventional institutions with institutional constraints, the form of recentralization is one that builds and rationalizes that institutional environment. Venezuela on the other hand, illustrates an anti-institutional approach to recentralization in which existing institutions are abolished or subjugated to presidential discretion" (p. 1).

According to Dickovick (2011), while both processes use similar recentralising tactics, most notably institutional layering, the results differ as a function of executive background, intent, and leverage. In the anti-institutional approach, for instance, institutional layering is employed to undermine traditional institutions of government and substituting them with new presidential initiatives. This form of recentralisation enhances the discretionary power of the presidency and undermines the traditional roles of sub-national governments and other governing institutions.

Dickovick's analysis of the two Latin American regimes can be productively applied in the South African context because, as shown above, the stylistic character of presidents can be the primary factor behind recentralisation. The discussions below, thus, explores the intergovernmental implications of the macro and micro policy changes through different political regimes, with a

particular focus on the resulting governance shifts. The discussions will attempt to relate these policy changes to broader governance shifts, that is, decentralisation, recentralisation, and what some scholars refer to as 'Zuma centred'. As per the discussion in the preceding section, Dickovick (2011), has indicated that, in the anti-institutional approach to recentralisation, institutional layering is employed to undermine traditional institutions of government and substituting them with new presidential initiatives. Similarly, Zuma is often characterised as an anti-constitutionalist who, through the Radical Economic Transformation policy, "repurposed state institutions to consolidate the Zuma-centred power elite" in a scheme known as state capture (Bhorat et al, 2017, p.4). On the other hand, while Mandela, Mbeki, and Ramaphosa could be classified as coming from traditional institutional environments, they pursued different governance regimes. But, as Dickovick (2011) has explained, both traditional institutionalists and anti-institutionalists can employ institutional layering to effect recentralisation.

Mandela Era (1994 – 1999): Decentralisation

Although the Mandela era can best be defined as a period of reconciliation, in terms of development, it was marked by the RDP, which advocated for an interventionist role for the post-apartheid state. According to Bhorat et al. (2017), the Mandela presidency can also be described as Developmental Welfarism, which saw a massive expansion of the grants system for poor people and the unemployed. The RDP was a broad-based document rooted in mass democratic movements, as the ANC explains in their policy documents:

> "The central objective of our RDP is to improve the quality of life of all South Africans, and in particular the most poor and marginalised sections of our communities. This objective should be realised through a process of empowerment which gives the poor control over their lives and increases their ability to mobilise sufficient development resources, including from the democratic government where necessary. The RDP reflects a commitment to grassroots, bottom-up development which is

> owned and driven by communities and their representative organisations." (ANC, 1994)

Thus, the ANC saw the state playing a leading and enabling role in transforming the apartheid-era economy and society through the RDP. According to Karriem and Hoskin (2016), to give effect to central planning, an RDP Office was established in the Presidency in 1994 to play a coordinating role. Due to capacity challenges, its ability to coordinate government programmes was limited, and by 1996, the Office was closed. The closure of the RDP Office was a significant move from the socially oriented policy position to the market-driven GEAR policy, with government coordination now overseen by National Treasury. Treasury is often criticised for being more concerned with maintaining fiscal discipline than promoting broader developmental objectives.

The Mbeki years (1999 – 2008): Recentralisation

The year 1996 saw a major shift in economic policy when the ANC-led government, under the leadership of Mbeki, abolished the RDP in favour of the GEAR programme. Implemented in 1996, the GEAR programme was heavily criticised and referred to as 'the 1996 class project' by the South African Communist Party, an alliance partner of the governing ANC. While the RDP propagated a more active role for the state in the economy and redistribute wealth (Karriem & Hoskins, 2016), by contrast, the GEAR programme entrenched market forces in the developmental agenda. This "betrayal" to the ANC left-leaning alliance partners, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, and the South African Communist Party, "was a classic neo-liberal formulation, reflecting the assumption that market forces freed of external restraint would maximise not merely growth but also the welfare of citizens" (Everatt, 2003, p. 83). According to Everatt (2003), the GEAR programme has been criticised by the ANC alliance partners and civil society as more of "a home-grown version of the World Bank's notorious Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs)". Although GEAR has been "allowed to die quietly…neo-liberalism, nonetheless, remains the dominant orthodoxy within government" (p. 85). The Mbeki era also

saw a shift in governance to a more centralised approach, as Bhorat et al. explain:

> "Mbeki's fourth innovation was the organizational shift of political control away from the ANC itself to the Presidency – an institution that he sought to build into a powerful apparatus of control and coordination at the centre of the state. These actions were to support the aspiration of creating a South African version of the developmental state." (Bhorat et al., 2017, p. 7).

However, local government was also allocated a role in the GEAR programme of attracting investment through utilising the comparative advantages of their areas. The 1998 White Paper on Local Government envisaged that "in the immediate term, municipalities will need to manage the consequences of globalisation - such as the restructuring and relocation of industries" (COGTA, 1998, p. xxx).

At the Polokwane Conference in 2007 where the ANC elected its new leaders, Mbeki was unseated as ANC president, and Jacob Zuma assumed the leadership of the organisation. According to Bhorat et al. (2017), the "Polokwane moment" represented a reaction to Mbeki's centralised approach to governance. However, Bond (2011, p. 113) argues that "with Mbeki tossed out in late 2008, a shift was anticipated under Zuma, but did not occur".

The Zuma Years (2008 – 2018): 'Zuma centred'

Following the unseating of Mbeki at the 2007 Polokwane Conference, Jacob Zuma was ushered in as the President of the ANC. Later, Mbeki was recalled as state president upon which a caretaker president was appointed before the appointment of Zuma as President. The Zuma presidency, often referred to as the 'nine wasted years'[2], was characterised by state capture in which key institutions of the state were controlled by non-state actors. Departing from the ANC's ideological focus of "radical economic transformation", the Zuma

[2] At the 2019 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, President Cyril Ramaphosa referred to his predecessor Jacob Zuma's term in office as the nine wasted years (City Press, 2019).

presidency was, in practice, aimed at “repurposing state institutions to consolidate the Zuma-centred power elite” in a scheme popularly known as “state capture” (Bhorat et al., 2017, p. 4). Beyond the “normal” corruption by public officials, state capture must be recognised as a political project that was given legitimacy by the visions of the radical economic transformation. Bhorat et al. further write:

> “While corruption is widespread at all levels and is undermining development, state capture is a far greater, systemic threat. It is akin to a silent coup and must, therefore, be understood as a political project that is given a cover of legitimacy by the vision of radical economic transformation…it is now clear that the nature of the state that is emerging – a blending of constitutional and shadow forms – will be incapable of driving genuine development programmes. By its very nature this mode of governance is counter development. The need for radical economic transformation must be rescued from a political project that uses it to mask the narrow ambitions of a power elite that is only really interested in controlling access to rents and retaining political power.” (Bhorat et al., 2017, p, 4)

Claiming to speak on behalf of ordinary people, these “reformers… constitute a politics profoundly mistrustful of the formal rules of the game, whether of the Constitution or of government” (Bhorat et al., 2017, p. 10). Thus, radical economic transformation was presented as a programme that must frequently break the rules, even the Constitution. Therefore, Zuma’s rise must be seen in the context of the economic environment and developmental state discourse. The infrastructure growth, Black Economic Empowerment, and the significance of the state-owned enterprises were used by the elite to assert power and repurpose state institutions. This was done to reverse the contradictions of the Mbeki era, which saw high economic growth and high inequality. Thus, this power elite centralised control over a range of governance areas, including establishing parallel government and decision-making structures that sought to undermine the executive.

The Ramaphosa years (2018 –)

While the Mbeki presidency was noted for centralising power and control of the Presidency, this trend appears to have continued and even intensified under the Ramaphosa presidency. A recent case in point is the National Coronavirus Command Council, established to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic, which confirms the still existing hierarchical approach in decision-making by the state. This Command Council faced criticism for taking far-reaching decisions related to the nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19 in the country. The main criticism stems from the reliance of the government on a small scientific and medical community, the inconsistent policy options being communicated by different advisers and the absence of public and civil society engagements (Naicker, 2020).

Table 4: Cyclical governance shifts

Regime	Characteristics	Policy position
Mandela presidency	Decentralisation	Reconstruction and Development Programme
Mbeki presidency	Centralising	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
Zuma presidency	'Zuma-centred'[3]	Radical Economic Transformation
Ramaphosa presidency	Centralising	District Development Model

Source: Author's design

Thus, this thesis argues that the trend of centralising is continuing and is embedded not only within macro but also in micro policy positions. Therefore,

[3] According to Bhorat et al. (2017, p. 4), the Zuma presidency was, in practice, aimed at "repurposing state institutions to consolidate the "Zuma-centred power elite" in a scheme known as 'state capture'. Thus, ''Zuma-centred" refers to a process of centralising state power among non-state actors for corrupt means.

it is possible that a programme such as the DDM, which appears to ignore the constitutionally entrenched autonomy of local government, continues the trend of the previous regime of subordinating local government to central government control. Further, the DDM appears to add another institutional layer on an already contested political environment. The following section provides a brief overview of the DDM.

2.2.4. An overview of the District Development Model

> "District Development Model: A non-solution for Local Government's continued failure: This overly ambitious 'strategy' seeks to address the inadequacies in local government and is premised on several shortcomings…[it] is a clear usurpation of local government's constitutional powers; would intensify the intricacy of relationships and could lead to additional and unnecessary layers of bureaucracy, which will slow down decision-making processes and impede efficient service delivery; would heighten conflicts and power struggles within the different levels of government; introduce the duplication of existing functions and structures within the system of cooperative governance." (Esema-Onaolapo, 2023)

Post-apartheid, a series of governance reforms took place, driven by the need to provide public goods and services and bring government closer to the people. These reforms translated into various pieces of legislation, policies, and programmes to restructure the system of governance, in particular local governance (Chikulo, 2013; Kanyane, 2014; Mbecke & Mokoena, 2016). Various frameworks were put in place to support the new governance model, for example, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, Municipal Systems Act (MSA) of 2000 and Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act 13 of 2005 (Legislative Sector, 2013; Mbecke & Mokoena, 2016; Masiapato & Wotela, 2017).

Following the adoption of the new post-apartheid Constitution of 1996, and the elevation of local government to a sphere of government as part of the decentralisation process, municipalities were the key providers of services and

drivers of development at the local level. This was to be achieved through the introduction of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) in 1996.

While various local government programmes were introduced, this section will only deal with the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme (ISRDP) as it shares much of its designs and structure with the District Development Model. Both models aim to limit silo mentality among the spheres of government through better coordination and integration of resources. Further, both programmes appointed champions at all three spheres of government to assist in getting support at different levels of government as well as other resources

In 2001 the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme (ISRDP) was introduced (Harmse, 2010). According to Harmse (2010), the ISRDP, which was simultaneously launched with the Urban Renewal Programme (URP) aimed to address the challenges of poverty and underdevelopment in the rural areas of South Africa. The programme involved all three spheres of government, the private sector and community-based organisations. The central objective of the ISRDP was to ensure better coordination of delivery for sustainable development in rural areas (Everrat et al, 2004). The ISRDP was announced by then President Thabo Mbeki in 2001. In his speech at the opening of Parliament, Mbeki (2001) explained that local government in both urban and rural areas will be pivotal in ensuring the coordinated implementation of the ISRDP. The National Minister of Provincial and Local Government will be responsible for coordinating its implementation nationally. According to Harmse (2010) and Statistics South Africa (2016) the programme was implemented in 13 nodes, or spatial locations, which were chosen due to prevalence of poverty, lack of infrastructure and capacity, and provincial representation.

Years after the implementation of the ISRDP, however, Statistics South Africa (STATSSA, 2016) in its evaluation report, indicated that the 13 nodes have not performed significantly better relative to the non-nodes. Thus, the overall success of this programme is not fully clear. Further, in their review of the first two years of the ISRDP, Everatt et al (2004) found that the coordinated delivery

of the programme has been difficult to achieve. The review cites the challenges in vertical and horizontal coordination where sector departments decided on their chosen sites of delivery which might be at odds with that of other spheres of government. Further, in their evaluation of the ISRDP, Everrat et al (2004) found some confusion among the study participants concerning the role of political champions. Thus, coordinating the ISRDP vertically and horizontally, from planning and budgeting to implementation, has been a major challenge with limited examples of success.

In 2019 the District Development Model (DDM) was launched by President Cyril Ramaphosa. The DDM aims to close the disparities in access and attainment of basic services across regions and rural and urban areas (COGTA, 2021). Anchored as a 'One Plan, One Budget' programme, the DDM aims to harmonise the relationship among the three spheres of government (national, provincial, and local), state entities, and other development partners. According to COGTA (2021), the model gives effect to the IGRs mechanism that will enable all three spheres of government to work together with communities and stakeholders to plan, budget, and implement in unison. It is championed by the President of South Africa and is institutionally managed by the Department of COGTA. The Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) in the Presidency plays a central role in policy coordination, planning, monitoring, and evaluation (DPME, 2020).

COGTA (2019; 2020) states that the DDM introduces a new IGRs planning, budgeting and implementation paradigm and discipline. COGTA identified weak inter-sphere collaboration, among others, as one of the reasons for poor service delivery and lack of community participation. The DDM is meant to ensure spatial targeting and budgeting towards common long-term outcomes (COGTA, 2019).

According to the COGTA (2019), the new district and metropolitan-based model was to be synchronised with the existing IDP and the Back to Basic Programme that preceded it. However, this approach is problematic as it does not clarify how the two programmes should integrate. According to Mbecke and Mokoena

(2016) and De Visser (2009), the role of IDPs is to integrate the planning of all municipalities under one united strategy for a municipal area. Furthermore, IDPs must form the basis for a municipal's annual budget and its spatial planning. This should be done in a concerted effort to integrate service delivery and development across spheres of government.

Additionally, according to the COGTA (2019), the model prioritises social partnerships in all sectors of society and communities. It aims to considerably impact through strengthening community participation by placing communities at the heart of service delivery. The aims of the DDM mirror those of the IDP, which poses the question of whether this is another governance layer. Other critical stakeholders include private sector companies, such as the Public Private Growth Initiative, Hollard, Sasol, Anglo American, Exxaro, and National Business Initiative, amongst others. In its implementation, like the ISRDP which precede it, the DDM is to be championed by ministers, deputy ministers, members of executive committees (MECs), heads of provincial departments, and deputy directors-general of the COGTA department. In addition, 39 Districts Forums are to be established (COGTA, 2021). This approach, however, displays a strong central government presence and a complex multi-layered system of intergovernmental relations.

However, a study conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) has identified various challenges with the implementation of the DDM:

- The development of a single plan at national, provincial and local government level challenging.
- Moreover, party political dynamics in adopting a single plan, lack of political maturity and healthy contestation between provinces and municipal programmes.
- Rationalisation of roles and responsibility, and the role of the Presidential Co-ordinating Council at the district level (Sausi *et al*, 2023).

Moreover, in pilot projects implemented in eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality, OR Tambo, and Waterberg District municipalities, challenges with coordination

were observed. According to the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) (2021), bringing all stakeholders into the DDM has proven difficult. Thus, just like the ISRDP that preceded the DDM, challenges with implementation have been observed.

Therefore, while the DDM spells out development strategies and policies in the physical, social, and economic aspects, this study argues that development programmes are much more dynamic. The political settings and institutional variations have not received much focus in its design. The diverse interests and differentiated capacities of sub-national governments and institutions and how they exercise power set the stage for a governance episode representing certain interests**.** The DDM, therefore, offers an intrinsically interesting case study because, with its 'One Plan, One Budget' approach, it attempts to promote a country-wide consensus in an environment marked by contrasting political and ideological views, inter- and intra-party conflicts, and differing visions on urban and rural developments. Additionally, while it is decentralised to the local sphere of government, as a presidential project, it displays a hierarchical structure consisting of national ministers and deputy ministers. Questions can further be asked whether the DDM represents a process of recentralisation and a changing pattern of local governance.

Indeed, in an opinion piece in *Business Day*, one senior member of the opposition DA, Cilliers Brink, wrote:

> "The model is a way of subordinating the constitutional autonomy of local and provincial government, and while it doesn't propose a change to the Constitution, it foreshadows it." (Brink, 2021)

This study, therefore, explored the following three major themes evident in academic literature as they relate to decentralised governance; the first theme is the complexities of decentralised governance. In particular, the study sought to explore the institutional failures of vertically divided authorities, with a focus on the DDM. According to Phillimore (2013), in federations and decentralised systems, vertical relationships occur between the federal government and its constituent units. The second theme is accountability. Decentralisation alters

relationships of accountability between citizens and elected politicians. In a situation like this, blame-shifting may occur because policy failure at one level may affect another level of the state. Citizens may not know which level should be apportioned blame for these policy failures. Conversely, both central and sub-national units may claim credit when policy outcomes are favourable (Treisman, 2002; Faguet, 2011; Resnick, 2014). The last theme is intergovernmental relations, which has, in the main, proven difficult in practice and has even been blamed for impeding the delivery of services because of the multiplicity of actors and stakeholders involved.

This study adopted the DDM to decode the complexities of decentralised governance in South Africa. Like the ISRDP, the DDM is a multi-sphere programme and aims to integrate governance institutions through planning and budgeting to fulfil its mandate. The appointment of political champions at the three spheres of government creates a layered, complex relationship and differential capacity of actors to exercise power. To explore these complexities, the study focused on the three spheres of government, that is, national, provincial, and local government located in the provinces of Gauteng and the Western Cape. The national Department featured in the study is in the province of Gauteng, while the sub-national governments are in the province of the Western Cape. Officials from the three spheres of government were interviewed to gain better insights on the topic.

2.2.5. Profile of the Gauteng province

Gauteng is the smallest of South Africa's nine provinces, covering an area of 16 936 km² or approximately 1.4% of the total land area of South Africa. It is bordered by the Free State, North West, Limpopo, and Mpumalanga provinces. While being the smallest province, it is also the most populous, being home to 13 399 725 people, which is 24.1% of the national population. Gauteng lies on the highest part of the interior plateau on the rolling plains of South Africa's Highveld. Its provincial capital is Johannesburg, and it is also home to South Africa's capital city, Pretoria, as well as the East Rand, West Rand, and Vaal

areas (Gauteng Municipalities, n.d.). The national Department in the study, like all national government departments, is in the capital, Pretoria.

Gauteng is divided into three metropolitan municipalities, the City of Ekurhuleni, the City of Johannesburg, and the City of Tshwane, as well as two district municipalities, which are further subdivided into six local municipalities, see Figure 5. It is also the only province with more than one metropolitan municipality. The two district municipalities are Sedibeng and West Rand. According to Statistics South Africa (2014), the 2011 Census revealed that most of the residents in Gauteng reside in the three metropolitan areas, with the bulk residing in the City of Johannesburg.

The provincial capital, Johannesburg, covers an area of 1 645 km^2. Also known as Jozi, Jo'burg, or Egoli, it is the largest city in South Africa (COGTA, 2020). Controversially marketed as a "World Class African City", Abrahams et al. (2018, p, 62) state that it also has the "odious title of being the most unequal city in South Africa and the world. It is a city of contrast, an eclectic mix of wealthy people, the poor, migrants, immigrants, and refugees". The 'World Class African City' formula has been criticised for bringing Western experiences to South Africa (Didier et al., 2012; Sihlongonyane, 2015).

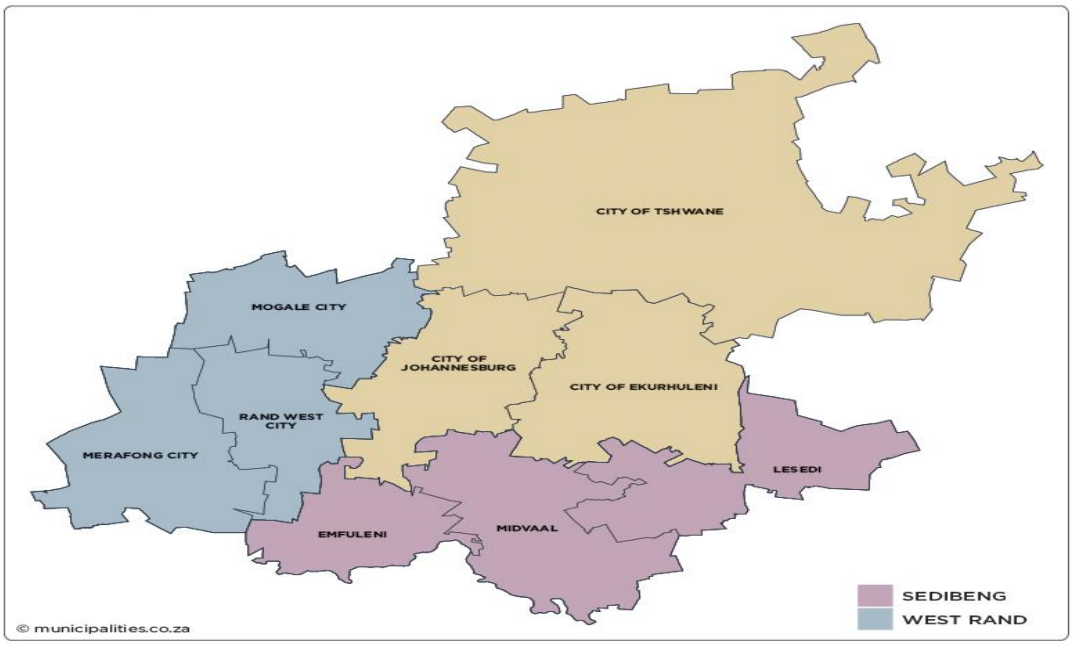


Figure 5: The province of Gauteng showing the three metropolitans and the two district municipalities

Source: Gauteng Municipalities, n.d.

Gauteng continues to serve as the economic engine room of the country and the subcontinent, contributing more than 34.8% of the country's gross domestic product. Gauteng is the financial capital of South Africa and the centre of its commercial business and industrial sectors. According to Gauteng Municipalities (n.d.), the most significant sectors contributing to gross domestic product are finance, real estate, business services, manufacturing, and general government services. Gauteng is also the financial services capital of Africa. More than 70 foreign banks have their head offices in the province, as do at least the same number of South African banks, stockbrokers, and insurance companies.

The largest gold and diamond mining houses In Gauteng are in Johannesburg, with the largest being Anglo American and De Beers. Gold mining constitutes 80% of Gauteng's mineral production output (Gauteng Municipalities, n.d). Politically, the province is governed by the national governing ANC, while the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality has frequently changed political hands.

2.2.6. Profile of the Western Cape province

The Western Cape is situated on the southern edge of the African continent between the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. It is bordered by the Northern Cape and Eastern Cape provinces. The Western Cape's natural beauty makes the province one of the most renowned tourist attractions in the world. To the north, it stretches deep into the Karoo plateau, while the West Coast is extremely dry (Western Cape Municipalities, n.d.).

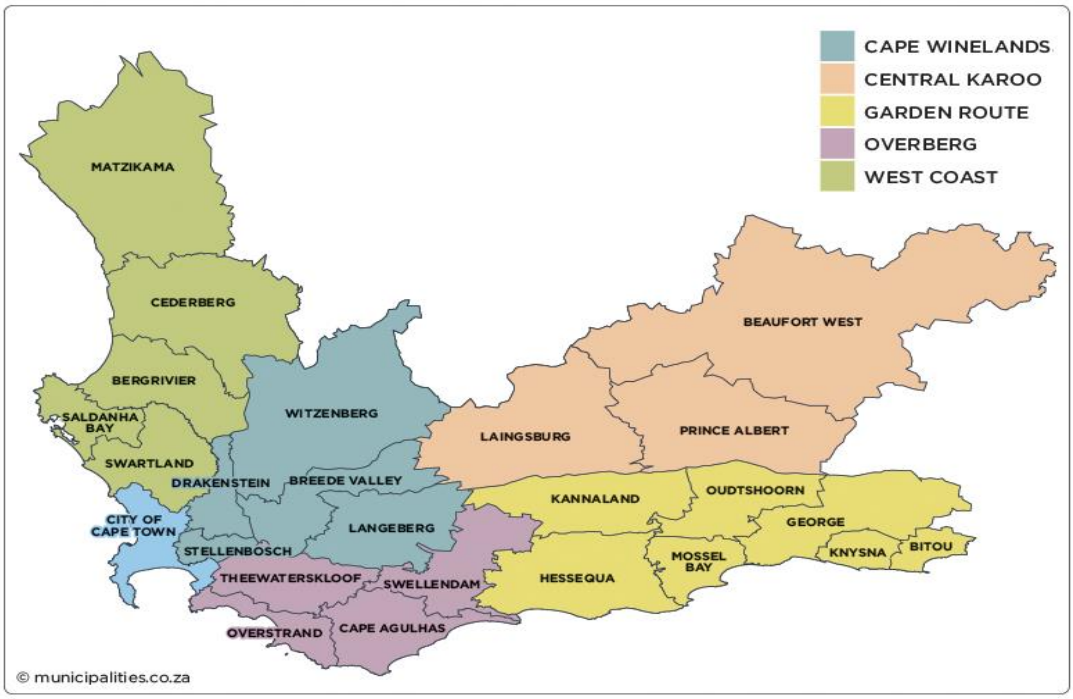


Figure 6: The Western Cape showing major towns and the five district municipalities

Source: Western Cape Municipalities, n.d.

The Western Cape covers an area of 129 462 km² and has a population of 6 279 730. It is the fourth-largest province in South Africa by surface area and the fourth largest in terms of population. Its capital is Cape Town. The Western Cape consists of the City of Cape Town Municipality and five district municipalities: Cape Winelands, Central Karoo, Garden Route, Overberg, and West Coast, see Figure 6. The district municipalities are further subdivided into 24 local municipalities. Other major cities and towns include George, Knysna, Paarl, Swellendam, Oudtshoorn, Stellenbosch, Worcester, Mossel Bay and Strand.

The Western Cape is rich in agriculture and fisheries. The province also has a well-established industrial and business base and the lowest unemployment rate in the country. Sectors such as finance, real estate, ICT, retail, and tourism have shown substantial growth and are the main contributors to the regional economy. Many of South Africa's major insurance companies and banks are based in the Western Cape. Most of the country's petroleum companies and

the largest segment of the printing and publishing industry are in Cape Town (Western Cape Municipalities, n.d).

The provincial capital, Cape Town, is one of four coastal metropolitan municipalities in South Africa, with a coastline that stretches some 294 km. It is South Africa's second-largest economic centre and second most populous city after Johannesburg (COGTA, 2020). It is the only Category A (metropolitan) municipality in the Western Cape province. It is the legislative capital city of South Africa, where the national parliament is located. While the national government and the other eight provinces are governed by the ANC, the Western Cape province and the City of Cape Town are both run by the opposition DA. The study was conducted in the provincial Local Government department located in the City of Cape Town. Another study was conducted in the Garden Route District Municipality.

Thus, both the Western Cape province and the City of Cape have fallen into the trend of "vertically divided authorities" (Resnick, 2014, p. S4). They are also a disparate manifestation of the decentralisation process and how problematic vertically divided authorities become for service delivery (Cameron, 2014; Resnick, 2014). Furthermore, the Western Cape province seems to define itself structurally outside the national norm. While the other eight provinces follow the national norm in naming conventions for their provincial departments, for example, its provincial department responsible for local municipalities is referred to as the 'Department of Local Government' instead of the 'Department of Cooperative Governance'. Its MECs are referred to as Provincial Ministers. It is for this exceptionalism that the Western Cape province and the City of Cape Town make an interesting case study in the context of the DDM. Both Cameron (2014) and Resnick (2014) highlight how the nationally governing ANC has attempted to subvert the opposition-ruled City of Cape Town.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the various epochs of South Africa's history, reflecting on the various modes of governance. Such reflections have assisted in understanding the influence of historical factors on current and future

governance arrangements. The chapter has shown the cyclical patterns of governance in South Africa through different political regimes. This sets the tone for a critical analysis of the DDM in Chapter 8 of the thesis. It also reveals how governance arrangements are aligned with the ideological disposition of political leaders. This could open doors for future studies on forms and types of government, especially when one considers that the political actors in this example all belong to the same political party.

The chapter also argues that political choices at CODESA laid the foundation for continuities in governance and have thus essentially postponed "the foundational destruction of the previous order of things under the new terrain of liberal constitutionalism" (Reddy, 2015, p. 150). This thesis argues further that a comparative study on the varying forms of decentralisation reforms in Africa is needed. In the South African context, unlike other African countries, decentralisation has been built on the template of the old apartheid regime through comprises at CODESA. This, in turn, resulted in varying degrees of its implementation, thus constituting what former president Thabo Mbeki called a "country of two nations".[4]

The chapter also provided an overview of the structure of the German Federal government on which the structure of the South African state structure is said to be based. Various scholarly debates on the structures of both countries were discussed. The DDM, which has been adopted by this study to explain the dynamics of decentralised governance in South Africa, was briefly discussed. Finally, the case-study provinces of Gauteng and the Western Cape were profiled to give the political context and insights.

The following chapter provides the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guide the study. The first three sections are related. The first section reviews theories on the state. The state centres this thesis because it is a "weighty actor" (Skocpol, 1997). The second section discusses how the state fragments into composite units, federal, and decentralised structures. Section 3.1.3

[4] Statement by Deputy President Thabo Mbeki at the opening of the debate in the National Assembly, Cape Town, 29 May 1998, South African government

conceptualises governance as a related concept of the state. In section 3.1.4, a brief overview of IGRs and cooperation is discussed. Multi-level systems of government are underpinned by IGRs. Power is the currency of politics. This is captured in section 3.1.5, while the last three sections discuss the African experience on decentralisation, fiscal decentralisation, and the clientelistic aspect of governance. In section 3.2, a conceptual framework is developed from the literature interrogation.

Chapter 3. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

This chapter discusses the frameworks that will be adopted to guide the study. While it is accepted that the state is a 'weighty actor', see (Skocpol, 1997), decentralised and federal systems have produced competing centres of power and contrasting political cultures, which rendered intergovernmental relations incompetent. Thus, if the state is considered a 'weighty actor', then the actions of sub-national authorities are contingent on the actions of the central state. For instance, in their quest to achieve their goals, central states can mandate sub-state actors to perform or cease certain actions through regulations. And as Conlan (2014) indicates, central government funding can be withdrawn when the recipients of such funding do not comply. To explore the topic of this thesis, it is important to critically interrogate the theoretical arguments on themes such as decentralisation, state, governance, and intergovernmental relations as related concepts.

The chapter builds on Chapter 2, which outlined the historical epochs of South Africa through three different modes of governance: centralist, balkanisation, and recentralisation. The study draws from the literature on multi-level studies and thus situates itself within several themes: decentralisation, governance, and related concepts. To problematise decentralised governance, this study also draws from various literature on IGRs, power, clientelism, and neo-patrimonialism. The study links several concepts and demonstrates how they are related. The state is identified as a locus of power in decentralisation and a key factor influencing decision-making processes. The notion of power is employed to lay the foundation for an in-depth analysis of the power interplay, contrasting political cultures, and multiple power centres.

The theoretical part of the study thus interrogates theories on the state and multi-level systems of government, such as federalism, decentralisation, governance, and IGRs. After interrogation of existing knowledge from the literature and findings from the empirical data, the above-mentioned concepts were found to be inadequate to explain the complex nature of multi-level systems of government. Thus, the concept of power was also adopted as an

analytical framework. The conceptual framework focuses on themes such as decentralisation, recentralisation, and power.

Federalism and decentralisation politically fragment the central state as it shares its power with sub-national units. Thus, decentralisation reforms cannot be understood without a clear analysis of the state. Indeed, Skocpol (1997, p. 3) argued that "studies have considered states weighty actors and probed how states affect political and social processes and their patterned relationships and social gaps. This thesis thus centres the state as a 'weighty actor'. The thesis explores how the state, as a powerful political entity, is, nonetheless, able to fragment into sub-national polities through federalism and decentralisation.

In her article, *Bringing the State Back in: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research,* Skocpol centres her argument on the autonomy of the state and asserts that the interest of the state is at odds with that of the social classes. In other words, there is a divergence between the interests of the state and the interests of the social classes. But as Li (2002) has pointed out, Skocpol seems not to make the distinction between the state's administrative power and its territorial power. Thus, Li argues that Skocpol's views suggest that the state and government are one and the same thing because the interests of the state and state bureaucrats who run the administrative apparatus of the state intersect. Thus, from this point of view, state fragmentation is merely the dismantling of the centralised administrative organisations that enhance the ultimate interests of the state bureaucrats. This argument, according to Li (2002), however, ignores the territorial dimension of the state. Change in the size and shape of individual states has always been linked with the rise and fall of state power. While the dominant narrative has been that federalism and decentralisation limit state disintegration and lessen opportunities for secession, Li (2002) argues that new evidence suggests that federalism and decentralisation create opportunities for state disintegration and secession. Citing the cases of Yugoslavia and China, Li (2002) argues that, despite the country being decentralised, Yugoslavia nevertheless disintegrated. On the other hand, a highly centralised China survived a massive political crisis despite all the predictions of its demise. Li proceeds to indicate that some scholars

explain Yugoslavia's disintegration by pointing to its "unbalanced state-society relation" (2002, p. 150), that is, too much decentralisation of the centre-regional relations created a destabilising effect.

This analysis is important for this thesis because it links with one of the key findings of this thesis, that a process of recentralisation is taking place in South Africa, as noted in Chapter 8 (see also Riedl & Dickovick, 2014). In recent times, the opposition, the DA, has been agitating for more power to be devolved to the provincial government of the Western Cape, which is the only province under its political control. Further, a new political entity, the Cape Independence, has been advocating for the total secession of the Western Cape from the rest of South Africa. Could this new shift to recentralise suggest efforts by the South African state to prevent secession by the anti-central state movements? Li (2002) asserts that anti-state movements have rarely been successful when the central state power is highly effective. Indeed, as the thesis has argued, see Chapter 7, for instance, political actors can exercise power outside formal, coded institutional structures such as the Constitution.

Furthermore, notwithstanding Rhodes' (1990) assertion that the state has been hollowed out through federalism and decentralisation, this study agrees with Pierre and Peters (2019) that the demise of the state is highly exaggerated. This is demonstrated by the presence of the central state in all spheres of governance. Indeed, as Skocpol (1997, p. 4) noted, "the pluralists and structure-functionalist perspective predominant in political science and sociology considered the state an old-fashioned concept associated with dry and dusty legal-formalist studies of nationally particular constitutional principles". As such, alternative scientific compatible concepts, such as government, were, instead, viewed as an arena within which economic interest groups or normative social movements engaged one another to shape the creation of public policy decisions. Those decisions were more focused on the allocative role of government. Thus, research agendas centred more on societal inputs to government and the distributive effects of governmental outputs. According to Skocpol (1997), in this environment, government itself was not taken seriously as an independent actor. However, the role of

government leaders in public policy decisions has demonstrated that government can take initiatives beyond the demands of social groups or the electorates. Thus, government and its agencies play a prominent role in policy decisions. The following sub-section presents theoretical discussions on the state.

3.1. Conceptualising the state

Defining the state clearly is difficult, if not impossible. As Jessop (2016) observed, this difficulty is caused by the long period of the existence of the state. Indeed, the German philosopher Nietzsche declared that “all concepts in which an entire process is semiotically concentrated defy definition; only something which has no history can be defined” (Nietzsche et al., 2007, p. 53). In other words, according to Nietzsche (2007), a concept that cannot be fixed, or traced to a particular reference point, is difficult to define. While the state is universal, for instance, in how government exercise its regulative role in the affairs of citizens, it is a hard concept to grasp (Held, 2000). For Ake (1985, p. 105), “the concept of state remains one of the most difficult in the social sciences”. “Rich in meaning and beset with controversy, it appears to become more elusive still with every attempt to clarify it” (p. 105). For Weber, “one can define the modern state sociologically only in terms of the specific means peculiar to it…namely, the use of physical force” (Weber, 1965, p. 3).

Sociological theorists of yesteryears, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber, offer different perspectives on the nature of the state. According to Royce (2015), from a Marxist point of view, the state is nothing but a vehicle for the interests of the ruling elite. On the other hand, Weber defines the state in terms of the material basis of its power, that is, its increasing monopoly over violence, while Durkheim defines it in terms of its regulative function, (Royce, 2015).

Marx’s conception of the state

According to Royce (2015), in his early writings, Marx’s writings reflected the disconnection between society and the state while also observing the

fraternizing between the political and economic forces (Royce, 2015). From his writings, one can observe the basic principles of his theory on the state. As Royce further points out, Marx was critical of the tendency to blame poverty and other social malaise, not on the victims themselves but on some failing government administration or ineffective policy. He critiqued the tendency to reflect society's poor socio-economic conditions solely within the realm of politics and thus failing to fully recognise the root cause of the problem. Thus, for Marx, the real cause of societal problems cannot be attributed to an uncaring government. Rather, the mere existence of the institution of the state which is dissociated from people's day-to-day lives while fully embedded in and dependent on a sectarian civil society is to blame.

Marx locates his theory of the modern state within the capitalism framework. He asserts that the state exists within the economic functioning of society, and thus, is not independent from it (ibid). Rather, the objectives it pursues and the policies it implements are dependent on society's economic base. Thus, "it is not the state that shapes economic life, but economic life that shape[s] the state" (Royce, 2015, p. 207). As Royce further indicates, from Marx's writings, "two theories can be deduced": "the ruling theory of the state, and the parasite theory of the state" (ibid). The first theory, argued in the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels (2012, p. 15) view the state as a creature of the bourgeoisie, "nothing but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie". Thus, from a Marxist point of view, the state represents the interests of the ruling elite. In the second theory, Marx depicts the parasitic nature of the state independent from class interests. However, in neither of these depictions can the state be seen to be protecting or being an ally of the working class (Royce, 2015).

Durkheim's conceptualisation of the state

While Durkheim also defines the state by its functions, he envisions the state playing three key roles: "the state as the brain of society, the liberator of the individual, and the organ of justice" (Royce, 2015, p. 215).

The state as the brain of society

According to Durkheim, in (Palumbo & Scott, 2003), as society becomes more complex and differentiated, there is a need for an intense coordination of the whole by a higher organ. The state, in this instance, refers to officials who act "as agents of the sovereign authority…who have the job of thinking about public affairs" (Royce, 2015, p. 215). In this conception, the state distinguishes itself from other agencies which simply executive decisions and orders. As Royce further articulates, for Durkheim, "the state proper, standing at the apex of the larger sphere of government is essentially a deliberate body, the brain of society, the very organ of social thought" (ibid).

Durkheim's theory of the state thus rests on two different collective distinctive cognitive lives: First, "there is the broader collective consciousness, the amorphous and muddled mentality of the larger public" (ibid). Entrenched in tradition and habit, this consciousness comprises society's unarticulated beliefs and views that have not been subjected to rigorous scrutiny. Second, there is a wholly articulated, coherent, and sensible governmental consciousness of the state. This consciousness is a concerted reflection by government officials and is informed by ideas derived from public deliberations. Thus, the role of the state is to articulate the often deficient and unintelligible ideas of society by unleashing its intellectual prowess that guides the direction society must take.

The state as the liberator of the individual

According to Royce (2015), pre-modern societies were a homogenous collective subjected to religious authority and, therefore, lacked individualism. Over time, however "the individual gradually emerged from the undifferentiated mass and becomes an autonomous centre of activity" (Royce, 2015, p. 216). As Royce further explains, for Durkheim, simultaneously with this development, the role of the state also expanded; "its functions multiplied, its aims proliferated, and it intervenes in more and more areas of social life" (p. 216). Thus, a seemingly paradox situation emerged: "the simultaneous increase in the freedom of the individual and the power of the state" (ibid). For Durkheim, this combination of individualism and statism is not contradictory nor projects

the state as a despotic institution. Rather, Durkheim views the state as the liberator of the people. He asserts that the stronger the state becomes, the more individual liberty increases. This is achieved in three ways: through legislating individual rights, protecting individuals from tyranny, and enhancing the dignity of the individual "as a moral and practical idea" (Royce, 2015, p. 216). Thus, for Durkheim, a strong state is necessary for individual liberty and autonomy.

The state as the organ of social justice

According to Royce (2015), Durkheim also envisions the state as an agent for social justice. For Durkheim, the state, in its dual orientation, outwardly pursues militaristic objectives, such as expanding its territory and conquering competing nations. These objectives are pursued in less advanced societies. However, in its inward orientation, the state pursues the interior affairs of society, prioritising moral purposes. These moral objectives, which protect the dignity of the individual, are pursued in more advanced societies. Thus, the state in its obligation, must bring about social justice. For Durkheim, the state holds the moral high ground by "infusing an element of justice into the sphere of economic relations, seeing to it that individuals are treated as they deserve, freed from an unjust and humiliating tutelage" (Royce, 2015, p. 218). Royce proceeds in his analysis of Durkheim's conceptualisation of the state as an organ that brings about justice, and equality into social relations.

Weber's conceptualisation of the state

While Durkheim advocated for individual rights and democracy, in contrast, for Weber, in mass societies, political rule lies in officialdom, as cited in Palumbo & Scott (2003). Thus, in the Weberian model of public administration, society was governed through the imposition of the law and other regulations (Katsamunska, 2016). While Durkheim defines the state by its regulative function, Weber defines it in terms of the material basis of its power, that is, its increasing monopoly over violence. "The modern state is a compulsory association which organises domination. It has been successful in seeking to monopolize the legitimate use of force as a means of domination within a

territory" (Weber, 1965, p. 8). While acknowledging that violence is not the only means of the state, nor is such means exclusive to the state, "force is a means specific to the state" (Weber, 1965, p. 3). The state distinguishes itself from other institutions due to its monopoly of the legitimate use of violence. When this monopoly is threatened, the very existence of the state is also threatened.

Weber, acknowledged as a contributor to the structural orientation of the state, introduced the concept of a bureaucratic state. He accentuated the importance of the administrative apparatus of the state and its professionalisation. For Weber, "the state is a relation of men dominating men, a relationship supported by means of legitimate, or considered to be legitimate, violence" (1965, p. 4). His view on democracy is that all citizens can undertake public affairs, yet he also acknowledges that this is only feasible in small and homogeneous political communities (Royce, 2015). Thus, he believes that participatory democracy, even in limited form, is just an idealised notion in the modern era.

Weber's theories focus on the politics of hierarchy, command, control, obedience to official rule, and the role played by the bureaucratic machine within the state. Yet, it is also at odds with the complexity of contemporary dispersed governance arrangements. His conception of the state is being challenged by multi-level systems of governance and networks. Governance theorists are of the view that there is a major political and institutional change from government to governance. As Rakodi (2003), for example, indicates, challenges to traditional public sector approaches to urban government have impacted various aspects of governance and management. These changes, for example, have impacted decision-making processes, political arrangements, accountability, and how roles and responsibilities are allocated between public sector agencies and other service providers.

Indeed, while Weber emphasised the monopolisation of violence by the state, Mahatma Gandhi wished for a society that is stronger than the state (cited in Uniyal, 1988). This view is at odds with Durkheim's beliefs that the more the state becomes stronger, the more individual liberty will increase. According to Uniyal, Gandhi regarded the state as a "soulless machine…[that] can never be

weaned away from violence". Gandhi believed that to protect man from the "awesome might of the state", man should "not merely fall back into the old idea of individualism and individual rights. This is because "man is not born to live in isolation but is essentially dependent" (p. 37). Rather, man should partake in the life of the community.

However, Gandhi differentiates between a nation and a community. He proceeds to explain that an "entity called a nation is not exactly a community in whose affairs ordinary men may meaningfully hope to participate" (ibid). Such participation is only possible in a relatively small and manageable social entity, such as a village, for example. However, this participation can easily become an empty formality if the small social entity itself is divided into oppressors and the oppressed and is, therefore, not a true community. Or, if the small community is internally cohesive but lacks autonomy, and the decisions it takes are without significance for its own life, then it is also just an empty formality. According to Uniyal (1988), this is the principle underlying Gandhi's conception of decentralisation and of village republics. Uniyal proceeds to analyse Gandhi's exposition on decentralisation, further stating that to "treat Gandhi's dream of decentralisation as a mere formula or constitutional imperative to be pushed through regardless of actual and prevailing circumstances, is to convert a great idea into a deceitful slogan" (Uniyal, 1988, p. 38).

According to Li (2002), while the state is conceptualised as a "territorial power, [which] therefore, stands on its own", the state is also "more likely to fragment, or conversely, to consolidate" territorially (Li, 2002, p. 141). Thus, to understand why the state is more likely to fragment, Li (2002, p. 141) indicates that "we should move beyond the conventional concept of the administrative breakdown of the state". As this thesis seeks to critically analyse decentralised governance, it is imperative to go beyond the "conventional concept of the administrative breakdown of the state" (ibid) by examining the concepts of federalism and decentralisation. This sets the foundation for analysing other related concepts such as governance, intergovernmental relations, and power.

3.1.1. Cooperative federalism

This section presents existing debates on federalism and decentralisation as structures of governance. While the Constitution establishes South Africa as a unitary state, various local and international literature refers to the country as a federal or quasi-federal state. Hence the relevance of the discussion of federalism in this study. As also indicated by Herath (2009), decentralisation originated from federalism.

According to Conlan and Laboureau (2014), political systems such as federalism and decentralisation are usually adopted by countries characterised by considerable geographic, ethnic, cultural, and economic diversity. Therefore, such countries tend to be ambivalent about whether they constitute one political community or several. To expand further on this argument hereunder follows Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities".

"Imagined communities"

In his seminal work, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Benedict Anderson (2006) provides an account of the history of nationalism through different eras and geographies. Anderson defines the nation as an "imagined political community–- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (2006, p. 6).

It is "imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (ibid). The nation "is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, as if elastic, boundaries beyond which lie other nations. It is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm" (ibid).

Finally, it is imagined as a community because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. However, even if nations are

imagined, they are real to the extent that they are prepared to kill for such a nation, “not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings” (Anderson, 2006, p. 7).

Though individuals may not physically see one another, communication through reading books and newspapers creates a sense of community as an individual observes an exact replica of his own newspaper being read by others. Anderson describes reading daily newspapers as a “mass ceremony”, which, though “performed in silent privacy, is being replicated simultaneously” by many other people “whose existence he is confident, yet whose identity he has not the slightest notion” (Anderson, 2006, p. 35).

On the nation and nationalism, Anderson argues that the nation did not exist before nationalism. Rather, the nation is the product of modern nationalism. Anderson also challenges claims that the nation was rooted in ancient history and did not come about spontaneously. Rather, the nation is the product of modern political and economic interests.

Politically, states are usually structured as federal, unitary or hybrid, which is a combination of the two systems. According to André (2014, p. 87), there is much confusion and misrepresentation about federalism within both the academic and political fields. One of the misrepresentations is presenting federalism as “the process leading to a centralization of political power, binding several states into a superstate that would swallow all the political authorities into one giant vortex, a solitary political construction wholly controlled by an all-powerful central government”. Rather, as argued by André (2014), federalism upholds decentralisation by reinforcing the powers and rights of governments nearest to communities. Decentralisation, therefore, promotes democratic values of citizens by maximising popular participation in political affairs.

As André (2014, p. 87) further points out, federalism, which is derived from the Latin words “*fides* (trust) and *foedus* (pact, agreement), implies a cooperative relation between several entities with common goals, which leads to a political union with a central government that coexist side-by-side with concurrent power structures inherent to the members that form such a union”. Therefore, political

decisions do not originate from a single superstructure but instead come from a matrix of connected power entities that are permanently associated with one another.

According to Erk (2014), “federalism and decentralisation are conceptually distinct from one another. In federalism, the existence of the constituent units and their autonomous powers are constitutionally entrenched; that is, they cannot be created, merged, or abolished by ordinary legislation passed by the central government. Decentralisation, on the other hand, is an act of the centre as it devolves some of its powers to regional and local governments” (p. 536). Thus, such powers can be revoked by the central government by a simple regulation or directive.

Rondinelli (1983, p. 31) defines decentralisation as: “the transfer of planning, decision-making or management functions from the central government and its agencies to field organizations, subordinate units of government, semi-autonomous public corporations, area-wide or regional development organizations, specialized functional authorities or non-governmental organizations”.

Rondinelli then categorised four forms of decentralisation, distinguished by the degree of authority and power or the scope of functions that the government of a sovereign state transfers to or shares with other organisations within its jurisdiction (Table 4).

Table 5: Different forms of decentralisation

Concept	Description
Deconcentration	Involves the transfer of functions within the central government hierarchy through shifting the workload from central ministries to field officers, creating field agencies or shifting the responsibility to local administrative units that are part of the central government structure.
Delegation	Involves the transfer of functions to regional or functional development authorities, parastatal organisations or special project implementation units that often operate free of central government regulations and act as an agent for the state in performing prescribed functions with the ultimate responsibility for them remaining with the central government.
Devolution	Involves the transfer of functioning or decision-making authority to legally incorporate local governments, such as states, provinces, districts or municipalities.
Transfer	To non-government institutions involves shifting responsibilities for activities from the public sector to private or quasi-public organisations that are not part of the government structure.

Source: Author's design based on Rondinelli, 1989

According to De Visser and Chigwata (2022), local government can be regarded as a form of decentralisation if it meets two basic requirements: it is democratically elected and, therefore, accountable to the local electorate. Local councils appointed by the central government are not responsible for their electorate. Further, local government must have a measure of autonomy to make policy decisions on matters of local concern. Local governments are usually not protected by a constitution but are often referred to as creatures of statutes.

There are many conflicting theories and criticisms of federalism and decentralisation. Indeed, multi-level systems of government, such as federalism and decentralisation, are inherently unstable and go through cyclical patterns of decentralisation and recentralisation (Conlan & Laboureau, 2014; Erk, 2014; Saunders, 2019). According to Conlan and Laboureau, such systems are usually adopted by countries characterised by considerable

geographic, ethnic, cultural, and economic diversity. Moreover, maintaining such systems requires a political balance of power between central and regional levels of government. However, Conlan and Laboureau (2014) explain that such a balance of power is continually challenged by social, economic, technological, and political changes. Importantly, such changes tend to produce patterns of decentralisation and centralisation. For Vieira, cited in Oliveira (2018, p. 4), in the United States context, these factors are dynamic and not static, the speed of which has led to a "complex, diversified and frenetic government". According to Vieira, public administration in the United States has become complex "almost beyond the reach of human understanding" (ibid).

Indeed, referring to the United States of America's federalism, Wildavsky (1985, p. 42) has stated, "From the beginning until this very day, there have been two classic criticism[s] of the structure of American federalism: it is too strong or too weak. Either the structure is a sham (federalism as a front for unitary state), or the structure is stultifying (federalism as an obstacle to effective government)."

Much of the debates and arguments go further and question the quality of governments within a federal and decentralised setting. According to Treisman (2002) and Faguet (2014), for instance, some argue that decentralisation should improve the quality of government by bringing officials closer to citizens, encouraging competition between sub-national governments for resources, and facilitating the fulfilment of the diverse interests of locals. Other improved benefits of decentralisation are efficiency, governance, equity, development and poverty reduction (Erk, 2014).

However, there seems to be no consensus on the perceived benefits of decentralisation and federalism. According to Cepaluni (2015), an increasing body of literature shows that federalism encourages inequality among sub-national units within federal states. This is because of the varied implementation of public policies by sub-national units. As Wildavsky (1985, p. 43) famously stated, "Uniformity is antithetical to federalism." According to Wildavsky (1985), the existence of states within a federal system free to differ

from one another and the central government inevitably leads to differentiation and, therefore, varied implementation of policies.

Additionally, Treisman (2002) argues that empirical work on the benefits of decentralisation is inconclusive. Some results seem to suggest that problems lie in coordination among the different levels of government. While some types of decentralisation may improve governance, others may weaken it. Treisman (2002) finds that perceived corruption is higher in federally structured states. Moreover, statistically, states with more tiers of government tend to have higher perceived corruption and may do a worse job of providing public goods and services.

Treisman (2002) explains that the reason for this variation is the way states are structured, that is, the degree of political decentralisation. Other reasons are the different definitions of decentralisation, as adopted by different studies and theories. In explaining these variations, Treisman (2002, p. 2-3) presents five different definitions of decentralisations:

- Structural decentralisation refers to the number of tiers of government. The more tiers there are, the more decentralised the system.
- Decision decentralisation focuses on the degree of issues on which sub-national governments can decide autonomously, that is, without fear of being overruled by higher-tier governments.
- Resource decentralisation refers to how government resources, such as revenues and manpower, are distributed between central and sub-national tiers.
- Electoral decentralisation refers to the method by which sub-national officials are nominated. If sub-national officials are chosen locally, for example, by election or appointment by local communities, the system is more decentralised than if local officials are appointed by the central government.
- Institutional decentralisation refers to the degree to which sub-national communities or their representatives have formal rights within the procedures of central decision-making. Countries in which states have

significant veto powers over central legislation via their representatives are more institutionally decentralised.

Furthermore, Treisman (2002) advances five arguments as to why, in specific contexts, decentralisation might affect the quality of governments. For example, the size of the country. Large countries will have more difficulties monitoring officials in far-flung regions and will thus exhibit decision decentralisation. In this instance, the ability of central government to monitor local officials will be greatly diminished. As noted by Rousseau (in Treisman, 2002, p. 3), in large countries, “the rulers, overburdened with business, see nothing for themselves, clerks govern the state”.

The second argument revolves around vertical competition within the state. If several levels of government share the authority to regulate the same environment and the levels are not subordinate to each other, as in South Africa, for instance, and do not collude, then the level of corruption will be higher than if just one government or a coordinated group of them had this authority.

Thirdly, horizontal competition for mobile factors. Treisman explains that when residents or businesses can move freely between regions, this could pressure the regional or local governments to provide local public goods and services efficiently. If local officials steal or waste resources, for example, residents and businesses will move to other towns or regions where government is more efficient, reducing the tax base of the less efficient governments. In South Africa, for instance, this phenomenon is known as “semigration” (Lightstone, 2021) and mostly involves people moving from the province of Gauteng to the Western Cape. Various reasons have been provided for this phenomenon, for example, perceived better service delivery by municipalities in the Western Cape than in other parts of the country (ibid)**.**

The fourth argument centres on more veto powers for sub-national units over central policy. This is related to institutional decentralisation; that is, when the rights of sub-national governments are entrenched in the Constitution, increasing the veto rights of sub-national units in the determination of central policy. Such institutional decentralisation is a key feature of political institutions

in federal states. Treisman (2002) notes that empirical evidence exists that suggests major changes in central policy are less frequent in federal states. This may slow down and restrict central policy initiatives or introduce new central programmes to provide public goods or services.

The final argument focuses on local government corruption and is linked to the resource decentralisation concept. Treisman suggests that local governments and officials may be more susceptible to corruption than their central counterparts. This can be attributed to the fact that there is more intimacy and frequency of interaction between private individuals and officials. Interest groups may be more cohesive at the local level, leading to greater state capture and the substitution of private transfers for public services. As Rhodes (1997) stated, it is the local level of government where private interests are realised. In South Africa, for instance, Bhorat et al. (2017) observed a symbiotic relationship comprising a shadowy network of corrupt brokers and constitutional bodies that resulted in the capture of the state. Political power has increasingly shifted from the constitutional state to the shadowy state that pursued its own interests at the expense of citizens.

Consistent with Treisman's views, Fenwick (2010), referring to the Latin American federations, argues that central government policy outcomes are unlikely to be realised within a federal system unless some institutional configurations take place. Varying political, institutional, and structural factors impact the ability of central governments to implement their preferred policy objectives and programmes.

Fenwick (2010) suggests three institutional variables that can constrain or encourage national governments to realise their policy objectives through collaborations with local sub-units, see also Table 5:

- **The constitutional recognition of sub-national levels of government.** Direct national-local collaboration on policy implementation becomes feasible when municipalities are recognised by the national Constitution as being distinct from the provinces. By

distinguishing municipalities as a distinct actor, a dynamic intergovernmental relationship is built.

- **Political dynamics.** A decentralised federal system requires a system of intergovernmental cooperation to successfully implement national policy objectives that contribute to "spreading clusters of rights" across its territories (Fenwick, 2010, p. 158). The political dynamics of a decentralised system contribute to how much political will can be expected to reach a policy objective. Majoritarian political dynamics, for example, are characterised by a dominant executive, single-party majority cabinets and weak opposition parties or exhibit an integrated federal party. Fenwick (2010) explains that an integrated federal party is one in which politicians at one level of government have an organisational relationship with politicians at other levels of government. However, non-majoritarian political dynamics strive for consensus and are characterised by executive power sharing in broad multi-party governance. In this context, ideological and partisan ownership of policies is reduced (Fenwick, 2010; Obeng-Odoom, 2017). According to Maseng (2014), similar political dynamics exist in the South African context. While the institutional and legal frameworks are democratic, the one-party dominance in municipalities overshadows processes meant to be democratic.
- **Rules regulating sub-national finances.** Less attention has been paid to how sub-national finances affect the political will of sub-national levels of government to implement policies (Arretche, 2010; Fenwick, 2010; Gervasoni, 2010; Lecours & Béland, 2010).

Table 6: Variables that impede or encourage national-local collaboration

Institutional variables		**Proposition**
National constitutional recognition of sub-national levels of government	Recognition of state/provincial autonomy (status of local units is ambiguous)	Municipalities are creatures of the states and/ or provinces. Direct policy collaboration between the central government and municipalities is *de jure* impeded.
	Municipalities are recognised as a distinct level of government	Direct national-local policy collaboration is *de jure* feasible. Two-level federal game becomes a three-level game.
Political dynamics	Majoritarian political dynamics	A vertically integrated party system impedes the political feasibility of direct national-local policy collaboration that circumvents governor intermediation. Such collaboration is *de facto* politically difficult.
	Non-majoritarian political dynamics (presidential coalitions)	A weak, fragmented party system provides incentives for sub-national political elites to seek policy outputs. Direct national-local policy collaboration is *de facto* politically feasible within the context of a race to the top to provide policy.
The rules regulating subnational finances	Market-regulated subnational finances (soft budget constraints)	Governors will overspend where access to external market credit is permissible. Municipalities can be fiscally captured by states and/ or provinces through extending credit. Incentives for direct national-local policy collaboration are impeded.
	Constitutionally regulated subnational finances (hard budget constraints)	Through regulating public policy spending responsibilities and setting subnational budget targets, national-local policy collaboration is fiscally encouraged.

Source: Fenwick, 2010

According to Olowu (2003), one of the most important lessons of successful decentralisation programmes is that democratic decentralisation involves the re-definition of central and local government tasks and resources. This cannot be accomplished without effective intergovernmental relations. The following subsection thus discusses intergovernmental relations and cooperation.

3.1.2. Intergovernmental relations and cooperative governance

One of the earliest advocates of intergovernmental relations, Anderson (cited in Wright, 1974, p. 2), defines the concept as “an important body of activities, or interactions occurring between governmental units of all types and levels within the federal system”. Providing more conceptual and analytical clarity to the concept, Wright (1974) identified five characteristics of intergovernmental relations, stating that firstly, intergovernmental relations occur within a federal system of government, that is, national-local, state-local, national-state-local, and inter-local relations.

Secondly, Wright (1974, p. 2), drawing from Anderson’s definition, argues that intergovernmental relations are “human beings clothed with office who are the real determiners of what the relations between government units will be”. Consequently, the concept of intergovernmental relations must be formulated largely in terms of human relations and human behaviour. Flowing from this argument, Wright states that, in the strictest sense, there are no intergovernmental relations, only human relations among officials in different governing units. Thirdly, officials engage in informally daily, see also Phillimore (2013). The current study explored the informal, uncoded factors and their impact on governance.

Fourthly, intergovernmental relations emphasise the role played by public officials, which typically includes mayors, governors, councillors, and legislators. The distinctive feature of intergovernmental relations is its policy component. The complex political and economic, together with increased social and technological change, have facilitated new power relationships and configurations.

The relations between different levels and types of government, however, are not only in federal states but also in unitary states where decentralisation is regarded as a key factor in national development. According to Phillimore (2013), though intergovernmental relations are notable features of federal political systems, they are important components of any political system with more than one level of government. In other words, no correlation exists

between a government system and the degree of centralisation of intergovernmental relations or the relative power between the various levels of government. Indeed, according to Phillimore (2013), some federal states have become more centralised, while some unitary states have become decentralised. The distinction between federal and unitary states could be attributed to a division of authority and decision-making power. In unitary states, sovereignty is exclusively governed by the central government. According to Hague and Harrop (2010), while sub-national units are able to formulate and implement it, they still need permission from the central government policy.

However, Phillimore (2013) states that "federations are distinct in that their constituent units (that is, states, provinces, etc.) have their existence and minimum competencies protected by a foundational law" (p. 228), for instance, the Constitution, that cannot be overturned by a central government.

Moreover, Phillimore (2013), argues that "rather than regarding IGRs as a team effort in which a country's levels of government strive to achieve common policy outcomes, it cannot be assumed that all actors are on the same side" (p. 230). In particular, the constituent units of government often regard promoting their policy positions and administrative autonomy as more important than national interest or ensuring service delivery across the country. Phillimore (2013) further states that intergovernmental relations tend to be paternalistic where the Executive and politicians play a dominant role. These executive IGR mechanisms vary in their level of openness, formality, and effectiveness and have been criticised for undermining public accountability.

In the South African context, the intergovernmental relations Framework Act, which gave effect to Section 41(2) of the Constitution, was promulgated in 2005. It aims to create a framework for better coordination of government activities as directed by the Constitution of 1996 (Mello & Maserumule, 2010; Mbecke & Mokoena, 2016).

While in some countries intergovernmental relations are more informal, the South African system of intergovernmental relations framework is more formal (Murray & Simeon, 2012; Phillimore, 2013). For instance, according to Murray

and Simeon (2012) and also Gumede (2019), in addition to the intergovernmental relations framework, the government introduced various other formal intergovernmental relations structures for better policy collaboration by government spheres and state departments. These are (1) the cluster system introduced in 1999 to deal with sector-specific policies, for example, the social sector for dealing with social policy; (2) the Presidential Working Groups, where non-state actors contribute to policy-making; (3) the Presidential Coordination Committee that ensures coordination between national and provincial governments, in addition to the Ministers-Members of Executive Committee; and (4) the National Council of Provinces, which deals with policies relevant to provinces. Parliament also plays a role in policymaking, with the cabinet being the final authority on all policy decisions (Gumede, 2019).

3.1.3. Conceptualising governance

Literature on governance is very diverse, and it would be wrong to assume that it can be easily subsumed under one definition. As stated by Bevir and Rhodes (2001), current dominant narratives of governance are the neoliberal approach on the one hand and that of governance as networks on the other. Yet, for the purpose of this study, the study will attempt a characterisation of governance as it bears on the theme of this study. The study, therefore, considers governance from a state-centric approach because the role of government in governance is one of the key aspects of governance (Pierre & Peters, 2019).

This study explores governance as both a formal and institutional arrangement, that is, as a structure, a process, and as an analytical framework. Since governance is dynamic, these configurations are important. As Pierre and Peters (2019) indicate, the inclusion, influence, and objectives of different actors may well change across space and time**.** As well as being a "thing", governance offers us a way of viewing the world of politics and the government (Pierre & Peters, 2019, p. 14). Indeed, Schneier (2004) asserted that the governance debate is a modern version of the theory of the state.

As Pierre and Peters (2019, p. 1) further argue, "there is a tendency to confuse governance as an empirical phenomenon with theories about how this

phenomenon operates and can be understood". They propose that the debates on governance move away from output-oriented viewpoints and rather be considered intellectually. This study, therefore, in its conceptual frameworks, focuses on governance, decentralisation, and intergovernmental relations. The synthesis of these concepts will provide a much richer analysis of the DDM. The study uses the DDM as a springboard to explore the institutional architecture of developmental programmes.

According to Asaduzzaman and Virtanen (2016, p. 1), concepts such as "bureaucracy, networks, decentralisation, power, and governance have become hardy perennials" of contemporary public management and public policy. Governance, "which is anchored in the New Public Management and New Public Governance doctrines, has virtually become an unassailable concept in both public management and public policy sciences" (2016, p. 1).

Additionally, governance actors, such as local governments and metropolitan municipalities, raise questions on how they influence intergovernmental relations (Blanco, 2015; Fawcett & Marsh, 2017). According to Fawcett and Marsh (2017), these changes warrant further consideration to fully understand the scale of changes in intergovernmental relations and multi-level systems of governance in general. This perspective can help to draw attention to the extend different networks of actors play in the policy making arena. Considerable literature observes that decentralisation and intergovernmental relations are complex and are a source of much conflict in some cases. According to Fawcett and Marsh (2017), attention should also be paid to economic actors who have subsumed political power which they exercise outside formal institutional frameworks, which poses a risk to democracy. As Mills (2000), in his analysis of "the power elite", argued, economic actors have become more explicitly entrenched in public decision-making circles, while professional politicians have lost out.

Governance is an imprecise term. Attempting to define it is challenging because, as stated by Asaduzzaman and Virtanen (2016), it "has a long conceptual history, multi-faceted meanings, and act as a counterpart of (often

unspoken) alternative for ‘public sector management’ and ‘public sector leadership” (p. 1). For Pierre and Peters (2009) in Katsamunska (2016, p. 134) governance is a “notoriously slippery term”, while Schneider (2004, p. 25) notes that “the secret of its success is clearly due to its conceptual vagueness. It is – with its variety of meanings - compatible with a wide range of social theories”. As Bevir and Rhodes (2001 indicates, concepts are clarified by locating their meanings within other concepts. For example, to clarify and give meaning to governance, it must be located within the framework of the state or government.

According to Katsamunska (2016), the main reason for the increasing popularity of “the governance concept, in contrast to the narrower term of government, is its capacity to include a whole range of institutions and relationships involved in the process of governing” (p. 133). In its traditional form, to ‘govern’ is “to steer, guide, direct, control, regulate, influence or determine”. In particular, according to Rakodi (2003, p. 524), “to govern is to rule with or exercise authority and to administer the affairs of a state”. While, according to Rhodes (2007, p. 4), governance refers to “a new process of governing; or a changed condition of ordered rule; or the new method by which society is governed”. In summary, Rhodes (2007, p. 4) notes that “governance refers to governing with and through networks”.

As also indicated by Kjær (2011, pp. 10-11), “governance is the capacity of government to make and implement policy, in other words, to steer society”. However, “the terms ‘government’ and ‘governance’ are not synonymous terms, although both share goals-oriented objectives” (Asaduzzaman & Virtanen, 2016, P.2; Katsamunska, 2016). As Asaduzzaman and Virtanen (2016, p. 5-6) indicate,

> “From a broader perspective, governance is considered a continuous process of the state, a participatory form of governance whose existence and effectiveness depend on how it perceives the needs and demands of the locality, promoting people’s participation in the decision-making process and decentralising power to the local institutions” (Asaduzzaman & Virtanen, 2016, p. 5-6)

According to Olivier de Sardan (2011), “taking the concept of governance in a purely descriptive and analytical sense” governance can be defined as “any organised method of delivering public or collective goods and services within specific logics and norms and to specific forms of authority” (p. 1). However, Pierre and Peters (2019) argue that this definition oversimplify practical day-today governance as it falls short of considering other societal actors (see also Obeng-Odoom, 2017).

The phrase “good governance in its normative definitions” (Olivier de Sardan, 2011, p.1) is linked to the Bretton Woods Institutions, such as the World Bank, and refers to factors such as “transparency, participation, accountability, and the rule of law” (Asaduzzaman & Virtanen, 2016; Obeng-Odoom, 2017). However, criticism has been directed at The World Bank’s conception of governance for being too “technocratic, depoliticised of its public affairs, and for being neo-liberal” (Olivier de Sardan, 2011, p. 1). Thus, Bevir and Rhodes (2001) make the link between governance and the neo-liberalism narrative that emphasises the inefficiencies of bureaucracy. However, as Blundo and Le Meur (2011) indicate, relieving governance of its normative dimensions, it may be viewed differently as a collective action within the administrative, political and public affairs dimension.

Despite the numerous definitions and perspectives on governance, Asaduzzaman and Virtanen (2016) explain that “governance refers to the political field and activity as the vital task of every government” (p. 2). Government occurs when those with legally and formally derived authority and policing power execute and implement activities. “By contrast, governance refers to the creation, execution, and implementation of activities backed by the shared goals of citizens and organisations who may and may not have formal authority or policing power” (Rosenau, 1992) in Asaduzzaman and Virtanen (2016). As noted by Stoker (1998), even though there is some differences in how the term is used, there is some consensus that governance involves various governing style that blurs the boundaries between public and private sectors. Some critics of governance claim this blurring of lines, especially in the urban governance environment, can be attributed to neo-liberalism (Zunino,

2006; Bang, 2011; Didier et al., 2012; Hearn, 2014). Despite the variations in meanings, there is consensus that governance include three groups of actors, which are, government, civil society, and the private sector.

The other side of the debates on contemporary governance centres around hierarchy, a strong central government on one side or a weak central government that relies on collaborative forms of governance (Laffin, 2013). For instance, Bell et al. (2010) claim that central governments have adopted indirect, softer modes of steering and controlling that relies on persuasion than direct rule. Some critics claim the emergence of these multi-governance systems have resulted in the "hollowing out of the state by networks", thus undermining effective government by the executive, "making it less reliant on a command and control code and more on diplomacy" (Rhodes, 1994, p. 138). Analysing governance networks within the British government, Rhodes's main thesis is that the British government has "shifted from a unitary state to governance in and by networks". In this "differentiated polity", Rhodes (1997, p. 8) claims that power has shifted "upwards to supra-national organisations (the European Union), sideways to non-state actors (marketisation and networks), and downwards to sub-state actors (sub-national governments and agencies)". Thus, according to Rhodes (1997), sub-national governments form part of governance networks. Indeed, Stoker argues that the Westminster model of government is limited and presents a misleading image of a unitary state because "the structure of government is fragmented with a maze of institutions and organizations. It implies that in a unitary state there is only one centre of power, while in practice there are many centres of power and diverse links.

Asaduzzaman and Virtanen (2016) summarise the concept of governance into four areas:

- **Governance in global space or global governance** deals with issues outside the purview of governments.
- **Governance in national space, that is, within a country** is regarded as the exclusive domain of government, which may have several levels, such as national, provincial, indigenous, local or urban. Nevertheless,

governance is concerned with how other actors, such as civil societies, may play a role in decision-making on matters of public concern.

- **Organisational governance or governance in organisation space** includes organisations that are usually accountable to boards of directors. Service space governance reflects the idea of governing local, regional, and national service space consisting of various service providers from the public, private, and third sectors.
- **Community governance or governance in community space** refers to activities at the local level where the organising body may not assume a legal form. It is important, therefore, to shed light on network governance (p. 5).

3.1.4. State technocrats and public accountability

As Resnick (2014) notes, decentralisation changes relationships between citizens and elected politicians, as well as between central and sub-national policymakers. While both central and sub-national governments will prefer to maximise their autonomy, they will also prefer to be held accountable when service delivery is favourable. However, the role of state technocrats and their accountability to citizens has not received much attention.

While Wright (1974) indicates that intergovernmental relations inherently include politicians, mayors, and legislators, he further states that, in recent times, the focus has shifted to the actions, attitudes, and roles of administrators. This, in turn, focused attention on the increasing role being played by state bureaucrats in government.

According to Hassen (2003), restructuring the public sector has led to major shifts in governance and the rise of new managerialism. This new managerialism, located in the neo-liberal framework, tends to consolidate the power of senior state bureaucrats, resulting in negative consequences for democratic governance. Reflecting on the United States of America's form of intergovernmental relations, Beer (1978, p. 17) cites two types of influences that have dominated IGRs: "the intergovernmental lobby group", referred to as territorial specialisation, and "the professional bureaucratic complex", referred

to as the professionalisation of policy making by bureaucrats in fields such as health, urban renewal, education transport, and energy. Together with other interest groups, Beer (1978) claims that these bureaucrats exert their influence in sub-governmental units, resulting in the formation of vertical bureaucratic hierarchies.

The role of state technocrats, who are part of policy networks, described by Hassen (2003, p. 114) as “the power behind the desk”, raises questions of accountability. Policy technocrats with high technical knowledge dominate the policy-making processes in state institutions (Bangura, 2004). Further, Bangura (2004) states that these technocrats tend to work in government institutions insulated from public pressure and, therefore, are less democratically accountable to citizens. This observation, shared by Kumar and Narain (2014), indicates that the premise of policy-making is embedded in bureaucratic power whose highly technical skills and closeness to political power insulate them from public scrutiny. In this environment, the citizens, who should be beneficiaries of public policy, are kept at the distance from what King et al. (1998, p. 319) call the “issues or the situation”.

According to Bangura (2004), the increasingly dominant role played by state technocrats has caused tension between technocracy and democracy because they are not accountable to the citizens. Zunino (2006) describes technocrats as individuals with a high level of academic training, particularly in engineering and economics, who hold the view that all society’s problems can be solved by scientific expertise rather than politics and political awareness in society.

Drawing lessons from Chile in South America, Zunino (2006) argues that using technocratic knowledge in decision-making and policy-making reduces citizens’ level of engagement in projects that affect their future. As an example, Zunino (2006, p. 1885) points out that the neo-liberal agenda in policy-making, especially in urban projects, is advanced by technocrats who base their decision-making on economic indicators as opposed to civic participation, social, and environmental criteria. This “techno-economic machine” has been transformed into a power node that has penetrated public administration and

replaced the old bureaucracy with flexible public workers and consultants, thereby blurring the line between the public and the private (ibid).

As argued in Chapter 6, the colonial and apartheid regime left an enduring legacy that have defined the governance architecture of post-1994 South Africa. The pre-1994 military style technocratic governance style informs the new reality. And as Zunino (2006) explain, “technocrats now focus on political demobilisation and elite politics…stressing expert economic management as a fundamental tool for consolidating democracy and achieving social equity”. Thus, technocrats apply strict technical procedures and rules in initiating and evaluating public projects to achieve their “neo-liberal agenda” through a “complex web of prescriptions” (p. 1835). In the South African context this has been elaborated in the GEAR policy as discussed in Chapter 2. State technocrats hold important roles in directing government projects by designing, implementing, and monitoring such programmes. In the context of the DDM, the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG, 2021) reports that an official from COGTA informed the Portfolio Committee that “the design of the DDM involved a shift away from a civilian approach towards a military approach to planning. This [DDM] was joint planning where one plan and one budget was imposed”. Thus, attention must be paid that the role of citizens is not reduced by the collaborative efforts of state technocrats and political leaders.

This study concerns itself with governance within the national space and within a multi-level system of government, such as decentralisation and federalism. Fenwick (2010, p. 160) states that sub-national finances are an important part of “understanding the federal game” as they help to determine what fiscal incentives are present in intergovernmental policy collaboration. According to Phillimore (2013), power is at the centre of any intergovernmental system. Moreover, as indicated by Lindell (2008), in studying dispersed arrangements of governance, it is important to know where power is located. Therefore, to complement this study, a discussion on power follows in the next section.

3.1.5. The governance-power nexus

Russell (2004, p. 10) indicates that the "fundamental concept in social science is Power, in the same sense in which energy is the fundamental concept in Physics". According to Russell (2008, p. 9), human desires are infinite and, therefore, cannot be satisfied. He writes, "Of the infinite desires of man, the chief are the desires for power and glory." Moreover, according to Russell, "it is only by realizing that love of power is the cause of the activities that are important in social affairs that history, whether ancient or modern, can be rightly interpreted" (p. 9). Offering his own definition of power, Russell (2004, p. 35) states that power is "the production of intended effects". In other words, according to Russel (2004), while it is impossible to quantify, it is possible to compare the power of actors or institutions by their ability to realise their desired objectives. One of the characteristics of power is how much influence actors exerts. Indeed, power can be exerted in various ways, for example, through incentive, "that is, altering the incentives confronting those subject to power" (Hague & Harrop, 2010, p. 13). This can include a threat of punishment for not complying or the promise of a reward for complying. However, power can also be employed by influencing preferences rather than incentives.

According to Avelino (2021), "power is one of the most contested concepts in social and political theory" (p. 2). As a result, its meanings are diverse, and, as Lukes (2005, p. 30) states, the concept of power is an "essentially contested concept, one of those concepts which inevitably involve endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users". Avelino then points out seven principal points of contestations as they relate to power among scholars: power over versus power to, centred versus diffused, consensus versus conflictual, constraining versus enabling, quantity versus quality, empowerment versus disempowerment, and power in relation to knowledge.

However, for the purpose of this study, only the centred versus diffused perspective will be discussed. According to Avelino (2021, p. 5), one of the prevailing debates on power is the one "between pluralists and elitists" (p. 5). One side of the debate stresses that elites "possess power over society" (ibid). The other debate emphasises that power is a struggle between plural interest

groups. For instance, Mills (2000) explains that power elites are consists of men whose societal positions permit them to make decisions with far reaching consequences. Even their non decisions, is an act that can impact the decisions they make. Mills (2000) then claims that within society, power resides in "the economic, political, and military domains" (p. 7), leaving ordinary citizens powerless. Within these "three domains, the typical institutional unit has become enlarged, has become administrative, and in the power of its decisions, has become centralized" (Mills, 2000, p. 7).

According to Mills (2000, p. 7), "the dominance of these three domains can be observed in the economy, which was once full of small productive units but now is dominated by two or three hundred giant corporations, administratively and politically interrelated, which together hold the keys to economic decisions". The "political order, once a decentralised set of several states, has become a centralised executive which has taken up into itself many powers previously scattered, and now enters into each and every cranny of the social structure" (ibid). The "military, once a slim establishment, has become the largest and most expensive feature of government, with all the grim and clumsy efficiency of a sprawling bureaucratic domain" (p. 7). In summary, according to Mills (2000), in each of these institutions, the power of decision-makers has increased, and while executive powers have been centralised.

On the other hand, the pluralist debate argues that power is not concentrated in one single entity or individual. For instance, Foucault (cited in Foucault & Gordon, 1980) challenges the notions of power being coercive or repressive, and exercised by groups or individuals. Instead, he argues that power is diffused and pervasive. In other words, it is not restricted to a structure, either at a single micro or macro level. There is a reciprocal relation among the different levels in how power is exercised power.

> "… but what I meant was that in order for there to be a movement from above to below there has to be a capillarity from below to above at the same time. Take a simple example, the feudal form of power relation. Between the serfs tied to the land and the lord who levies rent from them,

> there exists a local, relatively autonomous relation, almost a *tete-a-tete*. For this relation to hold, it must indeed have the backing of a certain pyramidal ordering of the feudal system. But it is certain that the power of the French kings and the apparatuses of State which they gradually established from the eleventh century onward had as their condition of possibility a rooting in forms of behaviour, bodies and local relations of power which should not at all be seen as a simple projection of the central power." (Foucault & Gordon, 1980, p. 201).

In other words, even though there is power from above, rather than the lower levels being mere passive observers, there is some action from below to above.

However, Lindell (2008) argues that "even if power is diffused, it is still to some extend concentrated in some social institutions, that is, it has centres" (2008, p. 288). According to Lindell (2008), in an environment with a multiplicity of actors, a narrow "state-centric perspectives on governance that focus exclusively on the workings of the formal institutions of the state" is insufficient to "grasp the complex web of power at play" (2008, 1880). Similarly, this thesis argues that, in the context of political systems with multiple levels of governance, such as in federal and decentralised political systems, it is important to explore the location of power.

However, as Avelino (2021) indicates, diffusion or decentralisation of power is "often implicitly or explicitly assumed to be good and can lead to more equal and just power relations" (p. 6). Furthermore, "theories of power provide insights into how processes of power decentralisation can, in some cases, involve the construction and reconstruction of new and old power inequalities" (ibid). For example, when community development projects involve actors with high societal positions at the exclusion of others. Accordingly, Avelino (2021) proceeds to caution that theories on power "remind us that social change and innovation processes do not necessarily strive for the decentralisation of power" (p. 6). On the contrary, they can be a manifestation of "recentralisation or reinforcement of central power" (p. 6). This can happen, for example, when development projects are co-opted by central governments. In the context of

this study, this notion has been explored by critically assessing the DDM, which was introduced by the central government in South Africa to improve the delivery of services to citizens. The current study explored whether the DDM, which is a presidential project and, therefore, displays hierarchical tendencies, is a form of recentralisation and reinforcement of political power and hegemony. Avelino (2021) states that it is pertinent to study how and to what extent power is diffused, decentralised, and recentralised.

To achieve a distribution of power and, therefore, "tame power", Russell (2004, p. 288) advocates for a democratic form of government, despite its shortcomings. As a solution, Russell argues that a "federal form of government is desirable because the local interests and sentiments of the constituent unit are stronger than the interests and sentiments connected with the federation" (2004, p. 292). However, some critiques of political decentralisation claim that it is nothing more than a reconsolidation of power at the local level (Rakodi, 2003; Aalen & Muriaas, 2017).

On the African continent, decentralisation has been part of the development agenda of donor institutions and is often linked to good governance. The following section will discuss the African experience of decentralisation.

3.1.6. The African experience of decentralisation

Following the collapse of the old Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War between the West and the old Communist bloc, most proxy wars on the African continent also ended. According to Erk (2014), because of this changed "geo-political context" (p. 538), many countries in Africa implemented various political reforms towards decentralisation. These democratic reforms were, in part, conditions laid down by Western donors, which led to multi-party politics. Decentralisation was a constant feature of these democratic reforms, resulting in the creation or strengthening sub-national governments (Erk, 2014).

However, various challenges resulting from decentralisation policies have been cited. According to Erk (2014) and Chilenga-Butao (2020), the vision of decentralisation has not been realised. As Resnick (2014) argues, democratic multi-party politics in Africa have put into perspective challenges brought by

decentralisation policies. The design and implementation of these policies have led to complex layers of governance, resulting in overlapping mandates. Furthermore, political decentralisation has given rise to what Resnick (2014, p. s4) referrers to as 'vertically divided authorities', a situation where different levels of government are controlled by different political parties see also, (Cameron, 2014; Obeng-Odoom, 2017). Additionally, even in situations where levels of government are controlled by the same political party, intra-party conflict can still occur because of ideological differences and political factionalism. This is because power and politics constitute an important element in governance processes (Rakodi, 2001; Smit, 2018). Further, Dickovick and Riedl (2010) cite colonial heritage, political party systems, and federalism as some of the issues that affect the objectives and extent of decentralisation reforms. The following subsection briefly discusses the findings of a report on the assessment of decentralisation on the African continent. The report, compiled by Dickovick and Riedl (2010) found mixed results on decentralisation reforms in Africa.

3.1.7. Assessment of decentralisation in Africa

According to Olowu (2003), African countries are the least formally decentralised in comparison to other regions. According to Olowu, whereas the formal state is centralised, society remains highly decentralised - dispersed in rural communities and villages. Olowu (2003) ascribes the limited decentralisation efforts in Africa to nascent state formation taking place simultaneously with decentralisation efforts. Thus, decentralising power and resources to semi-autonomous local governing units is a challenge to many political and administrative leaders who are accustomed to monopolistic exercise of power. Olowu suggests that decentralisation also provides "political enemies", that is opposition parties, an opportunity to undermine the "tenuous rule of patrimonial leaders" 2003, p. 41).

Olowu further writes that for a variety of reasons, since the mid-1970s, numerous African countries have initiated fresh decentralisation reforms. These differ from previous efforts in two important aspects: (1). The process is linked

to the programme of state democratisation. Some countries, notably, Nigeria, Uganda, and Mali, construed the capacity for local democracy and working upwards to the centre as a more viable strategy than simultaneous democratisation of all state institutions. (2). There is growing appreciation of the need to develop local governance and not just local governments. This implies not only vertical transfer of responsibilities and resources from the centre to local governments, but also that central governments should engage local governments and local non-state actors such as the private sector, civil society and international organisations in service delivery and development activities. (3). Olowu lists a third category that experimented with federal or quasi-federal arrangements. According to Olowu (2003), by the end of the 1990s, it was possible to categorise African countries primarily as those with progressive decentralisation policies and those who have stuck with old forms of deconcentration. According to Olowu, successful decentralisation programmes cannot be accomplished without effective intergovernmental relations. Olowu concludes that while some relative successes have been recorded, there are also instances of retreats into centralised solutions.

To bring about the desired outcomes of democratic decentralisation, transfer of responsibilities, that is, fiscal and human resources to local communities need to be prioritised. The challenge, according to Olowu, is how to develop effective intergovernmental relations and local accountability mechanisms. Olowu's (2003) assessment is in line with a study by Dickovick and Riedl (2010) on decentralisation on the African continent.

A study commissioned by the United States Agency for International Development USAID on decentralisation in Africa found mixed results with considerable achievements in some areas and more limited advances in others. According to Dickovick and Riedl (2010), the study found that African decentralisation has advanced considerably in the devolution and deconcentration of legal authority to sub-national governments. These processes have advanced in the political, fiscal, and administrative dimensions of decentralisation. Politically, all African countries routinely hold sub-national elections, while the fiscal decentralisation gave sub-national governments

considerable expenditure responsibilities in public services. Further, Dickovick and Riedl (2010) indicate that an important achievement is the creation of regularised, formula-based revenue transfers from central governments, though these are relatively small in some cases. Concerning administrative decentralisation, the study found that central governments have undertaken extensive processes to deconcentrate authority from central government offices to administrative units controlled by the centre. Thus, decentralisation has had some modestly positive impact on public service delivery, while serving as an instrument to enhance national stability in many post-conflict countries (ibid).

However, according to Dickovick and Riedl (2010), these changes have had fewer positive impact in other areas, for instance, in sub-national autonomy. Sub-national autonomy remains restricted by several top-down forces, especially the control exercised by state authorities and by the dominant political parties in many African countries. More importantly, as Dickovick and Riedl (2010) states, while central governments are justified in seeking to coordinate and monitor the actions of sub-national actors, the degree of control observed suggests a continuation of centralised patterns of governance in many cases. There is some downward accountability of sub-national governments to local citizens through the routinised and institutionalised use of sub-national elections. Nevertheless, Dickovick and Riedl (2010) argues that accountability in many cases continues to flow mostly upward to actors at the centre. Further, fiscal decentralisation of sub-national governments remains weak in most cases with sub-national governments unable to raise own taxes, and must therefore, rely on revenue transfers from central governments, (see also Dickovick, 2011).

The study indicates that the dominant political parties have rational motives to support decentralisation initiatives because it consolidates their own hegemonic positions. This has been achieved through strategic and partial implementation of decentralisation reforms. The study found that, in the South African context, while post-apartheid, a legal framework for local governance has been established, the ANC has been recalcitrant and hesitant to

decentralisation reforms that would provide local government regional bases to the opposition parties. The report concludes that while decentralisation is increasingly entrenched in many African countries, this does not imply that it is complete or consolidated, or that it has achieved its posited goals and objectives (ibid).

As stated above, other scholarly work examining decentralisation reforms on the African continent relate such reforms to political settlements, see for instance (Dickovick & Riedl, 2010; Erk, 2014; Resnick, 2014). Khan (2010) is credited with developing the political settlement framework to understand the distribution of power. Khan defines political settlement as “the relative holding power of different groups and organizations contesting the distribution of resources” (p.1). Khan (2010) states that political settlement is often loosely used to describe the ‘social order’ based on political compromises between powerful groups in society that establishes the context for institutional and other policies. More precisely, Khan defines political settlement as “a combination of power and institutions that is mutually compatible and also sustainable in terms of economic and political viability” (p. 4). Khan contends that institutions and the distribution of power must be compatible because, as per Khan, if powerful groups are not receiving an acceptable distribution of benefits from an institutional structure, they will strive to change it. Khan’s theory adequately captures the power politics and political dynamics around the District Development Model and decentralised governance in South Africa. This thesis argues that the DDM is a prototype for recentralisation (see Chapter 8) because it is designed to change the balance of power through dismantling the power centres discussed in Chapter 7.

While, as discussed above, decentralisation on the African continent was a result of political settlements, it was also the result of condition set by donors, such as the World Bank as part of good governance (Erk, 2014; Smit, 2018). With increased decentralisation, as conditions set by the World Bank, local governments in Africa gradually shifted towards public private partnerships in delivery of services (Olivier de Sardan, 2011). Finally, histories of conflict seem

to matter, especially since decentralisation has often been used to promote national stability.

According to Erk (2014), differentiating federalism and decentralisation on the African continent is difficult. Citing the example of the “three big federations of Sub-Saharan Africa (South Africa, Ethiopia, and Nigeria)”, Erk (2014, p. 537) states that federalism did not come about because of formerly separate states coming together to form a federation. Rather, its creation was a top-down approach resulting in new constituent units, based on ethnic, cultural, historical, and social considerations. In Ethiopia, for example, some regional states follow an ethnic settlement pattern (Zimmermann-Steinhart & Bekele, 2012).

Similarly, decentralisation in the unitary states of Sub-Saharan Africa has largely been part of large-scale, top-down institutional reforms (Erk, 2014). Additionally, decentralisation was presented to bring democracy, better public policy formulation, service delivery, and economic development. These promises were part of the agenda of international organisations like the World Bank, the United Nations, and the International Monetary Fund.

However, according to Erk (2014, p. 536), decades after its introduction in Sub-Saharan Africa, decentralisation has lost its “sheen and mutates in unexpected directions”, that is, it is no longer in the form as provided for in constitutions. The pattern of transformation, as described by Erk (2014), are “structural uncodified factors, for instance, societal, economic, geographic, and demographic” p. 536. In summary, Erk (2104) argues that because of these transformation, constitutional and institutional provisions are not enough to appreciate how a decentralised state works. Erk (2014) then identified five evolutionary patterns that explain the chasm between the codified constitutional and institutional blueprints and the practice on the ground. For the current study, only four will be discussed:

- **Symmetrical recentralisation:** In practice, Erk (2014) indicates that decentralised institutions remain in *pro forma* terms while the actual political work has reverted to central governments. Erk then explains how recentralisation usually arrives with large-scale national

infrastructure projects. He claims that these patrimonial development programmes and grand infrastructure projects are used to achieve national goals as part of a strategy to bring central governments back into policy arenas, which are the domains of sub-national governments. In agreement with Erk, Resnick (2014, p. 58) states that these development projects are “strategies of subversion or tactics” to limit the autonomy of sub-national governments while simultaneously holding them responsible for poor service delivery, see Table 6.

- **Differentiated performance:** This is possible within federal and decentralised states, defined by ethnic, religious, economic, geographic, and demographic diversity. When such diversities are territorially based, they reflect asymmetrically across regions, while constitutions, on the other hand, reflect a symmetrical format. Differentiated performance is determined by the make-up of the sub-national unit, where those with more financial resources, infrastructure, and trained bureaucracy tend to make the most of federalism and decentralisation. On the other hand, sub-national units lacking resources end up with new policies they are unable to implement without benefactors within the dominant nationally governing political party. Within these informal networks, a form of inter-regional opaque equalisation takes place led by the dominant political parties. Thus, the differing capacities of sub-national units make it possible for internal party politics and informal networks to emerge.

  Thus, regional variations play a key role in the pattern of centralisation applied in sub-national units. This study explores these blended formal, codified, and informal, uncodified factors as they interact in decentralised governance within the context of the DDM. Citing the Cape region with its metropolis, Cape Town, Erk (2014) states that it has always been a well-resourced region notwithstanding who governs. Because it is under the political control of the opposition DA, it is often excluded from the informal networks of the predominant nationally governing ANC.

- **Legitimising traditional authority structures and indigenous conflict resolution:** The third pattern is the reemergence of tribal authority structures in some of the sub-national governments, especially those in the urban margins. Decentralisation has resuscitated customary law, particularly in indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms between ethnic groups. African indigenous legal traditions of managing diversity and disputes did not make it into the formal design of decentralised institutions. Post-colonial constitutions adopted a modernist and nation-building approach while rejecting legal pluralism. In South Africa, however, Erk (2014) explains that because of a force of circumstances, traditional chieftainship was recognised by the apartheid government. The then-governing National Party turned the native reserves and independent chieftainship into a political system as part of its segregation policies. While displaying an image of autonomy, these tribal homelands, known as Bantustans, brought a façade of constitutional legitimacy to the apartheid system. In the post-apartheid government, legal pluralism is constitutionally recognised through the Council of Traditional Chiefs.
- **Political local conflicts over land, water, and other natural resources:** Citing the recognition of ethnic identity by the post-conflict constitutions of South Africa, Ethiopia, and Nigeria, Erk (2014) claims that these constitutions politicised the very ethnic divisions they sought to manage. This is because it disenfranchised people of mixed backgrounds and people of other identities higher than ethnic ones, be it regional, political, ideological, or religious. Constitutional recognition of ethnic identities has cascaded down to the sub-national level and, therefore, added a political character to what was initially a local conflict. Federal and decentralised systems that established new local levels with new competencies have also added to conflicts of who is local, who is a settler, and who owns the land and other resources. Decentralisation reforms have brought about competition for control of local levels of government with its potential material benefits.

Table 7: Strategies of subversion [by central governments]

Domains	Actions at the central level
Political	Resist relinquishing control to sub-national officials from opposition through an increase in appointments
Administrative	Divest certain administrative responsibilities unless they offer high levels of visibility to key voters.
Fiscal administrative	Limit the ability of sub-national officials to finance their responsibilities by reductions and restrictions, inter-governmental transfers and/or limitations on taxation or delays to improving donor funding.

Source: Resnick, 2014

Some of the negative outcomes of decentralisation are organisational paralysis, local patronage and clientelism, and resource capture (Pastory, 2014). In the South African context, Pastory (2014) advances a similar argument and states that one of the consequences of the decentralised system was the emergence of local clientelistic and patronage interests that have not promoted service delivery to communities. The following section discusses clientelism, which refers to a complex chain of personal bonds between political actors and their clients or followers.

3.1.8. Clientelistic governance and neo-patrimonialism

In general, citizens and governments employ both formal and informal governance mechanisms to interact (Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith, 2002). According to Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2002), formal governance systems are expressed in constitutions, regulations and laws, public service processes, commercial regulations and judicial structures. Thus, they are readily available and can be seen through physical documents, structures, such as government buildings, and events in the public domain, such as elections.

In contrast, informal governance systems are based on implied and unwritten codes and reflect social classes and ethnicity. Their manifestations are less obvious to notice and identify. Thus, governance systems have a dual character: formal "*de jure"* and informal "*de facto"*, (p. 2) which co-exists. As Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2002) suggest, it is in these informal governance systems where clientelistic politics and patrimonialism thrive. The intersection

of these informal, uncodified activities with the formal, lawful realm of democratic and bureaucratic administration has resulted in corrupt practices. According to Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2002), “this institutional dualism has its roots in the historical evolution of social relations between rulers and the ruled, from tribal chieftaincies to kingdoms and empires, to feudalism and the emergence of the nation-state” (p. 164).

Nevertheless, as stated by Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2002), “the changing blend of formal and informal governance elements does not connote a continuum from “traditional” to “modern” (p. 164). This is because human society relies on both formal *de jure* and informal *de facto* governance institutions (Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith (2002) The challenge, though, according to Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2002), is to distinguish the *de facto* governance institutions that serve most people from those that impede improvements in social welfare. While in many societies, it is expected that people will help friends and families, such activities are improper and unlawful in a rational-legal environment (McCourt, 2000).

In his highly cited definition of politics, Lasswell (1958), in (Marvick, 1980) stated that politics is about “who gets what, when, and how.” According to Marvick (1980, p. 219), the “how” requires us to cope with the power aspect, ‘when’ suggests the need to chart the results through time, “what” raises the question of which value conditions are being sought, gained, and lost, and “who” poses the task of identifying elites, that is, those who have the most of what there is to get” (p. 219).

According to Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2002, p. 164), in attempting to understand the “who gets what”, political scientists applied the concept of clientelism in the 1970s. Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2002) explain that the concept was first expounded on by philanthropists and sociologists to describe the hierarchical social relations that have long marked the countryside in peasant societies" (p, 164). It was discovered that clientelism, known also as the patron-client model of politics, was common in contemporary political systems in many parts of the world (Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith, 2002; Roniger et

al., 2004). According to Roniger et al. (2004 It was generally assumed that clientelism was a relic of early development and would be replaced by modern economic and political modernisation. Thus, while clientelism is often associated with pre-modern society and, therefore, associated with economic and cultural backwardness, it can also be found in advanced socio-economic contexts. For instance, in the USA, literature points to “pork barrel” (Arretche, 2011, p. 589) political exchange and special interest politics (Hopkin, 2006).

However, Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2002) argue that, while the negative side of clientelism is well known, there are also hidden positive functions of clientelistic practices (see also Hopkin, 2006). For example, clientelism can be used to facilitate the integration of ordinary people into the governing system and society. Additionally, Hagene (2015) describes problem-solving networks as a form of political clientelism that narrows the chasm between the citizens and the state. Thus, in this case, political clientelism is based on the morality and communal grounds.

According to Hagene (2015), the concepts of ‘clientelism’, ‘vote buying’, and ‘patronage’ are often conflated. In his ethnographic study in Mexico, Hagene (2015) found that people regard vote buying as illegitimate and shameful because it is unobservantly and secretly done. On the other hand, people see political clientelism as legitimate and a way of solving their everyday problems. Clientelism involves an unequal but mutually beneficial relationship of power and exchange for political support (Roniger et al., 2004). Focusing on clientelism as a form of electoral mobilisation, Stokes (2011), describes clientelism as exchanging material goods for electoral support, wherein the patron is asked for political support for material gain. In contrast, patronage involves the offering of public resources by office bearers for electoral support.

According to Stokes (2011), the distributive criterion of electoral support distinguishes clientelism from other political strategies that also offer material benefits to patrons. Programmatic redistributive, for instance, politics withdraw resources from some groups for redistribution to others. Therefore, programmatic benefits are seen to have a public value because they

redistribute resources from non-beneficiaries to classes of beneficiaries. In contrast, clientelistic redistribution is only available based on the client's willingness to provide political support.

However, while Stokes states that patronage and vote buying are sub-classes of clientelism, Hopkin (2006) claims that clientelism is a variant of special interest politics. Special interest politics are a mechanism by which political parties receive political support in exchange for selective allocation of resources using state institutions. While clientelism entails an unequal relationship between actors, that is, patron and client, Stokes (2011) argues that it also presents a paradox. While the patron and the client engage in a relationship voluntarily, from the less powerful member's perspective, it is also simultaneously exploitative and dominating.

On the other hand, according to Lemieux, as cited in Roniger *et al.* (2004, p. 354), clientelism triggers a "double transformation in both the patron and the client's statuses. The patron is at the centre of a power transaction, in which a relaxation of hierarchical control in the client's favour is exchanged for its reinforcement in the patron's favour". The client gains a measure of dominant power, while the patron gains a position of dominating authority" (p. 354). Literature suggests that federal and decentralised political systems leave greater leeway for political clientelism and patronage than unitary systems of government (Roniger et al., 2004; see also Treisman, 2002; Arretche, 2010; Fenwick, 2010). Furthermore, according to Olowu (2003, p.41), democratic decentralisation can provide an advantage to "political enemies", that is, opposition parties, who might want to undermine "the tenuous rule of patrimonial leaders".

3.2. The conceptual framework

The main research question this study sought to answer is: **What are the institutional, political, and contextual factors of decentralised governance in South Africa?** After an interrogation of literature, certain concepts have emerged with important analytical inferences.

This section sets out the conceptual framework derived from the interrogation of literature, the theoretical framework, and empirical data in the preceding chapters. The conceptual framework is developed to interpret the empirical data results and to answer the research questions. The conceptual framework is underpinned by the following concepts: decentralisation context, recentralisation, governance, and IGRs. After a thorough interrogation of literature, this study further employed a power analysis framework to explore decentralisation and governance. This approach will assist in exploring the multi-sphere power relations, strategies, cooperation, subordination, and domination within the DDM and other development projects. A brief explanation of the concepts derived from literature is discussed hereunder.



Figure 7: Decentralisation and related concepts

Source: adapted from Obeng-Odoom, 2017

3.2.1. Decentralisation context

In attempting to understand decentralised governance, it is important to understand its context in South Africa. According to Wittenberg (2003), many

of the issues confronting decentralisation in South Africa have their roots in the past, for example, lack of capacity at the local level. Chilenga-Butao (2020) explain that democratic decentralisation was undertaken amid longstanding governance structures that only slightly underwent adjustment through the apartheid era, and yet continued into the democratic transition.

According to Resnick (2014), van Niekerk (2012), and Murray and Simeon (2012), South Africa's system of multi-level government was a political compromise that is reflected in its design. Thus, as argued by Murray and Simeon (2012), the fact that the multi-level system was a result of a peace settlement rather than a careful analysis of its cost and benefits has important consequences for how it operates. In a similar vein, van Niekerk (2012) suggests that the system of multi-level governance was driven more by access to state power between the two negotiating parties, the National Party and the ANC, at CODESA.

Furthermore, according to van Niekerk (2012), two of the negotiated agreements would have an influence on the post-apartheid social policy design. The first is the creation of the nine provinces, which led to the separation of legislative control between central government and provincial governments. The second was the system of fiscal federalism between central government and provincial governments. According to van Niekerk (2012), the final settlements, which led to a model of cooperative governance, caused much confusion, conflict, duplication, and ambiguity. Some of the reasons for the failures of the multi-level system of government in South Africa, as articulated by Murray and Simeon (2012), are the initial reluctance of the ANC to embrace federalism. As a result, the ANC has no clear vision of how the system should operate, particularly what the role of the provinces should be. Moreover, decentred power goes against the ANC's own ideology of cohesion and discipline. Therefore, Murray and Simeon (2012) state that the ANC has deep mistrust for alternative and competing centres of power. However, it is not uncommon for countries with multi-level political systems to have hostile relationships with autonomous centres of power that are perceived to challenge their political hegemony. The current study, therefore, explores the

decentralisation context and design to better understand its impact on governance.

3.2.2. Degree of autonomy

Decentralisation shapes governance arrangements and the behaviour of political actors. Theoretical arguments relating to decentralisation are that it improves governance, promotes democracy, leads to social harmony, and makes governments more accountable. However, there is considerable debate about whether multi-level systems of governance produce the deemed benefits. This relates to the complex nature of multi-level systems of government comprising political actors with heterogeneous interests. These actors can either play a facilitative or constraining role in the application of decentralised governance.

Questions then arise about the link between the degree of political decentralisation and the quality of its government. According to Treisman (2002), greater political decentralisation might lead to an honest and efficient government that meets the needs of local communities. On the other hand, it might create coordination problems and lead to poor service provision to local communities. The degree of autonomy reflects how sub-national governments can make decisions autonomously. According to Dickovick (2011) autonomy can be uniformly seen as increasing with decentralisation and decreasing with recentralisation. In the context of the current study, the question to ask is, does the design of the DDM reflect low levels of local government autonomy or increased autonomy?

3.2.3. Recentralisation

Emerging literature suggests a process of recentralisation is underway (Pierre & Peters, 2019). Typically disguised as large development programmes (Erk 2014; Resnick 2014), recentralisation processes are feasible in countries where majoritarian political dynamics are prevalent. This process can include administrative, fiscal, and political recentralisation. While some scholars argue that recentralisation is inherent in decentralisation systems, in some cases, the

process can also be slow and subtle. In this study, recentralisation is linked with the introduction of the DDM.

For instance, Chigwata et al. (2021), in their study of three African countries, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Ethiopia, questioned the level of local government autonomy. They observed that while routine sub-nation elections are held, this has rather been used by central governments to consolidate power at the local level of government. In South Africa, for instance, Chigwata et al. (2021) state that the ANC has used local government elections to expand its control of the state. This was achieved by deploying ANC cadres to key positions in the state and then required a high level of discipline from them. Hence, according to Chigwata et al. (2021), sub-national elections in South Africa have been routinised by a highly centralised ANC. To further gain a clearer understanding of decentralisation, this study has explored the degree of political decentralisation in South Africa.

3.2.4. Power

One consequence of decentralisation reforms is that sub-national governments exercise some level of autonomy from the central government. In some unitary states, this power is delegated by central governments, while in highly decentralised and federal states, this autonomy is derived from a foundational law of a country such as a constitution. In this study, sub-national governments draw their power from the constitutional provisions that created what the study calls ‘decentralised centres of power’.

3.2.5. Cooperative governance

A decentralised system of government is defined as a system made up of two or more levels of government, with each level having powers over different functions and responsibilities (De Visser & Chigwata, 2022). A cooperative system of governance is required to coordinate the responsibilities and functions of the different levels of government. Intergovernmental relations recognise the relationships among various levels and sectors within multi-level systems of government. Thus, while public officials are required to act in an inter-jurisdictional context, they are also concerned with informal working

relationships in institutional settings. Indeed, Wright (1974) argued that intergovernmental relations continue informally among officials daily. However, the concept of governance is contested. Governance moves from the premise that the state, as a tool of government, is no longer the sole provider of public goods and services. There is a multiplicity of actors occupying a public space once the preserve of governments. This has resulted in a complex system of intergovernmental relations. In South Africa, the multiplicity of actors within the DDM has paralysed the cooperative governance mechanism.

3.3. Scholarly contribution of the study

According to Thomson (2015), many doctoral researchers are concerned with the meaning of 'original' in the original contribution to knowledge. Further, "they worry whether their research will be seen as original enough. They worry which of the multiple ways in which original might be interpreted will be applied to their thesis" (Thomson, 2015, n.d). Thomson (2015, n.d) further argues that the notion of 'original' seems to imply the idea of *singularity*, that is, "I've done something fresh and unique – combined with the notion of *originary* – I've started something new here – combined with the notion of *authenticity* – this is all my own work, I haven't copied it from anywhere else."

However, Thomson (2015) argues that these terms are unhelpful as assessment criteria. He argues further:

> *"Singularity*? Something unique? Not always the case in research…there are often teams of researchers working separately and apart on exactly the same problem. And some of these teams even come up with theories or results that are pretty similar. There is also a firm place in some disciplines for replication studies and testing out existing results.
>
> *Originary?* Very few people get to work on the undiscovered manuscript, a new invention, a new part of the universe. Many people *do* get to look at things that no one has yet investigated, but these are generally still related to a broader concern.
>
> *Authenticity?* – Well yes, and no. The PhD is all the doctoral researcher's own work. It mustn't be plagiarized. But almost every piece of research

> draws on other research – it uses other people's work as building blocks, it is situated in and converses with its field as a challenge, a complementary addition, a re-framing" (Thomson, 2015, n.d).

Rather, "originality is taking the reader…the thesis reader/examiner…somewhere which is simultaneously familiar and not. "Original thinking and writing defamiliarizes and, in doing so, recovers a newness about the topic no matter how well trodden it is" (ibid).

This thesis has attempted to recover a newness about a well-trodden topic on decentralisation. The thesis provides numerous theoretical and empirical contributions to existing literature. It contributes to the literature on multi-level systems of government and governance studies, in particular, decentralisation. Further, scholarly work on decentralisation on the African continent is often grounded on conditionalities imposed by the Bretton Wood Institutions. Therefore, decentralisation in Africa is linked to the Structural Adjustment Programmes of donor institutions as part of 'good governance'. The phrase 'good governance' in its normative dimension refers to factors such as "transparency, participation, accountability, and the rule of law" (Asaduzzaman & Virtanen, 2016; p.6; Obeng-Odoom, 2017). However, Olivier de Sardan (2011) argued that governance in this context is depoliticised of its public affairs dimension. Thus, a case can be made that decentralisation reforms in Africa were mediated through an asymmetrical power relation between international organisations and the host countries.

However, in the South African context, decentralisation reforms were not influenced by international factors but were rather internally mediated by political actors within the country. Thus, this thesis provides an alternative explanation that in South Africa, the adoption of decentralisation reforms was underpinned by internal power structures during the CODESA negotiations. The current study, therefore, analyses decentralisation from a political settlement point of view. This approach, rather than depoliticise, 'repoliticises' decentralisation into the realm of public affairs.

Furthermore, this thesis contributes to the theoretical literature on multi-level systems of government, particularly the 'special type of decentralisation' in South Africa. The adoption of a quasi-federal form of government presents an interesting case study because it has all the hallmark of an artifice. While the Constitution declares South Africa a unitary state, it reflects an ethnic schism associated with the old Bantustan systems. This political chicanery has caused much confusion and diverse interpretations of its true meanings and intentions. Indeed, in analysing Mahatma Gandhi's exposition on decentralisation, Uyinal (1988, p. 38) stated that to "treat Gandhi's dream of decentralisation as a mere formula or constitutional imperative to be pushed through regardless of actual and prevailing circumstance, is to convert a great idea into a deceitful slogan". Indeed, even post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa is still ambivalent whether it constitutes one political community (Conlan & Laboureau, 2014, p. 222) or it is just an "imagined political community" (Anderson, 2006, p. 6).

Finally, the case study on the District Development Model (DDM) demonstrates that sometimes, significant changes to a foundational law are not necessary to alter governance patterns. Through the DDM, the study highlights the power play, dynamics, and politics of public policies. It demonstrates the blurred lines between public administration and politics. Indeed, Uyinal (1988) argued that while democratic decentralisation proposes to solve the problem of an inefficient and unresponsive administration, public administration has, however, always been the instrument of politics. Therefore, to understand it requires an understanding of the political environment in which it functions. But, importantly, the main objective of the DDM was to get rid of the silo mentality prevalent within government institutions. However, through evidence, the DDM rather entrenches silo mentality and worsened cooperation among the three spheres of government. The DDM confirms Gall's (1977) observation that sometimes systems tend to oppose their own proper function.

Conclusions

This chapter presented the study's theoretical and conceptual frameworks. In conclusion, literature suggests that decentralisation policies have largely failed to live up to their expectations. Smoke (2001) went further and asked whether

any empirical justification exists for pursuing decentralisation policies. On the African continent, Erk (2014) claimed that more than 20 years after the reforms that brought about decentralisation, a huge gap exists between the constitutional and institutional blueprint that introduced the reforms and facts on the ground.

Erk (2014) argues that decentralisation has slowly given way to recentralisation because of the lack of political and economic capacity of the sub-national units. Lack of capacity, infrastructure and qualified officials at the sub-national level have brought the central government back in. This is especially evident in patrimonial development programmes and big infrastructure projects that advance national objectives that bring central governments into the policy domain that belongs to local governments. Citing the case of Uganda, for instance, Erk (2014) claimed that the growth of sub-national entities was dependent more on patronage networks than on their own competencies (see also Obeng-Odoom, 2017).

Erk (2014) asks whether the reasons behind recentralisation are because of a unforeseen circumstances. In other words, is it because of the long-term consequences of structural deficiency in infrastructure and administrative capacity of the newly formed sub-national units? Or are the reasons for recentralisation the result of contradictions of the original constitutional settlement, for example, the rapid creation of sub-national units?

Murray and Simeon (2012) appear to agree with the latter point, as they indicate that multi-level governance in South Africa was a result of a peace settlement rather than a careful analysis of the costs and benefits of decentralisation. As a result, implementing this multi-level regime in South Africa has been challenging. Cameron (2014) indicates that inter-party conflict is another reason for limited decentralisation in South Africa. Citing the DA-controlled City of Cape Town, Cameron (2014) claims that the ANC attempted to undermine the municipality by introducing floor-crossing legislation, resulting in councillors defecting from the DA to the ANC.

Murray and Simeon (2012) indicate that decentralisation may limit government's ability to coordinate programmes in the broader national interest. Too much consultation with sub-national governments can slow the pace of reform (Phillimore, 2013).

Faguet (2009) argues that the outputs of decentralisation are largely determined by local-level political and institutional dynamics. Additionally, Faguet (2009) indicates that to understand decentralisation, we must first understand how local government works. The DDM offered a critical case study on decentralisation and governance theory by illuminating the role of policy actors in policy implementation. The multiplicity of actors, the role of central government, provinces, municipalities, and districts, all operating within a 'One Plan, One Budget' framework, sets the scene for a complex situation. This study, therefore, explored the apparent declining role of the local municipality, the rise of the district municipalities, and the claimed recentralisation of political power by the central government.

Chapter 4. RESEARCH STRATEGY, APPROACH, DESIGN, AND METHODS

This section will outline the epistemological basis of the study, and the research strategy employed to answer the main research question. In answering the main research question, the study employed a qualitative mode of enquiry. The purpose of the study is to understand the dynamics of decentralised governance and the intergovernmental relations framework in South Africa. The DDM was selected as case study to interrogate these two concepts.

4.1. Research approach

According to Creswell (2014), research approaches are planning and the procedures for research that encompass the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

These plans involve making several decisions, and they need not be taken in the order in which they make sense to the researcher. The decisions involve which approach should be used to study a topic and should be informed by the philosophical assumptions the researcher brings to the study, procedures of inquiry (called research designs), and specific research methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Creswell (2014) then explains that the selection of a research approach is also influenced by the nature of the research problem or issue being addressed.

In the main, research can employ one of three approaches: qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods. In selecting one approach over another, researchers should begin the process with philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology), how they know what is known (epistemology), the inclusion of the values (axiology), the nature in which their research emerge (methodology), and their writing structure (Creswell, 2009). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative researchers use various interpretive paradigms to address these assumptions, such as positivist or post-positivist, constructivist, critical, and feminist-post structural.

This study, therefore, emanates from my assumptions and perceptions of reality and the methods of how they can be pursued. The study is grounded in a constructivism-interpretivist approach. According to Van der Walt (2020), interpretivism and constructivism are two sides of the same coin, while Wagner et al. (2012) indicate that the two concepts are related and address understanding the world in ways that others experience it. An interpretivist approach involves researchers interpreting elements of the study, thus integrating human interest into a study. Interpretive-constructivist researchers use the term more generally to interpret the meaning of something from a certain perspective. The basic assumption of this paradigm is that knowledge is socially constructed by people active in the research process. Thus, researchers should attempt to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it (Gakuu et al., 2016). Accordingly, this philosophy emphasises qualitative analysis over quantitative analysis.

4.1.1. Research design

As already stated, a research approach can be quantitative, qualitative or mixed method. Quantitative research is an approach used to test objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. Qualitative research, on the other hand, is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups attach to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2009). However, Creswell (2009) states that the researcher not only selects among these approaches; that is, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. The researcher also must decide on a research design within these methods. For qualitative research, some of these designs are narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnographies, and case studies. Based on the exploratory nature of the current study, the qualitative case study methodology is the most appropriate. A qualitative case study is a method of research that assists the investigation of a phenomenon within its own setting (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This study thus used a case study approach.

4.1.2. Case selection and the study population

The DDM is a complex national development programme that cuts across all spheres of government. One of its objectives is to bridge the gap between the three spheres of government, state entities, and private sector stakeholders. It is a multi-actor, multi-sphere programme situated within a complex and contested political, social, and economic environment. The WC was chosen because of its political dynamics to further problematise decentralisation. This exploration tested the degree of autonomy in sub-national units, in other words, the extent to which sub-national units are able to resist central government directives. This is critical in assessing intergovernmental relations and political forces behind decentralisation and how these impacts service delivery.

For this reason, this study interrogated concepts such as governance, decentralisation, intergovernmental relations, and accountability. What differentiates a case study from other designs is the emphasis on understanding a confined situation or system (Bryman & Bell, 2014). To meet the criteria of a case study, the study collected data from the three spheres of government. The study, therefore, involved the national and the sub-national levels of government, that is, provincial and local governments. A concept, referred to as 'vertically divided authority', amplifies the complexities and contestations of policy-making and implementation within a multi-level form of governance. However, this study has also shown that 'vertically unified' authorities are incompatible with democratic political systems.

4.1.3. Sampling strategy

Since my study focus is on multi-level forms of government, I clustered my study according to the national, provincial, and local government spheres in both provinces. The selection of the cases was done deliberately to obtain different perspectives at different levels of the state and in different provinces. The Gauteng cluster was made up of three national state departments, which are the Department of COGTA, the Presidency, and the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME). However, I decided to 'merge' The Presidency and the DPME, because they are essentially one department.

Also, I struggled to get permission from The Presidency, who, among other reasons, wanted to know why I wanted to interview The Presidency staff because *"the Department of Cooperative Governance is driving the DDM. Why would the researcher want to interview The Presidency staff?"* On the sub-national level, I selected one provincial department, that is, the Gauteng Department of COGTA, one metropolitan municipality (City of Johannesburg) and a district municipality (Sedibeng District Municipality) in Gauteng. The study, therefore, consisted of different state institutions and various individuals across all three spheres of government. The primary selection criteria for respondents were their experiences and insights into the dynamic environment of public policy-making and implementation and intergovernmental relations. Experts who may not necessarily have been part of government but who were knowledgeable about my topic were approach for their insights as well. This variation in sampling was to ensure diverse views to enrich the data collected.

4.1.4. Data collection

Different sources were utilised to collect data and include both primary and secondary data. To collect secondary data, the literature review and government documents, such as legislation and policy documents were used. Indeed, Silverman and Marvasti (2008) argues that texts and documents can provide the same rich data as interviews. Primary data was collected through semi-structured, open-ended interviews with government officials from both the Gauteng and Western Cape provinces. Policy and intergovernmental experts from both the national government and sub-national governments were recruited to participate in the study. It is for these reasons that a purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure only participants who are involved in policy implementation and decision-making were interviewed. The interviews were audio recorded with permission from participants. The data collected, audio recordings, transcripts, and documents were organised according to the type of data and securely stored in their original form in a database. This is not only to ensure confidentiality but also to be able to verify accuracy if called upon to validate my outcomes (Wagner et al., 2012). According to Baxter and Jack (2008:554), "using databases improves reliability of the case study as it enables

the researcher to track and organise data sources including notes and key documents". The interview protocol was developed to guide the researcher during the data collection process. The original participants were clustered according to Table 8.

Table 8: Cluster of institutions and themes

National government	**Themes**	**Location**	**Number**
COGTA (MISA)	Decentralisation, governance & Intergovernmental Relations (IGRs)	Pretoria (Gauteng province)	5
The DPME	IGRs, Governance	Pretoria (Gauteng province)	5
Sub-national governments	**Themes**	**Location**	**Number**
Local Government	Decentralisation, governance & IGRs	Western Cape Provincial government	5
Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality	Decentralisation, governance & IGRs	Johannesburg (GP)	5
Garden Route District Municipality	Decentralisation, governance & IGRs	Western Cape	5
Experts on the topic			
Politicians, academics & other experts	Multi-level governance, IGRs		5

COGTA: Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs; DPME: Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation; MISA: Municipal Infrastructure Support Agency

4.2. Ethical considerations

As a researcher, I was guided by the University of the Witwatersrand's Ethics Policy and School of Governance. Before proceeding with data collection, permission and clearance were sought from the University Ethics Committee. A letter of introduction from the university was shown to the participants. I sought consent from the participants and assured them of their confidentiality and data security. The participants were fully informed of the reason for the study and were given an option not to participate. Attention was paid to ensure that the questions were not leading nor showed any form of bias. As this research might be politically sensitive, the identities of participants will not be disclosed. This was achieved by assigning codes instead of using real names.

4.3. Data collection challenges

Doing empirical studies requires the researcher to visit research sites. This can pose financial and logistical challenges, especially for a multi-case study like

mine. My research sites were in different provinces of South Africa. These provinces were Gauteng, where I reside, and the Western Cape. As a result, this required careful planning due to financial constraints. My initial plan was to begin my interviews in Gauteng province from July 2022 until the end of August 2022. Thereafter I would travel to the Western Cape from September 2022 until October 2022. However, I soon had to adapt my plans due to the difficulties of getting permission letters from the state institutions of interest in both provinces. I had only secured one permission letter from a national Department in Gauteng and had done two interviews. By that time, I had already written three letters to the City of Cape Town, the provincial Department of Local Government, and the Garden Route District Municipality. I promptly received a positive response from the Garden Route Municipality, with a contact person allocated to me for when I arrived there.

However, despite following up with both the City of Cape Town and the Department of Local Government and being promised a response, I never got any feedback. I then wrote a letter to the Office of the Premier of the Western Cape asking for permission to conduct part of my research in the province. The Premier's office graciously, through the Director-general, acceded to my request and promptly sent me the permission letter. They showed great enthusiasm for my topic and asked for a copy of my report when I had completed my study. Although the letter from the Office of the Premier gave me permission to conduct my study in the province, I still needed to ask individual departments for permission. The whole experience taught me about the different organisational cultures that exist not only within the same government but also within the provinces. Perhaps, this explains the different levels of service delivery experienced by citizens in different regions across the country. Writing of their experiences in running the City of Cape Town as both the executive mayor and executive director, respectively, De Lille and Kesson (2017) talk about the reality of bringing different towns together to form the post-apartheid unicity of Cape Town. They talk about how officials brought the cultures of their previous organisations into the new organisation. Various attempts were then made to design the new city, including decisions to either

establish independent business units or a decentralised model of service delivery.

I then decided to take my chances and just drive to the Western Cape armed with the permission letter from the Office of the Premier and another one from the Garden Route District Municipality. An acquittance had managed to connect me with someone who used to work in the provincial Department of Local Government with a view to assisting me with getting permission. I phoned my contact who assured me that when I arrived in Cape Town, he would assist with getting me contacts within the Department. I left Gauteng on the 20th of November 2022. I had decided to travel by car as flying and then having to hire a car when I arrived would be too expensive, especially since the festive season had all but started.

Table 9: Initial study schedule

Location	Position of interviewee	Proposed dates of interview
GAUTENG CLUSTER		
City of Johannesburg	Senior municipal officials	August 2022
COGTA (Provincial Gauteng Province)	Policy experts	July & August 2022
Sedibeng District Municipality	Municipal officials	August 2022
COGTA (National)	Policy experts	July 2022
The Presidency	Policy experts	July 2022
DPME	Planning & policy experts	July 2022
Wits School of Governance	Policy expert	July 2022
WESTERN CAPE CLUSTER		
City of Cape Town	Senior municipal officials	September 2022
Department of Local Government	Municipal officials	September 2022
Garden Route District Municipality	Policy experts	October 2022

COGTA: Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs; DPME: Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation

Table 10: Final schedule

Location	Position of interviewee	Dates of interview
GAUTENG CLUSTER		
National sphere	Planning & policy experts	September 2022
National sphere	Planning & policy experts	October 2022
National sphere	Planning & policy experts	October 2022
National sphere	Planning & policy experts	November 2022
National sphere	Planning & policy experts	March 2023
National sphere	Planning & policy experts	March 2023
National sphere	Director-general	April 2023
Experts	Policy expert	Sept 2022
Expert	Policy expert	June 2023
WESTERN CAPE CLUSTER		
Local Government Dept	Senior municipal officials	November 2022
Local Government Dept	Senior municipal official	February 2023
District Municipality	Senior municipal official	December 2022
District Municipality	Senior municipal official	December 2022
District Municipality	Senior municipal official	December 2022
District Municipality	Senior municipal official	December 2022
District Municipality	Senior municipal official	December 2022
District Municipality	Senior municipal official	February 2023

4.3.1. The road-trip

The delays in getting permission letters in Gauteng and challenges in setting up interviews at the only state institution I had secured permission prompted me to change my plans and rather move my data collection to the Western Cape. The reason was that it was nearly December, and the festive season was around the corner. During this time, accommodation becomes quite expensive and scarce. Therefore, to avoid the holiday rush, I decided to start data collection in the Western Cape and return to Gauteng when I had finished. I was reasoning that since I reside in Gauteng, it will be much easier to deal with the problems and challenges here, unlike the Western Cape, which I am not very familiar with.

The City of Cape Town in the Western Cape province is approximately 1400 kilometres from Johannesburg in Gauteng, travelling on the N1 national route. On this route, you drive through four provinces: Gauteng, Free State, Northern

Cape, and finally the Western Cape. As I drove through the four provinces, I realised how fragmented the country still is along ethnic lines, just like in the past, except for Gauteng, which is the only province with a cosmopolitan feel where you are more likely to hear all the official languages of South Africa. The Northern Cape offered an interesting perspective that while the main languages spoken are Setswana and Afrikaans, as you get closer to the 'border' with both the Eastern Cape and Western Cape, the main languages spoken are now Xhosa and Afrikaans. So Afrikaans is always the common denominator, the constant language spoken on the streets. As I left the Northern Cape and entered the Western Cape, I was struck by a sense of *déjà vu.* There was a sense of familiarity with the time when I was growing up in the Northern Cape. At that time, South Africa only had four provinces. The familiarity was brought about by the yellow provincial government vehicles with 'PV' registration plates that were doing road maintenance, just like in the olden days. The Western Cape was caught between the old and new South Africa, yet there was also a sense of newness.

The following section is a narration of the challenges I encountered as part of my data collection within the Western Cape province. This follows the initial struggles in obtaining the required permissions, highlighted in Section 3.4.

4.3.2. The Western Cape cluster: challenges

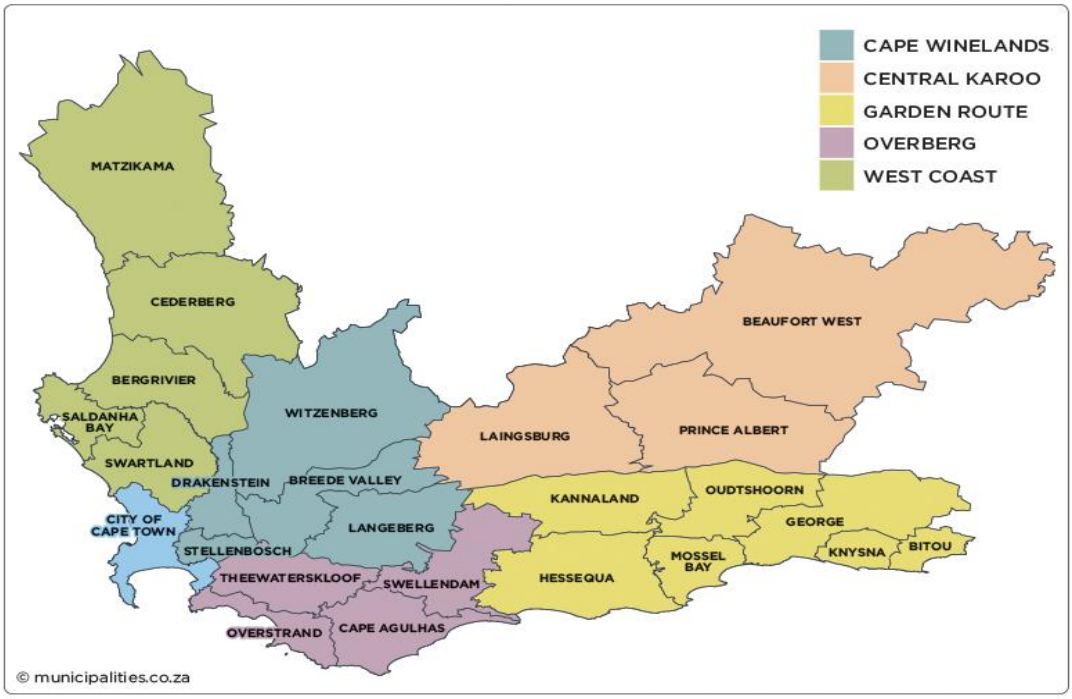


Figure 8: Map of the Western Cape province

I arrived in Cape Town on the 21st of November 2022 because I had decided to break my journey into two days to avoid arriving in Cape Town late at night for safety reasons. I had spent the night in Colesberg, a small town in the Northern Cape, which is approximately halfway between Johannesburg and Cape Town. This is the last town before you enter the Western Cape province. I decided to spend two weeks in the Western Cape for data collection. A day after arriving in Cape Town, I set about phoning my contact to assist with getting me contacts in the Department of Local Government. To my surprise, he instead connected me with someone from the provincial Department of Health. I called my new contact at the Department of Health hoping that he might know someone within the provincial Local Government department. We arranged to meet at his office, which is situated in the city centre of Cape Town within the provincial government buildings. My place of lodging was about 20 kilometres outside the city centre.

On the second day of my arrival, I went into the city centre to meet my contact at the Department of Health. He told me that he has been in Cape Town for

less than a year and does not know anyone at the Department of Local Government. I then decided to rather do my study within the Health Department since the DDM cuts across all government institutions. I asked him to assist me in getting permission from the Department, reasoning that since he is a senior manager there, it might be easy. He instead referred me to someone in the Department to assist me. I then contacted the said official via email, attaching the necessary documents, including the letter from the Premier's office.

My email was copied to several people within the Department. I was then sent a link to register on the National Health Research Database website. I was also asked to send the Ethics Clearance letter (Medical) from my university and my Curriculum Vitae and fill in an attached form labelled '*Summary form for managers'*. I logged on to the link, only to find that the said database, which is controlled by the national Health Department in Pretoria, was, in fact, for medical-related research. My research was non-medical. I had included this information in the Participant Information Sheet together with the Ethics Clearance letter that clearly stated that the research is non-medical. I made the Department aware that my research was non-medical and, therefore, does not require me to register on database. I received this short message from an official in the Department; *"If your project is not focusing on the WC* [Western Cape] *Department of Health – that is patients, staff, infrastructure, systems, etc then our research application system will not be of use to you or your project. Regards".* Like the officials at The Presidency, no effort was made to engage with what my research focus was about, despite the information being available on the Participant Information Sheet.

I was starting to panic because time was running out. I had planned to stay one week in Cape Town and one week at the Garden Route District Municipality in George. I then decided to go to the Department of Local Government personally on the third day. After getting lost in the city, I found the offices and asked to be taken to the Head of Department's office. There was a lot of arguments with both the security and junior personnel as I did not have an appointment. I outlined the purpose of my visit, explaining that I had driven all the way from Gauteng. I had a copy of my letter of request with me. A senior official in the

HOD's office was called and I explained the purpose of my visit and gave her the letter of request. She then led me to the office of the HOD where I was made to wait in the visitors' lounge. After a while, she came from the HOD's office to inform me that the HOD had agreed to let me interview officials within the Department. She also informed me that since the Premier had given me permission, it was not necessary to get permission from them. Appointments were set for interviews the following day. They also promised to send me information on how the province plans to implement the DDM later that day, which they duly did. The following day I went back to the office to interview two officials. Unfortunately, due to work commitments I could not interview the HOD and other officials. We then agreed that I would interview other officials virtually in the new year when I returned to Gauteng. Indeed, the interviews were conducted during the first week of January 2023. More documents were emailed to me, which greatly assisted me with my study.

When I was done at the Department, I then went to the City of Cape Town to enquire about my request for permission that I had sent some months earlier. I arrived at the reception, which was manned by security officials. I asked to see someone from the mayor's office. Again, the issue of an appointment came up. I explained that I did not have an appointment but was following up on the request sent to the municipality on the 1st of July 2022. They phoned some official in the mayor's office, and I explained the reason for my visit. She asked me the email address where the request was sent, and I gave her the address. She informed such emails would normally go to the office of the City Manager, and not the mayor. I then asked the security officials to call the City Manager's office. They called the City Manager's Personal Assistant to come down and meet me, but she refused, preferring to rather talk on the phone. After explaining the reason for my visit, she asked for the email address where I had sent my request. After giving her the email address, she explained that it did not exist and had probably lifted it from Google, even though I got it from the city website. She then told me that the email address was for requests for meetings with the City Manager by the public only. She then gave me a new email address to send my request to. I left with the intention of sending another

request for permission to gather data at the municipality. If permission was granted, it would be virtual interviews as I would have returned to Gauteng.

Just over a week after I arrived in Cape Town, I left for the Garden Route District Municipality in George on the 30th of November. George is approximately 450 kilometres from Cape Town in the southern Cape. I had already alerted my contact at the municipality of my time of arrival. On the morning of the 1st of December, I visited their offices to commence my interviews. The relevant officials were already informed, and everything went well on the first day. I went again on the second day to meet more officials, but unfortunately, although they were willing to participate in my study, due to work commitments, I could not meet them. It was agreed that a virtual meeting would be arranged for those I could not meet personally. On the 3rd of December, I returned to Gauteng. I interviewed one official from the Western Cape provincial government virtually in January 2024. I was also given some policy documents to read.

Upon returning to Gauteng province in the first week of December 2022, I immediately resumed my fieldwork within the province. The following section is an account of my experiences.

4.3.3. The Gauteng cluster: challenges

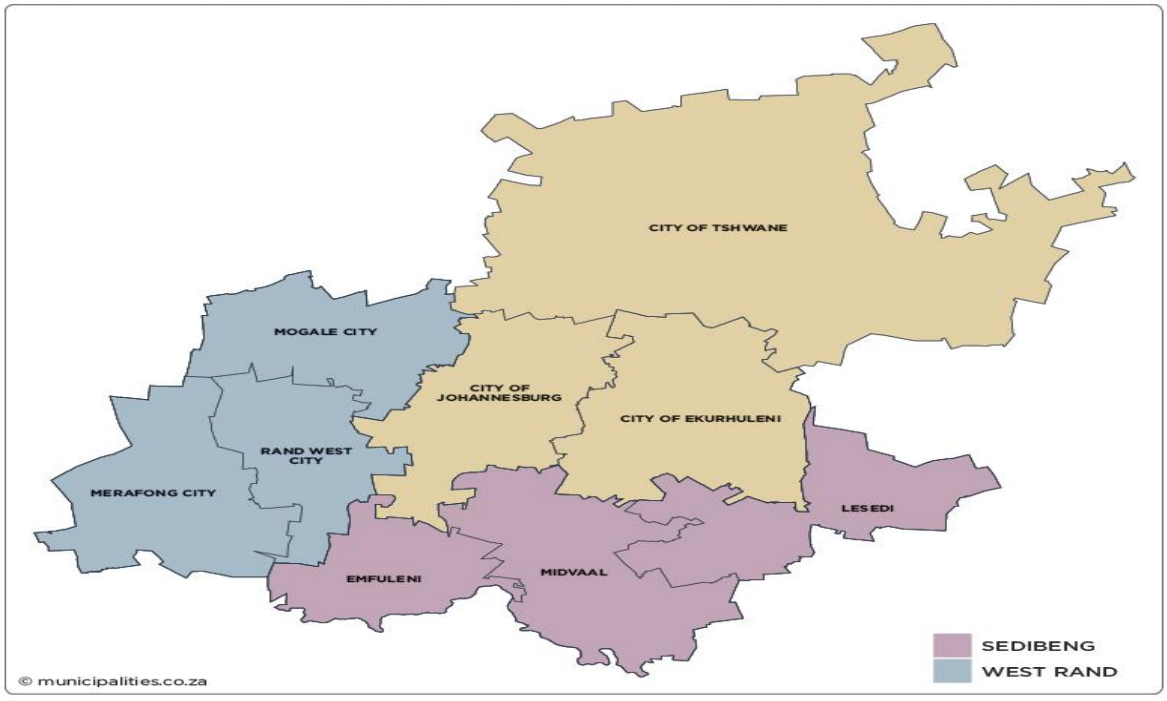


Figure 9: Map of the province of Gauteng

After returning to Gauteng from the Western Cape province, I resumed my data collection activities within the province. Despite my best efforts, which included sending emails and making phone calls, I could not get permission from the national Department of COGTA, the Gauteng provincial COGTA, and the Sedibeng District Municipality. The requests were first sent between June and July 2022. In the case of the national Department of COGTA, I managed to get the cell phone number of the Director-general from my ex-colleague who works at another national department. I sent the Director-general a WhatsApp message, briefly outlining my study focus and requesting permission to interview staff. The message was read, but there was no response. Again, through assistance from my ex-colleague, I sent another WhatsApp message, this time to the Director-general's personal assistant, who asked me to again email her my request. I had emailed her before. I again emailed my request with all relevant documentation. However, my request was declined by the acting Director-general, who was acting on behalf of the Director-general to whom I had earlier sent a message and received no response. The message from the Department read: *"A study of this nature has merit, and it could provide directives to improve inter-sphere cooperation in South Africa. However, due to the commitment and current responsibilities of dCoG* [5] [Department of Cooperative Governance] *staff to priority projects, it is not possible at this juncture to provide dedicated assistance to this study. We do, however, believe that this study should be done and trust that Mr. Kgosinyane will successfully complete this study."* The Department then proceeded, *"We wish you the best of luck with your studies."* My research supervisor pleaded with the Department to reconsider their decision; however, no response was forthcoming. Naturally, this development was disappointing not only because the national Department of COGTA institutionally manages the DDM, but primarily because it oversees

[5] The Department of COGTA consists of two components, namely, Cooperative Governance, and Traditional Affairs. The study, however, is focused on the Cooperative Governance component.

local government, or as one participant puts it, *"it is a single window towards local government".*

The same difficulties were experienced at the Gauteng Provincial Department of COGTA and the Sedibeng District Municipality. At the provincial COGTA, initially, when I sent my request in July 2022, I got a quick response with reassurance that my request was receiving attention. However, I never got any feedback. When I returned from Cape Town, I phoned a senior official at the provincial office of COGTA enquiring about my request for permission. My supervisor had assisted me to get contact details of officials in the Department. The official was surprised when I enquired about my request for permission because, according to him, he signed the permission letter a "*long time ago"* and was surprised that I had not received it. I then offered to go to the office personally to fetch the letter as their offices were not too far from my place of residence. He told me that it was not necessary and that he would attend to it when he got to the office as he was attending a meeting elsewhere. I never heard from him again. In February 2023, I called another official in the Office of the Head of Department, whom I initially corresponded with when I first sent my request. She promised to make enquiries and promised to come back to me the same day but never did. At the City of Johannesburg, I did not struggle too much to get permission; however, getting participants for my study proved difficult. I contacted some participants via LinkedIn who agreed to take part in my study but got no response from them after contacting them via email and WhatsApp messages. In the end, although I managed to get permission from both the Municipal Infrastructure Support Agency, which is an implementing agent for the Department of COGTA, and the City of Johannesburg, I was unable to interview any participants. Tables 11 and 12 show the original interview plan and the actual outcomes, respectively.

Table 11: Cluster of institutions and themes (original interview schedule)

National government	Themes	Location	Number
COGTA (MISA)	Decentralisation, governance & Intergovernmental Relations (IGRs)	Pretoria (Gauteng Province)	5
The DPME	IGRs	Pretoria (Gauteng Province)	5
Sub-national governments	**Themes**	**Location**	**Number**
Local Government	Decentralisation, governance & IGRs	Western Cape Provincial government	5
Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality	Decentralisation, governance & IGRs	Johannesburg (GP)	5
Garden Route District Municipality	Decentralisation, governance & IGRs	Western Cape	5
Experts on the topic			
Politicians, academics & other experts	Multi-level governance, IGR		5

COGTA: Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs; DPME: Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation

Table 12: Cluster of institutions & themes (actual outcomes)

National government	Themes	Location	Number
The DPME	Intergovernmental Relations (IGRs), Governance	Pretoria (Gauteng Province)	6
Sub-national governments	**Themes**	**Location**	**Number**
Local Government	Decentralisation, governance & IGRs	Western Cape Provincial government	**3**
Garden Route District Municipality	Decentralisation, governance & IGRs	Western Cape	5
Experts on the topic			
Politicians, academics & other experts	Multi-level governance, IGRs		2

4.3.4. Limitations of the study

While the study focused on decentralised governance, it takes a narrow view of a specific programme of government, namely the DDM. Another limitation might be generalisability, as the study is limited to only two provinces out of nine. As Todes and Turok (2017) note, there is uneven capacity within government, reinforced by political divisions and power dynamics. The relationship between the three spheres of government was explored. Nevertheless, the local sphere of government is charged with the delivery of services. Therefore, the study did not consider governance in wider public

policy-making processes of government. Nevertheless, the lessons learned might be beneficial in other institutions of government when policies are crafted. While this study attempted a 'whole of government' approach, the principal limitations of the project, however, were the difficulties in getting insights from the provincial sphere of government in Gauteng, and both metropolitans (Category A) in Gauteng and the Western Cape. Further, in planning this study, the B (local level) municipalities were not included; only the Category A and C (metropolitan and district level) were considered. And, as explained above, in the end, even Category A municipalities could not be included due to problems in accessing study participants. This omission (of Category B municipalities) was because, like most government officials, I was confused by the term 'district' to mean a municipal jurisdiction instead of a geographical space. Had such a clarification become available before the study commenced, I would have included the local municipalities to get better insights into their relationship with the district municipalities. Also, it was only during data collection that the scale of the conflicts, contestations, tensions, and competition between the B and C municipalities became apparent. Yet, insights gained from the national, provincial, and district-level informants provided an informed analysis of the intergovernmental tensions and the power and political dynamics within decentralisation systems, not only in South Africa but elsewhere.

4.4. Conclusions

This chapter presented a detailed description of the research strategy, approach, design, and methods. It also highlighted the challenges and difficulties encountered during the data collection process. It exposed the disconnection between policy-making and implementation. For example, Chapter 9 of the National Development Plan focuses on education and aspires that South Africa produce 5000 PhD graduates per year until 2030. Yet here I am, a PhD candidate struggling to get permission to conduct my research within state institutions. Judging by this attitude, one wonders how other government programmes, such as the DDM, will fare.

Although these challenges and experiences do not form part of the intellectual angle of this study, they raise questions about the culture and openness of government institutions and officials. To transform the post-apartheid public service, the government introduced a White Paper named *Batho Pele* (People First) on Transforming the Public Service. It aimed to enhance the quality and accessibility of government services to citizens through an efficient and accountable public service. It contained eight principles, including increasing access, ensuring courtesy, providing information, and openness and transparency. These principles somehow created an impression of a people-centred government. With very few exceptions, my experience was the exact opposite.

Chapter 5. PRESENTATION OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents empirical results to determine the institutional, political, and contextual factors of decentralisation in South Africa. Individual semi-structured interviews were adopted to generate primary data. Public officials from the three clusters as shown in Table 12, and two experts in the study field were recruited for the study. The three clusters are the national (NS), the provincial (PS), and the local government (LC) spheres, while the letter X denotes experts in the field of study. All in all, 16 semi-structured interviews were conducted.

This thesis is concerned with answering the broad research question **What are the institutional and contextual factors of decentralised governance in South Africa?**

In Chapter 1, the following arguments were presented: Firstly, following the political choices made at CODESA that overemphasised consensus rather than transformative political engagements, the pre-1994 ethnic-based political cultures and power centres continued to shape the post-1994 governance arrangements.

Secondly, decentralisation is fashioned on the assumed maturity of South Africa's political cultures to deal with the contrasting interests of political actors and institutional variations.

Thirdly, following the different political cultures, governance is underpinned by power, which is exercised within both coded and uncoded frameworks driven by variations in the interpretation of the Constitution.

To critically explore these arguments, the DDM was selected as a case study. This chapter thus presents the results of the empirical investigation in three broad themes: the institutional, political, and contextual factors of decentralised governance in South Africa, decentralisation and the formation of autonomous centres of power, and the DDM and the diffusion and recentralisation of power.

This study adopted a ‘whole of government’ approach to better understand the interactions among the three spheres of government. The ‘whole of government’ concept was a response to the fragmentations caused by the New Public Management reforms. According to Christensen and Lægreid (2007, p. 1060, New reforms initially labelled “joined-up government” and later “whole of government,” were launched to apply a more holistic strategy of coordination and integration in government. First introduced in the United Kingdom, the main aim was to get a “better grip on the wicked issues straddling the boundaries of public sector organizations, administrative levels, and policy areas” (Christensen & Lægreid, 2007, p. 1060).

Table 13: Overview of participants

Participant code	Cluster	Date of interview	Venue	Duration of interview
X1	Expert	22/09/2022	Virtual	-+40 minutes
NS1	National sphere	06/10/2022	Virtual	40 min, 29 sec
NS2	National sphere	06/10/2022	Pretoria	41 min, 40 sec
NS3	National sphere	15/11/2022	Virtual	34 min, 50 sec
NS4	National sphere	07/03/2023	Pretoria	1hr, 29 min, 46 sec
NS5	National sphere	07/03/2023	Pretoria	Interviewed at same time as NS4
NS6	National sphere	05/04/2023	Virtual	55 min, 14 sec
PS3	WC provincial sphere	10/01/2023	Virtual	56 min,53 sec
PS1	WC provincial sphere	28/11/2022	Cape Town	40 min, 45 sec
PS2	WC provincial sphere	28/11/2022	Cape Town	Interviewed at same time as PS1
LC2	WC local government sphere	01/12/2022	George WC	1 min, 48 sec, & 29 min, 19 sec
LC5	WC local government sphere	01/12/2022	George WC	20 min, 24 sec
LC4	WC local government sphere	01/12/2022	George WC	45 min, 39 sec
LC6	WC local government sphere	01/12/2022	George WC	29 min, 45 sec
LC1	WC local government sphere	24/02/2023	Virtual (after face-to face meeting, due to time constraints)	1hr, 41 min, 7sec
X2	Expert	12/06/2023	Virtual	50 min, 47 sec

NS: National Sphere; PS: Provincial Sphere; LC: Local Sphere; WC: Western Cape; X: Expert

This chapter is organised according to themes derived from the interviews. Section 5.1 details the context in which decentralisation in South Africa was undertaken. As noted in Chapter 2, the current governance structure was a product of the CODESA negotiations. This is followed by an exploration of power dynamics among the different governance actors in Section 5.2. Section 5.3 sheds light on the IGRs, and finally, Section 5.4 explores whether the DDM depicts the recentralisation of power.

5.1. Institutional, political, and contextual factors of decentralisation in South Africa

This sub-section presents the empirical results to determine the institutional, political, and contextual factors of decentralisation in South Africa. However, what emerged after the negotiations at CODESA was a weak form of federalism. Decentralisation in South Africa did not come about because of a carefully considered development strategy but rather because of a political settlement following the demise of the apartheid regime (Chapter 2). As a result, the costs and benefits of decentralisation were not considered. As one senior local government official put it:

> *"I'm not sure where to start because this is one of the subject*[s] *I think our forefathers, when they started this, they, I think they analysed by that particular time, the climate and the condition of that particular climate. And I think one needs to understand first what could be the reasons why then the three layer was created and one needed first to analyse it. I understand our Constitution was done based on the challenges which our forefathers were trying to address, internal service deliveries and bureaucracy and, and so forth, one can go on. Hence, they created that, and I think in any other systems, there are challenges. Hence, now I thought to give a background of…I think our forefathers, what was the reason why they came with that, but that the good intention of our forefathers is coming now to become* [an] *impediment to service delivery, because who's suffering? Is not the professional legislation, or the Constitution or Systems Act, Structures Act, MFMA* [Municipal Finance Management Act 41 of 2003]*, not that."* (interview, Participant LC1)

Another senior national government official suggests that, as in other countries coming out of conflict, decentralisation reforms were adopted as a political settlement. This view is captured in Chapter 3 as part of the literature review':

> *"There's a lot of, globally, there's a lot of debates around the best constitution and the best form of government that any country could, should have. And most countries go through a process often after a*

period of conflict, as we had in South Africa. Then they go through a process of having some kind of constitutional assembly and agreeing on a constitution. Most countries [that] *have constitutions, I think, have had those constitutions resulting from some kind of constitutional assembly, often following a long period of conflict. And of necessity, those constitutional negotiations include an element of settlement of the conflicts and meeting the interests of the various parties to some extent so that the conflict can be settled*." (interview, Participant NS5)

"…my view on all of this would be that there's a large number of different ways in which you could structure the government and assign functions to different levels of government, and you could have a very highly centralised system or you could have a very highly decentralised system, or you could have a mix of in between and, you could have some functions at local level and some eventually, and others, and national, is it. You could, as you could imagine, there's potentially an infinite number of different ways of arranging the organisational structure of government. Now my view on this is that it's a mistake to think that there's a perfect solution. Yes, there's only one organisational design, which is the perfect one, because I think that's a bit of a Holy Grail that we go around chasing the perfect organisational design when it doesn't actually exist and it becomes a red herring and it becomes a bit like Don Coquito chasing windows in Spain on the back of his horse because you're looking for perfect organisational design. And when it actually doesn't exist as the sort of silver bullet solution to the problems when actually, in my view, you could make any number of those, or you could make quite a few. Some of them would obviously be inappropriate, like, for example, a very highly centralised governance system in South Africa would be inappropriate because South Africa is so diverse and we have to recognise that diversity and it, they may, for example, just off the top of my head to give one example, for example, KwaZulu-Natal might not at all be happy if there was a high degree of centralisation and KwaZulu-Natal started to feel that it was being dominated by Pretoria or by other

groups in the country. And you can say the same for the Western Cape and for Cape Town. So, we need to have a certain level of decentralisation just to deal with the fact that we're such a diverse country and given our history and the various and the legacy of apartheid and colonialism that we have, we may need to manage all of those legacies. So that rules out some for example, very highly centralised governance design, but despite that, leaving that aside, right, there's still a large number of other types of organisation design that we could choose from." (interview, Participant NS5)

However, having the two concepts of 'unitary' and 'federalism' co-existing in one polity has proven challenging. The two concepts limit and enable the autonomy of constituent units simultaneously, as noted in Chapter 3. Also, as noted in Chapter 2, the negotiated settlement has ensured the continued fragmentation of South Africa, as it was during the Bantustan era. As one national government official remarked:

"Let me tell you my preference, which is not a perfect one. South Africa, is a very small country, both in terms of population, in terms of size and also in terms of its maturity as a democracy. The compromise that was made at CODESA to have this quasi-federal state is a problem. When you say quasi, you're talking about two systems that actually are in conflict with each other, and you're trying to implement them at the same time. It can't work. So, you either go for a strong central government, or you go for a federal, full federal. Given the political challenges that we have in this country, I wouldn't advocate for a full federal. I would advocate for a strong central government here with strong district municipalities funded by the very same central government and funded in this way." (interview, Participant NS4, Senior government official and member of the ANC)

5.2. Decentralisation and the creation of autonomous centres of power

In '*Power: A New Social Analysis*', Russell (2004, p. 292) submits that to tame power, a federal form of government is desirable because "the local interests

and sentiments of the constituent unit are stronger than the interests and sentiments connected with the federation". As noted in Chapter 3, this thesis finds this view problematic and thus agrees with Lindell's (2008) argument that even if power is pervasive, it still has centres. As one senior district municipal official indicates:

> *"Yes, the municipalities* [local], *they are autonomous, and they make their own decision…"* (interview, Participant LC2)

District municipalities share responsibilities with local municipalities. They derive their powers from the Constitution and the MSA; see further the discussions on Chapter 2. Their purpose, among other things, is to build local municipalities where there is no capacity. However, funding appears to be playing a big role in who 'calls the shots' between the two-tier local municipalities, that is the district and the local municipalities. According to one district municipal official, while local municipalities (Category B municipalities) are empowered through legislation to raise their own revenue through various service charges, the district municipalities only depend on the equitable share from the central government, which is not enough and therefore leave them with no *"bargaining power"* (Participant LC4) with the B municipalities, as stated by Participant LC4. Thus, the ability to raise its own revenue strengthens local government autonomy and power. As also explained by one district official, their funding model has been progressively reduced through the abolition of levies and the Municipal Infrastructure Grant:

> *"Can I be very honest with you, it's very problematic, because municipalities want to be autonomous. …Just to give you an idea, many years back when we still…the district municipality still received or still, we were working on the levy system, remember we used to get levies from businesses in the, in the whole district, we used to have quite a lot of money and then we used to once a year, twice a year, we used to have these ceremonies where we handed over money to the B municipalities, but then legislation came, it changed and now the budgets of the B municipalities, are generally much bigger than the Cs* [district

municipalities]. *So, our part of money has become less and less and less and less as a district municipality. So, and the bargaining power of district municipalities, if you don't have the money, who's going to listen to you? And the problem is that although at a higher level they are proposing the District Development Model, if the money doesn't come with it, now the district model comes, but where's the funding? You've taken away the levies, you abolish the levies, you've also taken away the MIG* [Municipal Infrastructure Grant] *funding, now what bargaining power do we have with Bs to say oh no, we're* [going to] *go and assist you now with the smallest budget in the whole district."* (interview, senior district municipality official, Participant LC4)

The two-tier local government system and the insistence of local municipalities to exercise their autonomy affect the delivery of services, including local businesses whose manufactured products are distributed locally and internationally. Yet both the province and the district municipality are unable to intervene when the local municipality is unable to provide basic services. This participant, who is a senior official at the district municipality, demonstrates how local autonomy affects the district's intervention efforts. The challenges of the overlapping mandates have been discussed in Chapter 3:

"Now from, because I've been working for the district [for] over 13 years; I am now in local municipalities, I was working for George [district municipality] *for 10 years. Understanding of local and the district, what are the functions of local, what the function of the district and where then it matters, then you will find out people who will say that no, no because we are autonomous, don't get involved in our domestic issues. Now we are sitting with the challenge where I will say that it's a man-made disaster in Kannaland* [local municipality], *but the businesses and the communities are suffering. Now as a district, we want to intervene. Kannaland is existing of manufacturing of your products like your cheese' I think it's called Lancewood and Ladysmith cheese. They are also, I think worldwide been recognised* [for]*, they call it Hannepoort, it's a liquor. Now currently they are faced with the challenge of water supply to those*

businesses, water supply to the community; hence, the district now needs to engage. This morning, we sat and there was a question raised by [the] *MM* [municipal manager], *do we have powers as a district to get it off? And everybody starts looking at each other, and nobody could answer…because we understood and, and I don't think we were bold enough to say that but they are autonomous on their own, we can't get this thing off. Because the province is also in the process of coming to assist. But we cannot also still just go in there, yes, we still can get through the Disaster* [Act], *we can go and do what we need to do. But we still need their council to take* [a] *decision and say the district and the province should come and help. That's where the problem is.*" (interview with senior district municipal official, Participant LC1).

What complicates matters further is that as per their constitutional mandate, the district municipalities are expected to assist and capacitate local municipalities when the latter is unable to fulfil its mandate. As a result, the district found itself as second respondents when the local municipalities were taken to court by local businesses for failing to provide basic services. Citing the case of another municipality, this participant explains that despite the constitutional provisions empowering them to intervene, district municipalities cannot "just fly in there" as they must first be invited by the local municipalities:

"I can't recall this municipality somewhere in the Eastern Cape, where the service delivery, the sewage was flowing on the road and whatever'. Now there's a case study which went to Concourt [Constitutional Court]*, Boxer, which is a supermarket, then took them to court. And who was cited* [for] *that? It was a district* [municipality] *of that area, that district fail*[ed]*. Now the local municipality failed, but the district also failed to come in to assist. Now when you look at the function of the district, it's very broad. We are there to provide capacity. But this capacity can be provided sometimes when it's asked. It cannot just fly in there.*" (Participant LC1).

Since these local government powers are constitutionally entrenched, even national government cannot also just 'fly in' to assist when local municipalities fail. This results in intergovernmental failures. Citing another court case involving the Department of COGTA, which is responsible for local government, the participant explains further:

> *"The functions of these three spheres of government deflecting that autonomous one in relation to intergovernmental relations, one need to ask another for assistance, the other* [sphere] *cannot just like...you look at the Joburg, Tshwane,* [metropolitans in the province of Gauteng] *what happened, and COGTA fly in to go and try to assist. And what happened? We took them to court. And COGTA was wrong. That local municipality never said come and help us. So, I'm concerned about our systems*." (Participant LC1)

The Western Cape exceptionalism

As stated in Chapter 2, the Bavarian state in Germany, which, though part of the German federation, defines itself outside the German federal system and thus regards itself an autonomous state. Similar tendencies have been observed in the province of the Western Cape, South Africa. As the only province not under the ANC rule, the Western Cape province has always displayed a state of exceptionalism, even in how its provincial governance structures are organised. More like the state of Bavaria in Germany, which, although part of the federal government, is distinct from the rest of the other states. For example, while the other eight provinces follow the national norm in naming their provincial departments, its provincial department responsible for local municipalities is referred to as the 'Department of Local Government' instead of the 'Department of Cooperative Governance'. Its provincial Members of the Executive Council (MECs) are referred to as Provincial Ministers. This state of exceptionalism extends to developmental programmes. Following the launch of the national DDM, the provincial government of the Western Cape, a provincial programme called the JDMA. However, it also highlights intra-party power struggles between the central government and provincial government of

the Western Cape. This is implied by one district municipal official when asked if the DDM will worsen tension between the B and C municipalities:

> "*I don't know if you know about…the Western Cape have a different view, Joint District Metro Approach, JDMA?"* (interview, Participant LC2)

Launching of the provincial counterplan has caused confusion within the Western Cape province with officials having to choose between the national and provincial plans. This suggests that while the DDM is not universally accepted, the JDMA is also not universally accepted in the province. This was demonstrated by one senior district municipal official at the Garden Route District Municipality when asked if the JDMA is a parallel plan to the DDM. The official initially attempted to shift the question to the HOD [Head of Department]:

"You must actually ask that to my HOD. I think you must also talk to him to get that answer. I think you should address this question to him because we struggle...you are asking the same question that we all are asking, why? But that is how it is. That is the instructions we get from them. But I know everyone is not in agreement with that we have our own [programme]*, because there is a national model, and we follow the national example. And you must tell him* [HOD] *I referred a question to him. Maybe we'll have a better answer because I also don't understand why they're doing things like this*." (interview, Senior District Municipal official, Participant LC6)

However, financial incentives appear to be the main driver of providing support for either national or provincial programmes. This shows how political actors utilise financial resources as a power mechanism to achieve their objectives. In some cases, actors 'double dip' from both the national and provincial spheres of government for funding, as demonstrated by these two officials:

> "*That is the instructions we get from them. But I know everyone is not in agreement with that, that we have our own* [plan]. *Because there is a national model, and we follow the national example. So, if we apply for funding and stuff, if we have to apply to the province, you must call it a JDMA* [Joint District and Metro Approach]*. If you go to national, DDM*

[District Development Model]. *I don't know really; it's actually a joke.*" *Please don't mention my name".* (interview, Senior District Municipal official, Participant LC6)

"We have done that as a district; we submitted it, but then when we submitted it, we submitted under two names DDM/JDMA. When [the] *national issue the money it is not going to issue the money under the banner of JDMA. So, if you are under the banner of JDMA, you're* [going to] *get a zero. Hence there's a lot of projects now coming here so (Interview, senior district municipal official*." (Participant LC1)

5.3. Uncooperative cooperative governance

From the interviews, it became clear that the IGRs framework is difficult in practice resulting in poor cooperation among spheres. According to participants, the framework is weak and does not compel officials to work together. Thus, the DDM has subsumed the role of the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act (Act 13 of 2005). For example, this participant argued that rather than being an Act, the IGRs framework is almost like "a gentleman's agreement":

"I think the last element that I want to say was, it's difficult because obviously in terms of the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act, and people find that more, an act of, almost like a gentleman's agreement, and not necessarily forcing people to work together, but obviously also in terms of the Constitution, to not want to take each other to court". (Participant PS3)

"And also, you know, maybe be more supportive than of the weaker municipalities or the under-resourced or the, you know the struggling municipalities than just to look after their own sort of, you know, so that is something that is really, you know that would be one of the things that will hamper a District Development Model. Unless you've got a way of forcing people to work together, unfortunately, to say, you know, we must

work 'together. It doesn't work like that…we do find that the B [local][6] *municipalities* [are] *still very reluctant to give us their cooperation."* (interview, senior district municipal official, Garden Route, Participant LC4)

Further supporting the claims of this thesis that the DDM appears to subsume the powers of the IGRs framework, an expert had this to say:

"But if you look at the root cause of what the DDM is trying to solve for, it's trying to solve for the fact that there is no mechanism that compels governments to work together effectively. So, you've got the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act, I think it's in 2005, and that enjoins a number of things to happen, and it creates certain type of structure. But there's nothing about how those structures need to properly operate or limits that can be placed on what people can or can't do within or with other spheres. And I think that that is the constraint that the DDM tried to address, is that, you know, you can set up, for example, a MINMEC[7] *meeting, you know, which is MECs* [Members of the Executive Council] *and mayors or a MINMEC meeting, which is national ministers and MECs. But can you compel them to adhere to or follow what has been agreed in those meetings? Or what is the underlying architecture? Perhaps more properly, that actually supports decisions, strategies, policies that emerge from those spaces. So, for example, if you have a city that fundamentally disagrees with and will use the earlier example, a rail rollout or how the rail system is being operated, what mechanism does it have to truly change that system or truly affect the way that it runs? And the answer is it doesn't have a mechanism. It has perhaps a forum through the Intergovernmental Relations* [Framework] *Act that allows it to express itself and allows other people to hear, and it*

[6] Local government in South Africa is categorised into three tiers, which are, single tier Category A (metropolitan municipalities), two tier category B (local municipalities) and C (district municipalities).
[7] "MINMEC"(Ministers-Members of the Executive Council) refers to a standing intergovernmental body consisting of at least a Cabinet member and members of the Provincial Executive Councils responsible for functional areas similar to those of the Cabinet member (COGTA, 2016). In other words, a forum consisting of national government ministers and their provincial counterparts.

could perhaps have several, for us, that are created for this purpose. But nothing that creates a constraint on the behaviour of the SOE [State-Owned Enterprises] *that is affected, which can continue to act as if the metro's* [metropolitan municipality] *input was irrelevant. And, I think that is one of the issues of effective intergovernmental coordination, and there's a lot to be said, and I think it should be acknowledged that getting governments in different spheres of government talking to each other and an information flow is important and significant, and I think that that is true if you have an ambitious developmental goal which requires speedy action, firm decisions that are implemented that take place in complex environments that are effectively programme managed. I don't think that the current incident* [in the] *government relations framework provides that unless there is* [the] *complete will of all participants to approach the developmental project in that way."* (interview, Participant X1)

Indeed, as findings from the literature suggest, see for example, Chapter 2 (Steytler, 2017), part of the problem in cultivating closer cooperation among spheres of government is concurrent functions between the national sphere of government with the lower spheres. While the Constitution grants local municipalities the authority to govern the local affairs of their communities on their initiatives, other spheres also want to provide services at the local level. This interference results in the misalignment of plans between the national and provincial spheres with those of local municipalities, as mentioned by a senior official from the Presidency:

"The key issue there is that I think the relations between the three spheres of government [are] *a bit difficult because the intention of all these spheres is to provide services to the local people. So sometimes you find this misalignment between what national have planned for a specific space, what provincial have planned for a specific space, and what local have planned for a specific space. To really substantiate that, is that I think we went to a level of, say okay, the municipalities have got the IDPs* [Integrated Development Plans], *which was a community*

consultative process, which must be followed to be able to develop that. And then the provincial and national governments have got their annual National Performance Plan, the APPs [Annual Performance Plan] *right? The plan was that when you develop an APP at the provincial level* [it] *must be informed by the IDPs…that is hardly the case, so it's not that. So that framework failed because the IDP doesn't inform the APPs of the provincial government, and then the provincial government APP does not inform the national government APPs. If you find, for example, a department like your Water and Sanitation, which has provincial departments, you will find that if you take the APPs of the nine provincial departments of Water and Sanitation, they don't talk to what their national department is saying. So therefore, it becomes difficult to be cascaded down to the local government level. Then government came* [up] *with what we called the sector plans. The sector plans are meant to say various departments that that are performing within the specific sector, let's say, for example, the basic services sector where you will talk about water, you'll talk about energy, you'll talk about sanitation, you'll talk about the basic services, right? That sector must talk to each other, for, for example, if you are going to build a house in Soweto, for example, that department's plan must talk to the Water* [Department], *so there must be water infrastructure. There must be sanitation infrastructure. There must be energy infrastructure for the electricity and all that. So, then we then no longer call that housing, but then we call it human settlement."* (interview, Participant NS1)

Indeed, both the horizontal and vertical institutional fragmentation led to a lack of coherence further deepening the silo mentality. In the provision of water for example, we have the national Department of Water and Sanitation and its various agencies at the national, provincial, and local government levels. If one considers the province of Gauteng, for example, the institutions involved in water services are the national Department of Water and Sanitation, national Department of Cooperative Governance, provincial COGTA, and Johannesburg Water. Rand Water provides water to the provinces of Gauteng,

Mpumalanga, and the North West. Johannesburg Water is a municipal entity that supplies water within the Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality. National COGTA, to quote two study participants, is a "single window" to local government, which any other institution must first approach if there is an issue of water provision at the local level. When asked who is responsible for water provision failures to communities in this complex intergovernmental episode, the Director-general of Water and Sanitation Department had this to say:

> "*Well, there is a separate provision for us in the national, in the Water Services Act for us to intervene on our own in municipalities, and we're currently working on amendments to that provision to make it clearer that we can do exactly what you're saying without going through the provincial government. And it's really about strengthening our role as a regulator for water and sanitation nationally with regard to municipalities. That goes back to the point that I made earlier that in some of these areas, we need to make the system work better. There's not so much a problem with the fundamental structure of the system, it's more about* [making] *it work, trying harder and being smarter about the way it works, and as far as I can see that doesn't require changes to the Constitution, but in some instances, it might require amendments to the subsidiary legislation. So, as I said, we're working on doing some amendments to Section 63 of the Water Services Act to clarify a bit what DWS* [Department of Water and Sanitation]*, as well as regard to intervening or enforcing minimum norms and standards at municipal level where there is failure.*" (interview with the Director-general, Department of Water and Sanitation, Participant NS6)

A recurring theme throughout the study has been local municipal autonomy, as discussed in Section 5.2. One participant explained that it is easier for national "mother" departments to work with their provincial counterparts in the same sector than to work with local municipalities. She cites municipal autonomy as an impediment:

> "*The relationship between the three spheres of government in its nature, it's complex, it doesn't mean it is impossible. It has its complexities. I think it has a fairly much better relations between the national and the provincial government…you find that they have the much stronger relations with their mother department, which would be,* [for example], [the] *Department of Education and Health at national level. So, there are those complexities that are there, but like I'm saying, they don't make the relationship* [impossible], *but they provide for some level of complexities. The local-level space, it's a bit tricky because they constitutionally have been given, you know their own powers, to drive their own service delivery or their own constitutional right.*" (interview, a senior official in the Presidency, Participant NS3)

However, other participants 'blame' the lack of inter-sphere cooperation on the Constitution for giving federal powers to sub-national levels of government. As noted in Chapter 2, according to De Visser and Chigwata (2022), federalism combines elements of self-rule for regional or local governments and shared rule by the federal and state/provincial governments for nationwide responsibilities. The Constitution of South Africa contains all the elements of a federation, but does not use the term 'federal' (Haysom, 2005). As this senior government official, who is also a member of the governing ANC, explains:

> "*That's why I say its got elements of both federal and unitary state of arrangement or relationship if I can call it that. That is why national had to come up with the law, which I think needs to be reviewed, the Intergovernmental Relations* [Framework] *Act. It's a good attempt at trying to foster a collaborative relationship between, among, the three spheres, but then it falls short because it is not about the Constitution and these spheres, draw their powers, if you could call it that, directly from the Constitution, which means we need to beef up the Intergovernmental Relations* [Framework] *Act to not to be in conflict to the Constitution, to the constitutional imperative*". (interview, Participant NS3)

Deepening the lack of cooperation among the spheres of government is the 'One Plan, One Budget' approach of the DDM. This approach implies the formation of relationships among politically diverse governance actors for its successful implementation. Some of the requirements for successful implementation are sound IGRs, financial resources, and political control. However, this thesis has argued that these challenges cannot be explained without paying attention to the complex political settings, a paternalistic IGRs framework, and power dynamics in decentralised and vertically divided authorities, such as in South Africa.

Further, as discussed in Chapter 2, Chilenga-Butao (2020) noted that political dynamics are absent in most debates on decentralisation even though they are the root cause of service delivery failures, especially at the local government level. This also supports Resnick's (2014) arguments that decentralisation has led to 'vertically divided authorities', as this participant explains:

> "*…because I think every political party is facilitating for its mandate…the kind of landscape of the political influence, is in when you have a term called opposition. And so, it's almost kind of by carte balance, it says that you have to oppose. And you find that in whether it's even a coalition government, they* [are] *also suffering from a lot of, you know, kind of the silent opposition, that is called coalition. But it's almost like even when people know that what you're talking about, it's good for everybody else, but because they have the mandate to oppose, then it's kind of like I'm going to oppose this because, you know, I'm at liberty to oppose. So that, those are some of the elements that you will see. So politically, because we have way too many political actors in this space, they will always provide complexities. So, my, so my personal feeling is that politics will always influence that,* [be]*cause we seem to have different agendas. Local government is worse in our country because it's really where the politics find expression.*" (interview, a senior national government official, Participant NS3)

It is against these complex political, power dynamics and centralised intergovernmental relations framework that one government official at a conference where part of this thesis was presented remarked:

> "*This thing* [the DDM] *will not work.*" (Government official, 2022).

The poor cooperation among governance actors is also reflected in the lack of enthusiasm for the DDM. One senior national official expressed doubt on the viability of the programme:

> "*I doubt that the DDM, as we see it now, will be a permanent feature of our landscape.*" (interview, Participant NS5)

A decentralised system of government is defined as a system consisting of two or more levels of government with each having different functions and responsibilities. The various levels of government are engaged in vertical and horizontal relations. Vertical relations refer to the central government's cooperation with sub-national governments, while horizontal relations refer to the cooperation among sub-national governments on the same level. The spheres must work together on matters of common concern to ensure that the whole government is able to fulfil its mandates (De Visser & Chigwata, 2022).

However, the two-tier local government system (district and local municipalities) has caused not only tension, but also competition. As the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (2020) has noted, the challenges relate to the division of responsibilities and poor coordination, which, in turn, affects the implementation of projects (Chapter 2). Expressing her frustration with the relationship between her district and the local municipality, one senior district municipal official in charge of the IDP remarked:

> "*…so in the local governments sphere, it's often difficult for the District Municipality because, you know, there's always this question. What is the relevance of district municipalities? Why are they there? So, yes, the municipalities, they are autonomous and they make their own decisions, for this only as a coordinating function, but the view often is that the district wants to be the Big Brother, they call it, and they want to tell them*

and boss them around, which is obviously not the case so, in terms of the district municipality communicating with local municipalities, that is often a bit of a challenge, for example, at our district municipality." (interview, Participant LC2)

The relevance of the provinces and district municipalities was indeed questioned by one senior national government official. As noted in Chapter 2, the balkanisation of post-1994 South Africa is a continuation of the pre-1994 governance arrangement under a changed context:

"*The discussion that we had upon those studies that I was talking about was that at least if we can cut one level, one sphere of government, in fact, in fact, we don't have three spheres of government. The argument was that we don't have three; we have* [four]. *Not three spheres, so you've got your local, your local municipality, you've got a district municipality which is useless, where the recommendation was that we need to have only two levels of two spheres of government. One focusing mainly on local people and then one focus*[ing] *on the national and that's it. You kill the district, you kill the provincial, in that order or in that manner you then strengthen your IGR* [intergovernmental relations] *where your sector plans and sector departments directly talks to the IDP* [Integrated Development Plan] *not through somebody else*." (interview with a senior official from The Presidency, Participant NS1)

Another district municipality official bemoans the lack of cooperation among municipalities by contrasting how things used to work through "shared services" among municipalities and the current situation. While the official expresses some nostalgia, it also implies some centralisation in how municipal services used to be delivered:

"*So, it can definitely be a mechanism* [the DDM] *that can be used going forward to coordinate services a bit more because I think what we're currently doing, we are duplicating on services. We are all going out on a tender. Each municipality goes out on a tender. You ask the same thing that the municipality next to you* [is] *asking, and couldn't you, rather do*

it, do one tender for seven municipalities? All the municipalities go out on their own tenders. Tenders are a costly process, it's a time-consuming process. This and huge amounts of monies are spent on service delivery. Can I be very honest with you, it's very problematic, because [now] *municipalities want to be autonomous. I have been involved in shared services many years back, shared services being not a free service. Municipality A helps municipality B, but municipality B contributes towards* [the] *cost of that service. And are, we, we started quite well. We started with shared services, for instance between ICT, you know IT services. We did* [an] *internal order. We did a couple of others. A disaster management services, but what we find is that municipalities they're very willing to come into agreement if other municipalities pays.*" (interview, a senior district municipal official, Participant LC4)

Additionally, the lack of cooperation between the B and C municipalities affects the delivery of services because the local municipalities (B) insist on their autonomy. This further demonstrates the constraining role decentralisation plays in policy outcomes. Part of the problem is concurrent responsibilities where the two tiers control the same jurisdictions. The tensions are also fuelled by incentives to generate their own revenue, as explained by this participant.

"The district is working towards…the district wants to become a Water Services Authority, but now we need B municipalities to, to give us letters of support, and they're not giving us that. So, the regional landfill site will now be our first project that is us providing bulk services, and, four municipalities are participating, and there would be budgeting for it. But what we are saying is we are supporting it. We're not taking it, the way we're going to do it is not going to be as [direct] *service providers. We're not going to get rates and taxes from it. We're going to just put it in, and you just pay us for the service that we're providing, for the pipes or whatever. So that is that mind shift, that shift that must be done in our region. I don't know if we're going to get it right.*" (Participant LC2)

The lack of cooperation was also caused by inter-and intra-party conflicts, especially within a particular local municipality. This begs the question of how the DDM will be implemented in an environment of political conflicts. This local municipality has been in the news recently when the provincial government wanted to apply a Section 139 intervention (see Chapter 2). The municipality took the provincial government to court to prevent being put under administration. The municipality won the legal fight against the provincial government:

> "*Politically and administratively, it made the municipality* [not] *function, and you can go on Google and see, you will see the stories of Kannaland* [local municipality]. *Politically, the infights of…tomorrow its ANC* [African National Congress] *and DA* [Democratic Alliance]*, DA with ANC, independent party leaders…administratively, then tomorrow you'll hear it's this MM* [municipal manager]*, tomorrow that MM has been dismissed, it's this director, sorry that director is dismissed. And so, hence I'm saying it's a man-made disaster. So, we are sitting with that disaster as the district and asking ourselves, how do we intervene? But we still need their council to take* [a] *decision and say the district and the province should come and help*"*. (Participant LC1)*

Even within the same political party, intra-party conflict is present.

> "*Sometimes I ask myself, but most of these parties* [members] *are coming from the same party. Why are these people fighting like this? It doesn't even make sense. Yes, that's politics there, so it doesn't make sense that they're fighting against each other, but it's the same party that's in control, so it blows my mind.*" (interview, Participant LC6)

These conflicts are also driven by the considerable ambivalence on whether a 'district', in the context of the DDM is a geographical construct rather than a municipal jurisdiction (see analysis in Chapter 7). Further, this misunderstanding fuels tensions between the B and C municipalities as on the face of it, it relegates local municipalities to non-influential positions while elevating district municipalities. Referring to the DDM, the former Director-

general of the Department of Public Service and Administration, Professor Richard Levin wrote:

> "*The term District is seen to refer to locality rather than the District Municipality, which no doubt forms an important part of the planning, delivery as well as Monitoring and Evaluation architecture.*" (Levin, 2019, p. 32).

Illuminating further on the matter, one senior national government official explained that the district in the context of the DDM refers rather to a geographic space that extends beyond municipal and even provincial borders. This, however, adds another governance complexity in terms of municipal demarcations. The Municipal Demarcation Board is the authority that determines municipal boundaries as per the Municipal Demarcation Act of 1998 and various Constitutional Court judgments. The provincial boundaries on the other hand, are the competence of the national parliament (Municipal Demarcation Board, 2021). Further, the DDM displaces both the political and administrative structures of institutions at the local level, thus creating potential conflicts and power struggles. As the senior official explains:

> "*You know what is the challenge with the DDM?...I think there's a lot of confusion amongst government, among sectors in terms of the language. So, the confusion now comes to the interpretation of the model. People, when they, they read District Development, so they say it must be this is a district one, so you must be, it is a district, and that is not the case. So, the district space is not a district municipality. So, there is what you call the district space, which is not the demarcation as per the municipal systems, but then in the space within which the core functions of a specific thing can be able to be done* [at] *that level. Let me give you an example. We want to focus on illegal mining and I just* [want to] *give you an example. We want to focus on illegal mining in Gauteng around your West Rand, Kagiso, 1, 2, 3 and all that. So there is a district, this is called West Rand. Right? But then the illegal mining activities goes even outside the periphery of the West Rand district. But then it goes into the*

other district, let's say, for example, it goes into another one. So, in terms of the DDM [District Development Model]*, the district, therefore, will be the pipeline along where there is illegal mining, even if that involves three districts. The focal point around that is the illegal mining issues. So, we say, now we demarcate this area, and say this is a district space, which was… therefore involved three district municipalities, with...you get me? So now that becomes a problem, now in terms of the implementation because who's supposed to oversee the local government level? So, we then came with what we call the district hubs, and the district hub managers or champions. So, this is somebody who will be able to now, to become, if I use a lay word, an executive mayor of the DDM district or something like that because this person now oversees areas within three locals, within three district municipalities, which talks illegal mining and must ensure that these issues are being recorded in the, in the district IDPs* [Integrated Development Plans]." (interview, Participant NS1)

5.4. District Development Model: recentralisation within a decentralised system?

Some scholars claim that development discourse is often used as a "strategy of subversion" by central governments to limit the autonomy of sub-national units. In other words, central governments justify interventions in local governments as a desire to improve local development (see Chapter 3).

There is indeed some suspicion at the local level of national government overreach due to the deployment of national government politicians as DDM champions. The deployment of central government politicians limits local-level autonomy and may be viewed as meddling in local government affairs. When asked if she thought the national government uses the DDM to recentralise power, one replied:

"*That's the perception, right, but, and we're trying to remain in the Western Cape, autonomous if I can say it like that, and not being, not having the national minister now sitting in our meetings and chairing the meeting. But that's what the DDM says, the national minister* [deputy

minister of International Relations, Alvin Botes] *must chair your meetings. And we said, but we already have structures in place* [that are] *working very well; we don't need a national minister to come in and chair our meeting; our mayor is chairing our meetings. I don't want to, but it's a political thing because, you know, DDM says that national must now come sit in our forums, and national is ANC* [African National Congress] *government. So, it's almost like ANC government now wants to come* [and take] *over our spaces."* (interview, a senior District Municipality official, Participant LC2)

Indeed, her suspicions seem to be confirmed. The "centre of government", which comprises only central government departments, acts as a central actor while advancing a discourse that the DDM is a local government programme. One senior national government official from the Presidency explained:

"*We have got what we call a centre of government,* [it] *is sort of a cluster, so the centre of government is your departments like DPME* [Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation]*, presidency, treasury, DPSA* [Department of Public Service and Administration], *COGTA* [Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs]*, because they all had the core mandate that they provide to towards the, public service. Therefore, they've clustered themselves and called themselves the centre of government. And it's among those departments now that they've now created what we call The Presidential Steering Committee on the DDM* [District Development Model]." (interview, Participant NS1)

The "centre of government" in the government policy context emphasises central government control. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the President established a 'centre of government' known as the National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC), which was responsible for coordinating efforts by different government institutions to contain the virus. The NCCC consisted of a small core of national government politicians led by the Minister of the Department of COGTA. The NCCC relied on the emergency powers of the Disaster Management Act to steer the country through the

pandemic. For this study, it is necessary to indicate that COGTA and the same minister are responsible for local government. As this expert who used to work for local government indicates, post-COVID-19, the government wanted to repurpose the NCCC to implement the DDM:

> "*There was a lot of attention on the DDM* [District Development Model] *a few years ago and then during COVID, there was talk about, you know, the Command Council structure was an example of how DDM could perhaps be utilised.*" (interview, Participant X1)

Contrasting the DDM with the provincially developed JDMA, one senior Local Government official in the Western Cape provincial government argues that the presence of national government politicians as district champions implies centralisation while the JDMA is more citizen-based:

> "*You will notice that, on the DDM* [District Development Model], *the minister and the deputy ministers, they have a political oversight with the DDM, but with the JDMA* [Joint District and Metro Approach]*, the mayors and the local mayors have a political oversight. So, it's more of a citizen approach, it's geographical.*" (a senior official, Department of Local Government, Western Cape, Participant PS1)

However, some officials from the national sphere of government, while admitting some recentralisation tendencies, do not think the DDM represents the recentralisation of power by the central government. Rather, the DDM appears to subsume the roles of the failing intergovernmental relations framework. Indeed, according to COGTA, the DDM has shifted from a "highly negotiated approach to alignment of plans to regulated cooperative governance's One Plan", as mentioned by this participant:

> "*I think when it was initially announced by the President, I don't think that was the intention. The intention was to improve coordination first, and that would then be coordinated through both planning and implementation delivery. I think that was the underlying principle. Part of the problem, though, is the way the draft regulations are crafted. The*

regulations definitely seek to give more authority to a centralised approach. So, one can see it as undermining some of the existing components in terms of the powers and functions." (interview, Participant NS2)

One senior official from the provincial and one from the national sphere respectively argue that rather than recentralising, the DDM is actually decentralising power to the districts:

"*I don't know when they're going to be able to address all the challenges, but they are trying to address some of the challenges with regard to long-term planning and budgeting and implementation. And, and they are trying to use the model* [almost] *in some way, I suppose it could be called decentralisation, to decentralise to a district level and to the long-term planning, district with all its locals*." (interview, Participant PS3)

"*Yes, if I was to do a critique of* [the] *DDM, that wouldn't be included as one of my critiques. I mean, if it's done properly, it should actually be about decentralisation. It should actually be about empowering, planning at the district level, which is a very local level*." (interview, Participant NS5)

However, it is necessary to mention that in terms of the structure of local government, "a very local level" is the local municipalities and not the district municipality, as mentioned by the participant.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the results of the empirical enquiry. The chapter detailed the institutional and contextual factors of decentralisation in South Africa. It has demonstrated from empirical data how political settlements and cultural considerations rather than developmental imperatives drove the decentralisation reforms. In contrast to the generally held view that decentralisation 'tames power' by dispersing it to the local units, this thesis has argued that instead, this has led to autonomous centres of power, referred to by Gervasoni (2010, p. 302) as authoritarian sub-national enclaves. A

dispersion of power, therefore, does not necessarily prevent the formation of authoritarian enclaves. This has resulted in contestation for power between the district and the local municipalities.

The introduction of the DDM within a fragmented, politically divided authorities and paternalistic intergovernmental relations has worsened the already fragile cooperation among the different governance actors. The chapter also revealed the contested meanings of 'district'. While other actors, notably from the national sphere of government, regard a district as a construct that spans across municipal, metropolitans, and even provincial boundaries, some actors from local government regard it as a municipal jurisdiction. As a result, competing hierarchies and entrenched political cultures have intensified, leading to broken IGRs. Having presented the research findings in Chapter 5, Chapters, 6, 7, and 8 focus on discussing the empirical findings.

The main argument presented in Chapter 6 is that two main influences have defined the governance architecture of post-1994 South Africa: its colonial and apartheid legacy, and political choices made during the CODESA negotiations. In Chapter 7, it is argued that while decentralisation disperses power, it paradoxically solidifies it at the sub-national level. Thus, pre-1994 governance architecture created 'independent centres of power' through the Bantustan system, the post-1994 state created 'independent centres of power' through the creation of the nine provinces and local government. Chapter 8 analyses the shifting patterns of governance and argues that major political and governance changes do not require violent and dramatic events. Sometimes they take place gradually. Hence the focus on literature to explicate the history, continuities, and contextual factors of the historical epochs of South Africa. This approach will entrench South Africa's experiences into the broader scholarly work, making a theoretical contribution to theories on decentralisation and governance.

Chapter 6. INSTITUTIONAL, POLITICAL, AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS OF DECENTRALISED GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Introduction

> "Since most conflicts that have their source in Apartheid are now fought under the new conditions of electoral democracy, it is not really a matter of debate as to who actually won. Ongoing battles are the order of the day. Change often co-mingles with continuity, and sometimes, confusingly, new elites rely on old conservative discourses." (Reddy, 2015, p. 150)

This chapter presents a historical context of the governance architecture in South Africa and its influence on public policy and resultant programmes. This exploration will better illuminate the constraining role such influences play on the post-colonial and post-apartheid public administration. For example, one of the biggest challenges facing South Africa is delivering basic services to previously marginalised citizens. Part of this enduring legacy of the apartheid regime is spatial inequalities. The arguments presented in this chapter are that two main influences have defined the governance architecture of post-1994 South Africa: its colonial and apartheid legacy and the political choices made during the CODESA negotiations. The conflict-avoiding negotiations ensured continuity as much as change. Thus, it is argued that the two main influences laid the political template on which the present governance arrangements are designed. As has been discussed in Chapter 2 and further crystalised in Chapter 7, the quasi-federal Constitution negotiated at CODESA reproduced ethnic-based 'homeland' power centres, except for the Gauteng province, into eight ethnic-based provincial power centres and local governments.

As an illustration, in 2016, the ANC in the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality announced its member, Thoko Didiza, as its mayoral candidate following a factional battle between the then-mayor and his deputy. Violent protests erupted from some residents who argued that the mayoral candidate was not a native of Tshwane and was seen as a "fly-in candidate", as reported in *The Daily Maverick* (Poplak, 2016, para. 1). Didiza, who was born in the former

‘homeland’ of Natal, was quoted in the *Sunday Times*, saying, “I’ve never, and I still do not feel foreign in Tshwane” (Quintal, 2016, para. 1). Thus, this chapter pays attention to such subtleties, which reflect the political culture built on the ethnic legacies of the apartheid Bantustan era, but which still find expression in the current context. As Friedman (2021) argued, the post-apartheid society is still very much embedded in realities of the past. Indeed, this further reinforces this thesis’ argument, noted in Chapter 1, that decentralisation policies are often designed with the assumption that the political culture of South Africa is mature enough to handle its intricacies.

With few exceptions, scholarly work on decentralised governance in South Africa explores the persistent colonial legacies that continue to influence South Africa’s post-colonial experiences. The chapter argues that to understand the complexity of the current governance arrangements, its failures and or successes, it is pertinent to explore the persistent colonial legacies that continue to shape South Africa’s governance landscape. As the review of literature unfolded, it became clear that the colonial and apartheid governance architecture has influenced the post-colonial and post-apartheid governance architecture. The post-colonial and post-apartheid government believed that all that was necessary to fulfil its historical mission was to take control of the state. Thus, they failed to transform a colonial and apartheid state that catered for a few of its citizens. However, in the new context, ‘few’ represents class and not race, resulting in the further marginalisation of the majority and popular mobilisation”. As Reddy argued, “change often co-mingles with continuity” (Reddy, 2015, p. 150).

For Friedman (2021, p. IX), post-1994, the main polarised political arguments are between those who insist that nothing has changed and those who insist democracy has changed everything in South Africa. He asserts that both arguments are wrong and right because “society can both change and remain the same” (p. XI), which is what happened in South Africa post-1994. According to Friedman (2021), while much has changed, society still operates in ways that share strong characteristics with past realities. After listing the post-1994 achievements, Friedman, however, accepts that poverty and inequality persist.

In explaining these apparent contradictions, he argues that post-1994 “democracy inherited a society of insiders and outsiders” (p. X). “The insiders were all white, while the outsiders were all black” (ibid). He then proceeds to explain that post-1994, a significant number of the ‘outsiders’ became ‘insiders’, but the rest remained outsiders. While they remain “insiders in the political system because they can vote” (ibid), they remain economically and socially outsiders. Friedman contends that this path was chosen because “the new political elite agreed with the former economic and social power holders on one crucial point: that what Whites enjoyed under apartheid must be available to all” (p, XI). Therefore, there was no reason to alter the way things were done in the economy and social institutions of the past. Thus, the core pre-1994 patterns remain.

Hereunder follows the main findings of this chapter. Section 6.1 provides background on colonial influences that defined the architecture of public policy and resulting programmes. Section 6.1.1 provides, through evidence, how such continuities co-exist within the framework of constitutionalism.

Summary of the main findings of the chapter

The data suggests that (a) the persistent colonial legacy influenced the architecture of the governance regime in South Africa. Decentralisation reforms were driven more by political considerations than developmental imperatives. Similarly, these continuities are evident in the governance architecture of South Africa, both structurally and bureaucratically. (b) These continuities impact how services are delivered to citizens. Further, the structural continuities impact the bureaucratic component of the state. The chapter, thus, addresses the first research question:

What are the institutional, political, and contextual factors of decentralised governance in South Africa?

Following Reddy’s (2015, p. 150) assertion that “change often co-mingles with continuity” and Friedman’s arguments that “society can both change and

remain the same" (2021, p. IX), the following section further examines this theme as it relates to the post-apartheid governance architecture.

6.1.1. Continuity and change in governance

In its article titled '*South Africa's Dividing Line'*, *Time*, referencing the inequalities in Cape Town, South Africa, states that "the largest dividing line is land, where the legacy of apartheid meets the failures and broken promises of the current government…in an almost replica of apartheid-era urban planning, wealthy and middle-class Whites are concentrated in the city centres and in well-connected suburbs". The housing projects promised by the post-apartheid government are being built on the urban periphery "replicating the township system developed under apartheid" (Pomerantz, 2019, p. 38).

Although the context has changed, the *Time* observation appears to concur with arguments presented in Chapter 2, referencing Mamdani's (1996, p. 18) concept of the "bifurcated state". The "bifurcated state" refers to a dual mode of rule exercised differently in the urban and rural areas during the colonial and apartheid periods. Indeed, this dual mode of rule was also captured by Franz Fanon in his seminal book on colonialism, The Wretched of the Earth. He referenced South Africa's apartheid period as a "system of compartments" and described the colonial city as "a brightly lit town; [where] the streets are covered with asphalt…while the native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire" (Fanon et al., 2002, p. 39). In the new context, the "system of compartments" is described by Time (Pomerantz, 2019, p. 35) as "South Africa's Dividing Line". Thus, because of poor service delivery, much of the population still finds themselves in perpetual transition not really enjoying the full benefit of democracy.

These continuities are evident in the governance architecture of South Africa, both structurally and bureaucratically. Central to the struggle against apartheid was the idea of a unified country, both ethnically and racially. Indeed, the ANC declared at their National Conference, *Ready to Govern* in 1992:

> "South Africa shall be a unitary state in which there shall be government at local, regional, and national levels. The Bill of Rights and principles of

non-racialism, non-sexism and democratic accountability shall apply at all three levels of government". (ANC, 1992)

Yet what emerged at CODESA was a "weak form of federalism" modelled along the same ethnic lines as in the days of apartheid (Murray & Simeon, 2012, p. 235). The political settlement at CODESA has instead delivered more of the same, as this participant, a senior official in the Presidency, points out:

> *"In practise, we don't actually have a unitary state. So, there is that, I suppose, a bit of a contradiction within the Constitution, and it's probably because of the time when the Constitution was written."* (interview, Participant NS2).

The political climate that existed during the CODESA negotiations, was the overriding consideration that shaped the current context. Having a multi-sphere system of government has, however, introduced new sets of problems that impede delivery of services to the marginalised communities. The multi-sphere system of government has ensured continuity as much as change in the way services are delivered. This participant from a district municipality in the Western Cape explain further:

> *"but the good intentions of* [of the multi-sphere system] *is coming now to become* [an] *impediment to service delivery, because who's suffering? Is not the professional legislation, or the Constitution or Systems Act, Structures Act, MFMA* [Municipal Finance Management Act 41 of 2003]*, not that."* (interview, Participant LC1).

Indeed, the apartheid template of fragmenting South Africa along ethnic and regional lines found expression in the creation of the nine provinces. As Van Niekerk (2012) stated, the creation of the nine provinces was primarily driven by political considerations to state power by the two main negotiating parties, the ANC, and the NP. Thus, according to Van Niekerk (2012), "insufficient attention was given to the historical context in which policies and governance institutions emerged" in the pre-1994 period and "their effects and continued influence on social policy in the democratic era" (p. 620). The new provincial

arrangements impeded those seeking state assistance from accessing it. These new provincial arrangements re-fragmented the country, not by race or administration but by geographical location. Further, Van Niekerk (2012) argues that this re-fragmentation of South Africa hindered the implementation of the post-apartheid social policies. This is because provincial cabinets can direct provincial expenditures according to their political wills and priorities.

As Reddy (2015) points out, during CODESA, in their quest to arrive at a more favourable resolution, the negotiating elites failed to accomplish more radical outcomes, thus betraying the "subaltern masses" wishes". Reddy further argues:

> "They also ignored the innumerable questions, issues, and obstacles of changing deep-rooted institutions and established social relations of settler colonialism, hoping that these would be somehow resolved under the conditions of electoral democracy. The goals for the nationalist leadership were the success of the negotiations, the conquest of the state and, if possible, a peaceful resolution leaving intact the capitalist economic infrastructure. At the same time, it was planning to de-racialise social relations, though without addressing the power dynamics of settler colonial rule and its legacies for the colonised subject." (Reddy, 2015, pp. 146–148)

Thus, according to Reddy (2015, p. 148), "in everyday civic life", the mass political subject of electoral democracy has remained confined to the far-flung townships, marginalised to internment camps of squalor, insecurity, and hopelessness. Indeed, failure to accomplish radical outcomes and transforming institutions has left the country in perpetual transition, which rendered the government powerless to address the challenges of service delivery.

To address the challenges experienced "in everyday civic life", as articulated by Reddy (2015, p. 148), the South African government adopted various policies and programmes. However, in addition to the reasons advanced by Reddy, various other factors have militated against the achievements of a better life for all promised by the post-apartheid state. As also noted in Chapter 2, the ANC

led government has oscillated between its social democratic leanings to embracing a neo-liberal approach to state formation (Maserumule, 2019). Indeed, South Africa's post-apartheid public policies have been paradoxical since inception in the 1990s. In his critical assessment of the post-apartheid social policies, Bond (2014) argues that rather than be transformative, public policies in South Africa were simply a continuation of apartheid policies, which did not bring any improved benefits to the previously marginalised. While Leubolt (2014, p. 1) indicates that "post-apartheid social policies were reformed", and Bond (2014) argues that they were not transformed, they both agree that the racial bias has been removed. Further, Leubolt (2014) observed that social policies in South Africa have led to inequalities, while Abrahams *et al* (2018) indicates that the urban settlements have been replicated. Thus, attempts to change urban planning from apartheid spatial planning have failed (Donaldson & Du Plessis, 2013; Van Wyk, 2015; Abrahams *et al.*, 2018). It is continuity as much as change that characterises the post-apartheid governance architecture.

Furthermore, according to Maserumule (2019), the framework on which the post-apartheid administration of the state was built, followed the same structure and content of the colonial era Public Service and Pensions Act of 1912. Putting this in perspective, Maserumule, as cited in *New Agenda* (2019) argues:

> "The legislation that provided the framework for the administration of the state, following the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910, was promulgated in 1912 as the Public Service and Pensions Act (Act 29 of 1912). Its comparison with those that came after it, as promulgated in different historical epochs of the evolution of South Africa (the Public Service Act 111 of 1984 and the Public Service Act 103 of 1994 respectively) indicate that these pieces of legislation followed the structure and content of the Public Service and Pensions Act of 1912. They did not bring much change to the philosophical orientation of the South African public service since its colonial foundation. The result is that the post-apartheid state is the function of the intersection of

> neoliberal prescriptions with this colonial edifice." (Maserumule, 2019, p. 32)

The question to ask, according to Maserumule, is: "Where did the post-apartheid state go wrong"? (p.32). Part of this question was answered by former Public Service Commission Chairperson, Professor Stan Sangweni, who made the following observation (cited in New Agenda, 2019, p. 32):

> "The ANC had failed to develop in time a model of our own on how to run government. In other words, we ran into government in 1994 completely unprepared and as a result, we often got compromised into embracing the colonial apartheid governance model. The ANC failed to deconstruct the colonial edifice of its administration (Sangweni, 2019)."

This failure "to deconstruct the colonial edifice" (p. 32) is displayed in how the post-apartheid state is organised. Structurally, the adoption of a quasi-federal form of government merely democratised an undemocratic system as it is still ethnically organised, while public administration merely de-racialised a racialised governance system. Indeed, Mamdani (1996, p. 32) argued that the real impact of the transition to non-racialism may be "the fact that it will leave intact structures of indirect rule" employed by the former colonial rulers. By indirect rule, which he described as "decentralised despotism", (p. 7), Mamdani was referring to the strategy employed by colonial powers to use tribal structures and traditions as a means of controlling their African colonies. Thus, for Mamdani, decentralised despotism is the enduring legacy of a century of colonial rule.

As a result, the post-apartheid state's capacity to fulfil its liberation mission is eroded. Thus, a constellation of the 'old and the new' co-existed in a complex and sometimes contradicting environment of colonialism and constitutionalism. Olivier de Sardan captures this contradiction:

> "There are layers of power and legitimacy dating from different periods which all co-exist in the same sociopolitical space, displaying a complex

> mixture of mutual recognition and blind competition of tolerance and masked rivalry." (Olivier de Sardan, 2011, p. 2)

Thus, the everyday life of the masses remains confined to the margins of society, just as they were during the colonial and apartheid periods. Indeed, the marginalised people are still "confronted with the colonial order of things, he finds he is in a state of permanent tension" (Fanon et al., 2002, p. 52).

In their book *View from City Hall,* which details their experiences of running the City of Cape Town post-1994, De Lille and Kesson capture this 'complex mixture':

> "The Constitution's contemplation of separate but equal spheres of government represented a sea change that arguably is still to be fully appreciated in South Africa. Indeed, we believe this lack of appreciation has stemmed from a paradigmatic approach to local government that is somewhat outdated, especially in administrative circles. It is because it is one thing for the laws to change, but it is another entirely for the bureaucratic systems, years of learned parliamentary experience, and general awareness of public policy shifts to change." (De Lille and Kesson, 2017, p. 10)

Indeed, the unchanged, 'outdated' bureaucratic systems poses a question about the degree of local government autonomy and its influence on local development programmes. For example, during apartheid, local governments lacked constitutional status and were, therefore, mere subordinates of provinces. Indeed, much of the legacy of treating local government as a subordinate of provinces persists. Thus, in different forms of the state in South Africa, local government was always treated as a tier of government. This legacy, which was inherited from Britain when it administered South Africa as its colony, continue even after the post-apartheid institutional and legislative changes. While the legislative framework has elevated local government to a sphere of government, a mind shift from political actors is needed to give it effect, as this senior official from the national sphere of government argues"

> *"I think that much of that legacy* [colonial] *still finds itself even after such a generational and dramatic change of the new democratic dispensation, that local government is still a tier, and there's a lower tier, I think, in some people's minds."* (interview, Participant NS7)

Rooted in entrenched structures and cultures, these diverse approaches to public administration distort the provision of public goods and services. De Lille and Kesson (2017), presenting the challenges of bringing different towns together to form the post-apartheid unicity of Cape Town, indicate that many staff incorporated the cultures of their previous organisations into the new structure. Attempts were made to revise the city's design, for example, establishing independent business units and decentralising the model of service delivery. Thus, the new constitutional and institutional frameworks merely carried over from previous systems.

And so, in contemporary South Africa, Mamdani's (1996, p. 18) "bifurcated state" finds expression in both the post-colonial and apartheid administration and governance. One can argue that the failure to deconstruct the old ethnic-based, fragmented state structure has intensified the tribal divide that undermines the delivery of services. Asked whether a more centralised approach to governance will improve service delivery, one study participant from the national government sphere said:

> *"And in so many ways, from my personal perspective, it's that we are indoctrinated with previous systems, and I don't think we've cleared them off our heads. Whether it's the colonial system or the apartheid system. I think it creates complexities that you're sitting with people, that are supposed to drive service delivery, but they're still battling their own tribal issues. So, you have a lot of history that we don't honestly talk about that has a bigger influence on service delivery."* (interview, Participant NS3)

Indeed, the indoctrination of previous systems is observable in the development programmes, which have their foundations in the apartheid governance arrangements. For example, a deeper analysis of the DDM's 'One Plan, One Budget' approach displays characteristics of apartheid central planning, which

coincides with the governing ANC's own centralist leanings. This participant from the local government sphere compares the apartheid era local government and the post-apartheid local government practices. The pre-1994 municipalities were creatures of provincial governments and lacked autonomy. Thus, those municipalities shared services with each other centrally coordinated by the provincial Department of Local Government. However, according to the participant, the post-apartheid municipalities are *"problematic because municipalities want to be autonomous"*. As such, the participant is of the view that the DDM "*can definitely be a mechanism that can be used going forward to coordinate services a bit more"* (Participant LC4)

Adapting this participant's comparative statement, one can argue that the apartheid governance architecture provided the template on which the DDM is designed. While the central government justify interventions at the local government level as a step to improve service delivery, this approach is a form of direct rule that sacrifices local government autonomy. Thus, rather than deconstructing the colonial power structures, it merely reproduced them through a centralised approach to local government affairs. The DDM appears to reproduce rather than transform apartheid-era authoritarian and a centralised approach to local government delivery problems. This has created two local government practices: coded, constitutional, democratic decentralisation and the uncoded, autocratic, direct, centralised approach. As stated by Newman (2005), new forms of governance do not necessarily displace the old but rather interact with them, often awkwardly. Olivier de Sardan (2011, p. 2) describes this situation as the "piling up" of power, whereby new forms of political authorities do not substitute layers of existing institutional arrangements already in place but add to them.

Conclusion

In this chapter, it is argued that two main influences have defined the governance architecture of post-1994 South Africa: its colonial and apartheid legacy and political choices made during the CODESA negotiations. The conflict-avoiding negotiations ensured continuity as much as change. Further,

while the apartheid regime fragmented South Africa through the ‘independent’ ethnic Bantustan power centres, the post-apartheid government has recreated ethnic-based provincial power centres. Thus, structurally, the state merely morphed into a deracialised, fragmented, ethnic-based polity. This fragmentation created autonomous centres of power that constrain national policy outcomes. The next chapter argues that while decentralisation reforms created new institutions, they also created centres of power.

Chapter 7. DECENTRALISED CENTRES OF POWER

Introduction

> "*I think what's really gone wrong in government, I don't think our focus is always on building relations and working together. And sometimes some people may rather focus on building empires, and I think that is really the breakdown of relationships.*" (interview with a senior official in the Department of Local Government, Western Cape, Participant PS3)**.**

The above statement sets the tone for this chapter. In Chapter 6, it is argued that two influences defined the post-apartheid governance arrangements: colonial and apartheid legacy and political choices. Under changed conditions, new 'independent' decentralised centres of power were created through the nine provinces and local governments. This chapter's main argument is that while decentralisation disperses power, it paradoxically solidifies it at the sub-national level. In other words, decentralisation merely reinvents and reproduces the hegemonic practices of the central government at the sub-national level. This finding extends Gervasoni's (2010, p. 302) concept of "authoritarian sub-national enclaves", as shown in the above comment by Participant PS3.

Further, this chapter argues that macro trends such as decentralisation are constituted by unstable relationships and political actors who are constantly deploying strategies to achieve their political objectives rather than build intergovernmental relations. This chapter considers the multi-level power interplay and the establishment of power nodes. In Chapter 3, it was argued that power is not concentrated in one single entity or individual; rather, power is diffused and pervasive (see, for instance, Foucault cited in Foucault & Gordon, 1980). However, the findings of this thesis concur with Lindell (2008), that even though power is diffused, it still has centres. Through evidence, this chapter shows how power played out at the three levels of the state: national, provincial, and local. Further, this chapter shows how the immature political cultures in South Africa, and indeed developing countries, are unable to deal with decentralisation reforms. To lay a proper foundation for the empirical

analysis of the chapter, a short overview of power that reinforces the literature in Chapter 3 is provided below.

According to Hague and Harrop (2010, p. 12), “power is the currency of politics. Just as money permits the efficient flow of goods and services through an economy, so power enables collective decisions to be made and enforced.”

However, power, because it is an invisible force, it is difficult to deal with in everyday politics (Krott et al., 2014). As Russell (2004, p. 35) indicates, since “power is the production of intended effects”, while “it cannot be quantified, the power of actors or organisations can be compared based on their ability to achieve their desired effects”. Power resides not only in structures but also in relationships. Indeed, the concept of power has become crucial “for the understanding of the interests and conflicts in the territory that consequently shape the organisation of space” (Oliveira, 2018). Thus, the political space is influenced by the actions of political institutions. As Castro (cited in Oliveira, 2018, p. 3) points out:

> “The political space is delimited by the rules and strategies of political power, it is a space of interests and their conflicts, of their norm, of the control and the coercion legitimized by social actors. In other words, a political space demarcates a territory where interests are organized, actions have necessarily broad effects in relation to society and its space and where there is the possibility of recourse to coercion, through the law or through legitimate force”.

However, because of the perceived “failures of the centralised state everywhere” (Bardan, 2002, p. 185), decentralisation is viewed as being more responsive to the needs of the localities. Decentralisation reduces the role of the central state by fragmenting central power and promoting an intergovernmental framework to harmonise the relations between the state and its constituent units. Thus, decentralisation can be considered as a political area that is governed by the relevant rules for the management of society's conflicts. However, this thesis argues that in the South African context, the fusion of constitutional provisions and deployment of political and institutional power

creates a dynamic and complex environment that militates against the perceived benefits of decentralisation. Further, it is argued in this thesis that these power contestations have become the dominant characteristics of decentralisation systems. Indeed, “decentralisation is not always designed to promote goals such as democratic accountability, or developmental capacity, but rather can be a strategy to serve the interests of those decision makers who hold power” (Dickovick & Riedl, 2010, p. 8).

In the South African context, following the adoption of the new Constitution in 1996, sub-national levels of government were given both legislative and executive political powers to exercise in their areas of jurisdiction. The local sphere consists of three tiers: the metropolitans, districts, and local municipalities. The metropolitans control their exclusive designated areas, while the districts share common functional areas with the local municipalities, with the districts being the highest-level tier (RSA, 1996). Within this governance ecosystem, the power of political actors is an important factor to help explain the contentious cooperative governance system.

This thesis posits that, while decentralisation created new decentralised institutions, it also created new centres of power, which this thesis refers to as decentralised centres of power. Following these reforms were battles for political hegemony, which involved power struggles over public policies and programmes. The three spheres of government became terrains of conflict over the basic distribution of resources and political power. This chapter, therefore, sets out to explore the deployment of power by actors within governance institutions and its influence on relationships and the achievement of national goals. The approach this thesis has employed differs from most research done on decentralisation in South Africa, which has related, rather than empirically tested, the power interplay among the three spheres of government.

Summary of the main findings of the chapter

The objective of this thesis is not to advocate for either a strong central government or a weaker central government with strong sub-national governments; rather, the objective is to understand the complexity of

decentralised governance in South Africa by decoding the DDM. The main findings of the chapter are: (a) Decentralisation has created autonomous centres of power and, thus, led to the promotion of own policy positions and self-interest by sub-national governments. (b) Following Van Niekerk (2010), Van Wyk (2013, and Gumede (2019), the cooperative governance model is paternalistic and has proven difficult in practice, leading to poor coordination among the three spheres of government. (c) Notwithstanding the challenges listed above, an asymmetrical approach to decentralisation is desirable rather than treating sub-national governments in a symmetrical fashion.

This chapter thus answers the second research question:

Does decentralisation create autonomous centres of power? If so, in what manner?

The literature on decentralised governance is not adequate on the political factors that shape the decentralisation experience in South Africa. As a result, decentralised governance is treated from a simplistic perspective, where studies focus mainly on the management and administrative failures of local government. As already stated, there are many arguments on the perceived benefits of multi-level systems of government, such as decentralisation and federalism. The deemed benefits of decentralisation and federalism are, however, contestable (see Treisman, 2002; Cepaluni, 2015). An increasing body of scholarly work suggests that problems lie in coordination among the different levels of the state. While decentralisation polices may improve governance, it may also weaken it. According to Resnick (2014), political tensions within decentralised governance exposed the inherent challenges of multi-level systems that created multiparty politics, especially on the African continent. Thus, this thesis argues that decentralisation should be considered as a concept that rather defines relationships among institutions. While such a relationship should be cooperative in nature, it is mostly antagonistic because of the deployment of power.

Power is characterised by influence. Indeed, power can be exerted in various ways, for example, “incentive shaping”, that is, “altering the incentives

confronting those subject to power" (Hague & Harrop, 2010, p. 13). This can include a threat of punishment for not toeing the line or the promise of a reward for acceding to a request.

However, power can also be exerted by influencing preferences rather than incentives. Power consists of three elements (Krott et al., 2014, p. 4): (1) coercion power, which is defined as "altering the behaviour of the subordinate by force"; (2) incentive or disincentive power, which is conceptualised as "altering the behaviour of the subordinate by means of disadvantages or advantages"; and (3) an information element, which is conceptualised as "altering the behaviour of the subordinate by means of unverified information".

Additionally, Oliveira (2018, p. 2) refers to "the status quo of power in geography". Thus, Allen (2003) offers an alternative notion of power based on empowerment and association rather than coercion and constraints. As Allen (2003, p. 95) explain, "Geography is about power, and political Geography is about the use of power to administer, control, and fix territorial space." Furthermore,

> "Even though power is distributed intact to authoritative locations from an identifiable centre, this view now happily co-exists with the idea that power may be diffused, decentred, and networked. Equally, while it is hard to get beyond the idea that power is always exercised at someone's expense, this understanding of power runs alongside the view that power is merely a means to get things done, a general facility for realizing outcomes." (ibid.)

In his analysis of power in geography, Allen (2003, p. 95) contrasts the two narratives on power, which stresses the instrumentality of power as something that is exercised "over" and its collaborative side, that is, the power "to" secure outcomes. This analysis highlights the difference between the instrumentality and the facilitative notions of power. That is to say, "the notion that power is used to obtain leverage over the notion that power is a way of getting things done", (p. 95). According to Allen (2003, p. 95), "the former consider power as an instrument of domination and constraints, the latter consider its potential for

collaboration". However, the two notions of power are often indistinct when power is collectively deployed for the achievement of one group's set of interests at the expense of another.

According to Allen (2003), the dominant narrative about power is underpinned by the state-centred version, where the state is considered unitary and a sole political actor. In this notion, power is "almost akin to a solid bloc whose certainties are then spread from the centre outwards, and neither distance nor dispersal problematizes its reach" (Allen, 2003, p. 97). However, Barnes (cited in Allen, 2003) has questioned whether these traditional forms of designation really function as often claimed. In his argument, Barnes indicates that an element of discretion is built into the very exercise of power where recipients of such devolved power are empowered to exercise their power independently. As such, the dispersal of power creates an opportunity for ambiguity and displacement to take hold and render any regulations or decisions provisional.

Indeed, in South Africa, a quasi-federal state doesn't necessarily mean it is unitary or federal. Rather, it is the political actors who exercise discretion on its application. Thus, unitarism and federalism constitute a complex relationship in theory and practice, but more in practice. While the other limits power, the other enables power. In practice, this poses considerable challenges in delivering services, as this participant points out:

> "*I mean, illustrative of the fact that, you know, we do have this complicated multivariate governance framework, which is just the different levels of delivery or different avenues of delivery, but they don't all see themselves in the same way or see each other in the same way and, if that's your starting point, you know you've got a very serious issue of, is everyone even on the same page with what the delivery or developmental agenda is?"* (interview, Participant X2)

Indeed, as noted in Chapter 2, the Constitution has created a complex "multivariate governance framework" (Participant X2) where federalism and unitarism have come to be seen as two intertwined concepts of the state. In practice, as a notion, judging from the actions of governance actors, this

appears to apply more to federalism than unitarism. Thus, these two concepts have created diverging views and conceptual confusion on actors who, on the one hand, appear to be freed from central state constraints and others who embrace a hegemonic discourse of a unitary state. Thus, rather than reinforce one another, they further fragment, resulting in autonomous power centres. As also discussed in Chapter 3, according to Li (2002), one of the reasons why states fragment or break down is the perceived weaknesses of the central states by "ethnoregion movements" (p.145). The perceived weaknesses of the central state, thus embolden these movements to pursue autonomy as they see no negative consequences for themselves. But, as Li (2002) argued, contrary to popular narratives that federalism and decentralisation can contain ethnic nationalism, these are more likely to create opportunities for ethnoregions to contest the central state. Although these arguments refer to ethnoregional movements seeking autonomy, these can be productively applied in the context of this study. The following section further discusses how self-interests and inter-and intra-party conflicts have become the hallmark of decentralisation in South Africa.

7.1. Power centres, self-interest, inter-and intra-party conflict

> "Noncentralisation refers to independent centres of power in geographic areas, who do, (and are expected to), differentiate themselves" (Wildavsky, 1985, p. 43).

While central government may aspire to pursue uniform public policies and programmes to address inequalities, within federal and decentralised systems, this symmetrical approach is contestable. Since inequalities are not uniformly experienced within regions in a country, particular attention should be paid to peculiarities of the localities. However, scholarly arguments have emerged linking federalism and, thus, decentralisation to inequalities among regions within the same nation-state. Indeed, as Wildavsky (1985, p. 43) has famously argued, "uniformity is antithetical to federalism". Wildavsky explains further:

> "The existence of states free to disagree with one another and with the central government inevitably leads to differentiation. Yet states must

> differ if they are to do more than obey central directives. Were there to be a change in values toward inequality of condition, the political culture that undergirds federalism would fall apart. You can have a belief in equality of opportunity to be different, but you cannot have a belief in equality of results to be the same and still have a federal system" (1985, 43).

My reading of Wildavsky is that sub-national autonomy provides local-level governments with limited incentives to carry out central government policies. In the South African context, sub-national autonomy is marked by institutional fragmentation and a lack of cooperation among the different spheres of government, which impacts the provision of goods and services.

Following the discussions in the introduction to this chapter, this thesis finds it problematic that decentralisation facilitates national policy goals because governance actors have the discretion to exercise power independently. Indeed, the constraining effect of power is demonstrated by the decentralised centres of power created by decentralisation reforms. While local municipalities are empowered by the Constitution to exercise their authority in their area of jurisdiction, they exercise such power "over" rather than 'to', see (Allen, 2003, p. 95). In other words, local municipalities stress the instrumentality notion of power rather than its collaborative notion. Following Allen (2003), thus, in this case, power is exercised at someone else's expense, that is, the community to whom services are supposed to be delivered. In the following example, the district municipality wants to apply to the national Department of Water and Sanitation for a licence to be a Water Services Authority. However, for this to happen, the district needs the support of the local municipalities within their jurisdiction. This is because, according to the MSA (Section 84), there can only be one Water Services Authority in any specific area. The B (local) municipalities are responsible for providing water to the communities, while the C (district) municipalities are responsible for potable and domestic wastewater systems. However, because this local municipality was unable to provide water to the communities, the district municipality wanted to assume that

responsibility but got no support from the local municipalities. This participant demonstrates how power, in this instance, can constrain rather than facilitate:

> "*The district* [municipality] *wants to become a Water Services Authority, but now we need B* [local] *municipalities to give us letters of support, and they're not giving us that.*" *(*interview with a senior official at the Garden Route District Municipality, Participant LC2)

This statement also confirms this thesis' argument that the two-tier local government is problematic, and instead of working cooperatively, they work in opposition to one another. Part of the contestation stems from the ability to raise revenue through service charges to consumers. Thus, despite the existence of rules, for example, the Intergovernmental Relations Framework of 2005, local government actors remained alienated and detached from the project initiated by the district municipality to establish water supply infrastructure. District municipalities, therefore, lacked the authority to initiate projects at the local level because and thus are unable to assist the local communities.

The participant further indicates that a "mind shift" is needed in the region to ensure all municipalities excel and develop. For this to happen, municipalities need a "regional mindset" which, presently, is not the case because the local municipalities (B) "only think about themselves". The Participant further argues that having a "regional mindset" will enable the district municipality to play a bigger role by becoming a Water Services Authority. This will enable the district municipality to assist smaller municipalities like Kannaland, Oudtshoorn, and the Karoo [local municipalities in the Western Cape]. However, cooperation from the B municipalities that will enable the district municipality to become a Water Service Authority is not forthcoming. Based on the above participant's statement and analysis, one can conclude that the power configuration frame the local government decision-making in turn driven by the amount of funding a tier of local government can raise.

Thus, as per the arguments presented in this Chapter, the exercise of power by governance actors has a constraining impact on the delivery of services to communities.

Indeed, funding is linked to power. The municipality with the most funding holds the power over another. As Fenwick (2010, p. 160) argued, “the rules regulating sub-national finances are an integral part of understanding the politics of the federal game”. The rules determine the fiscal incentives for intergovernmental collaboration. In other words, regulations concerning finances determine the level of political will sub-national governments are willing to provide for successful policy implementation. In the South African context, municipal revenues consist of constitutionally mandated equitable shares plus individually raised levies. However, only the local municipalities are authorised to raise their own revenue, while the district municipalities are funded from the revenue fund through the equitable share. Thus, the local municipalities get more funding than the district, further entrenching their autonomy. Following amendments to the local government regulations, district municipalities were no longer authorised to charge levies. This unequal funding model between these two municipalities has caused further tensions, leading to non-cooperation. However, the higher spheres of government ‘play the federal game’ by funding certain municipalities while ignoring others. Consequently, “pork barrel politics” prevails (see Arretche, 2011, p. 589), leading to an even more adversarial relationship between the two-tier local municipalities, as this participant further explains:

> “*You see, like the provincial government would give Mossel Bay* [local municipality] *R2m for the LED* [local economic development] *project, but then the district only gets R400,000, for example.* (interview with senior district municipal official, Participant LC2)

In this instance, there is an unequal distribution of funding because of patronage relationship among the higher levels of government and the lower levels based on the level of support from the bottom to the top. However, as this thesis has argued, some of the contestations are caused by coded

constitutional factors that have created some ambiguity and different interpretations of the Constitution. The ambiguity, for example, is caused by the Constitution establishing two systems of government in one polity, that is, unitary and federal systems. While it allocates responsibilities and functions to local government, it also empowers national and provincial governments to intervene when municipalities are unable to fulfil their constitutional mandates.

Indeed, this statement confirms Barnes' (cited in Allen, 2003) argument on the dispersal of power and discretion. This ambiguity and discretion, in turn, lead to diverse interpretations of rules and regulations. As such, the intergovernmental relations framework must continuously balance the power established by these two constitutional dimensions. However, from the evidence gathered, the intergovernmental relations framework is unable to cope with the tension created by such a system. Indeed, Van Niekerk (2012) argued that the cooperative governance model created by the Constitution has resulted in "conflict, duplication, re-fragmentation of the polity, confusion, and ambiguity" (p. 622). This view represents the point of departure of analysis for the following section.

7.1.1. Uncooperative cooperative governance

As its focus, this thesis has sought to explore the complexity of decentralised governance systems. As Gall (1977) persuasively argued, sometimes managerial failures could be a reflection of the complexity of the system they work in rather than management competence. This section, therefore, explores the complexity of intergovernmental relations and cooperative governance frameworks and their impact on the delivery of services to communities.

Decentralised systems of government require strong intergovernmental frameworks, inter- and intra-party cooperation for the successful implementation of central government programmes. This is particularly problematic in a multi-sphere system of government such as in South Africa. Although it is generally accepted that South Africa is a three-level, highly decentralised unitary state, this thesis agrees with, for example, Murray and Simeon (2012), Erk (2014), Phillimore (2014), and de Visser and Steytler (2018)

that it is a quasi-federal state. The thesis further argues that South Africa consists of five levels of government when one considers the local government sphere, which is further broken down into single-tier metropolitan municipalities and two-tier district and local municipalities. The others are the national and provincial spheres.

Thus, power is fragmented across five spheres of government, with national government playing a dominant policy-making role. This “dichotomous relationship” (Fenwick, 2010, p. 167) has resulted in a complex, non-cooperative governance model. Indeed, as Van Wyk (2013) argued, giving practical effect to cooperative governance in South Africa is not an easy feat. It is a complex process that can yield positive or negative results depending on the power dynamics between the national and sub-national governments.

Another factor impacting cooperative governance is the issue of having concurrent and overlapping powers over the same policy area. While there are exclusive national and sub-national powers, as well as concurrent powers shared by the two levels of government, often the lines are not clearly defined. However, even if they are clearly defined, there is always the challenge of one sphere creeping into the exclusive area of another sphere. As this thesis has argued, constitutional provisions do not necessarily mean political actors can adhere to such provisions. Indeed, the Constitution does not guarantee constitutionalism. The dynamics and complexities of decentralised governance systems can be observed in the difficulties of providing services to communities. For instance, in South Africa the provision of transportation services to communities is constitutionally the responsibility of all the three spheres of government. According to the National Land Transport Act 5 of 2009 (RSA, 2009), the national sphere of government among others, is responsible for the formulation of national transport policy and strategy; assigning functions to the most appropriate sphere of government; and capacitating and monitoring provinces and municipalities that lack capacity or resources to perform their land transport functions.

The provincial sphere of government is responsible for (i) the formulation of provincial transport policy and strategy; (ii) planning, co-ordination and facilitation of land transport functions in the province, and (iii) co-ordination between municipalities with a view to ensuring the effective and efficient execution of land transport in the province and promoting provincial legislation with a view to promoting the objects of this Act. These responsibilities are implemented within the national government framework (RSA, 2009). The municipal sphere of government is responsible for developing land transport policy and strategy within its area, based on national and provincial guidelines and incorporates spatial development policies on matters such as densification and infilling as well as development corridors (ibid).

Historically, local government has had weak transport functions, save for traffic control. The post-1994 government, however, amended the National Land Transport Act (2009), thus granting municipalities greater planning authority. However, according to a participant who used to be a senior official in the City of Cape Town, granting municipalities greater planning powers has led to complications because the amendments were implemented "*without necessarily changing how the provincial government is viewed in that equation".* In other, words, while the amended Act ensured greater responsibilities for local government, it failed to spell out the role of provincial governments clearly. This resulted in conflicting views on the implementation of the transport infrastructure as the participant explains:

> "*And that can lead to a very strange anomaly where you have transport planners at the local and provincial level who are planning for, say, a multi-decadal future transport plan, but they don't actually have the power to influence the biggest lever of a transport plan, which is rail network in terms of people movement.*" (interview with an expert and a former senior official at the City of Cape Town, Participant X2).

In addition, the participants argue further that neither the metropolitan nor the provincial government has a say in the distribution of the rail network in their area of jurisdiction. Therefore, they must comment like any other interested

stakeholders on plans or legislation, but they have no authority, mandate, delegation or veto power over the rail system.

My reading of the above statement is that power is at the centre of this "anomaly" (Participant X2). In this statement, you have the central government, through legislation, the National Land Transport Act, and through its state-owned entity, Transnet, exercising power at a local level even though the issue at hand concerns the local municipalities and their communities. As de Visser et al. (2022) indicated, local government powers indicates their degree of autonomy. Further, this statement demonstrates the constraining aspect of decentralisation as it allows for a constellation of actors: national, provincial, local, metropolitan governments, and state-owned entities in the same policy areas, thus leading to inefficiencies.

The cooperative governance model has, indeed, proven difficult in practice and has often been cited as an impediment to successful service delivery and policy formulation (Van Niekerk, 2010; Van Wyk, 2012; Gumede, 2019). According to Chapter Three of the Constitution, the three spheres of government are "distinctive, interdependent, and interrelated" (RSA, 1996), however, governance actors appear to assert the, 'distinctive', part more than the other two in their daily actions and practices. A recent report from *News24,* an online news site, detailing the intervention by the national government after the eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality failed to deliver services, provides an example. Section 154 of the Constitution (RSA, 1996) empowers national and provincial governments to intervene, support, and strengthen municipalities' capacity to handle their affairs. The report cites how the mayor, who is a member of the nationally governing ANC, regarded the intervention as "a coup". This confirms the prevalence of both inter-party and intra-party conflict.

This statement intimates that intergovernmental disputes are prevalent across the three spheres of government. Worth noting from the statement is the direct action from the central government into the eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality, thus bypassing the provincial government. However, even more prevalent are contestations at the local government level. At the core of the

challenges of cooperation in this sphere of government is the tension between the district and the local municipalities. Central to the tension is the issue of funding. Since local municipalities are constitutionally able to raise their own revenue on top of the equitable share they receive from the national government, it has placed them in a position of power. As such, funding entrenches autonomy and limits cooperation.

Therefore, as a result of the funding gap between the B and C municipalities, "*that concept* [DDM] *is not* [going to] *fly*" (Participant LC4). Thus, rather than working cooperatively, the two-tier local government system has caused much tension and fragmented delivery of public services. While the District Development Model appears to promote such cooperation and, thus, better coordination, entrenched local power structures have emphasised local government rather than local governance arrangements.

Another reason for poor intergovernmental relations relates to the fact that working with local government in South Africa requires other government institutions to first consult with the Department of Cooperative Governance (COGTA). To use the phrase of one official (Participant NS1), COGTA is a "single window" to local government. This further entrenches central government power in the affairs of local government. This participant from the Presidency further explains the concept of a 'single window':

> "[Do] *you know what the challenge with the DDM* [District Development Model] [is]*? I think there's a lot of confusion amongst government, among sectors in terms of the language. Yes, it* [DDM] *is the President's brainchild, as pronounced by the President, driven by COGTA* [Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs] *because COGTA oversees the local government space. So, we usually say COGTA is a single window towards local government, so you can't go to local government without going to COGTA.*" (Participant NS1)

The 'single window' approach to local government constrains sectoral coordination and collaboration by institutions co-habiting the same functional areas. Yet this approach is not only problematic but also paradoxical when one

considers that service delivery requires a constellation of actors to be successful. It is also paradoxical because having a constellation of actors in one policy area, in this case, housing, creates intergovernmental conflict because of power plays among the different governance actors. The issue of housing, for example, requires different national and provincial government departments to collaborate with local government. Thus, the issue is no longer housing but human settlements because it involves the provision of bulk infrastructure, like water and sanitation and roads.

However, at other times, one does not only have to deal with a 'single window' but multiple windows before collaborating with local government. For example, most municipalities fail to provide basic services to communities, like water. Yet, water is both a national and local government function, but it is not a provincial government function. The national government's function is to manage water resources and infrastructure, while the local municipalities are responsible for water distribution. Yet when there is a problem with water distribution, it is not clear which sphere of government is accountable. As Phillimore (2014) observed, one of the negative aspects of decentralisation is that it shifts accountability. When there is a problem at one level, citizens may not know which level of government to blame. Yet all levels of government claim credit for positive policy outcomes. The multiple-windows approach, like the 'single window', impedes the ability of national government to intervene when local municipalities are unable to provide water to communities. The Water Services Act (Section 63) allows the national minister to temporarily take over the provision of water distribution from failing municipalities. However, this requires the national minister to consult with the provincial government, the premier of the province, the MEC responsible for local government in the province, and the national Department of Cooperative Governance. The Department of Cooperative Governance oversees local government in South Africa. A senior official from the National Department of Water and Sanitation explain that the Department is working on amendments to the Water Services Act to enable the Department to intervene in municipalities without going through the provincial

government. These amendments are part of making decentralisation more effective.

The participant insists that there is no problem with the fundamental structure of the political system; rather, it is more about making it work in practice, trying harder and being smarter about the way it works. He further argues that to make the structure work does not require changes to the Constitution, but in some instances, it might require amendments to the subsidiary legislation. This statement confirms the arguments of this chapter that decentralisation has created multiple centres of power that constrain rather than facilitate the provision of services to communities. The next sub-section further explores the difficulties of cooperative governance where partisan politics intersects with local governance structures.

7.1.2. Politics of plans and counterplans

Despite attempts to encourage a cooperative form of governance, decentralisation in South Africa is characterised by an uncooperative system marked by disunity among political and administrative actors, as discussed in sub-section 7.1.1. Resnick's (2014, p. S4-14) concept of vertically divided authorities, where "partisan politics intersect with local governance structures and urban service delivery", sets the tone for this sub-section.

According to Resnick, political decentralisation has resulted in a situation "whereby an opposition party has been elected to manage a major urban conglomerate, such as a capital city" (p. S4). As a result, inter-party conflict constrains the delivery of services to communities. Indeed, this participant from the Presidency supports Resnick's views on partisan politics emanating from political decentralisation. This also brings forth the perils of multiparty democracy. She points out that politics plays a big role at the local government level:

> "*Local government is worse in our country because it's really where the politics find expression. So now you, over and above the registered political parties, we have independent people* [candidates] *as well*

playing in that space of local government. So, it makes things feel more complex." *(*interview, Participant NS3)

This was evident during an interview with one of the senior managers from the Garden Route District Municipality. He related the district municipality's difficulties in intervening when a particular local municipality could not deliver services. This was because of the different tiers of local government being under the political control of different political parties:

"*But, because of the political challenges, you find that the district is now governed by the DA* [Democratic Alliance]*, certain municipalities covered by the ANC* [African National Congress]*, or EFF* [Economic Freedom Fighters] *that local municipality, because of their proudness* [pride]*, not because of their community, because of* [the] *proudness of their party, they won't go to the district and say, can you please help*." (interview, Participant LC1)

Indeed, soon after the launch of the District Development Model by the national government, disputes arose over a series of issues relating to the model. Some of the disputes and criticisms came from the opposition parties who claimed that the DDM was the way the ANC government was trying to recentralise power. The DA-led Western Cape provincial government, which is the only province not under the political authority of the ANC, launched their Joint District and Metro Approach (JDMA). Paradoxically, while claiming that the JDMA aim to "avoid duplication and maximising impact through combined coordination efforts" (see Table 14), the JDMA appears to be a pushback against the DDM, which is a national programme. Asked whether the JDMA is a parallel programme to the DDM, a participant from the Western Cape provincial government responded:

"*You know, it's political, there's a lot of political aspects.*" (interview, Participant PS1)

The province claimed that the JDMA is the province's implementation plan for the nationally developed DDM. According to the province, there were projects

the province had already started. Thus, according to the Western Cape provincial government, the locally developed JDMA is the foundation on which the DDM is to be implemented. It is also worth mentioning that the Western Cape provincial government regards the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) as the sole developmental plan for local government.

> "A district IDP that is both inwardly and outwardly focused and that is in line with the original legislative intent, for it as a planning instrument…will be a powerful document that guides development in the coordinated and aligned manner in a geographic space. It will, at the same time, be a district plan for the district municipality as an institution, but also an intergovernmental plan to implement catalytic projects in the district" (Western Cape Government, n.d).

It is also important to mention that the IDP is legislated, while the DDM is not legislated. This approach by the Western Cape provincial government exposed serious political divisions among the spheres of government in relation to developmental programmes. Detailing the main differences between the two plans, the Western Cape provincial government (Local Government) indicates the differences between the IDP and the DDM:

- The IDP is not a long-term plan since it covers only a period of five years, whereas the DDM covers a period of between 25 and 30 years.
- Another major difference is that the IDP is strongly linked to political office bearers and their term of office while the DDM is a long-term plan not tied down to any political office or election electoral cycle.
- IDPs must be reviewed annually, while the One Plans (DDM) are to be reviewed every five years.

Save for semantics, a deeper analysis of the DDM and JDMA reveals little differences in their objectives. For example, both models promote vertical and horizontal interface to minimise silo approach to service delivery. Further, both models promise to strengthen and capacitate local government. Looking at the JDMA critically, while attempting to distinguish itself from the nationally designed DDM, the Western Cape provincial government has failed in this

regard. At the most, the JDMA can be described as a localised version of the DDM that is designed within the broader framework laid down by the national government. For example, in an email message send to this researcher, a senior official in the WC Department of Local Government explained that the WC Cabinet has endorsed the JDMA while the national Department of Cooperative Governance has acknowledged the "*close links that the DDM and the Western Cape JDMA have"*. Further, while the DDM emphasises the 'One Plan' approach, the official explains that the JDMA rather refers to the *'implementation plan' that the Department* [COGTA] *has requested"*. Through the JDMA, the province has, thus, found it difficult to think outside the central government box. If it is to be accepted that the JDMA mirrors the objectives of the DDM, then it must be accepted that its introduction is nothing more than political posturing, as one study participant indicated. Thus, if the DDM creates a perverse scenario that lowers the prospects for national to sub-national convergence and alignment on developmental strategies, which then creates the need for a re-centralised corrective action through initiatives like the DDM, then the same can be said of the JDMA.

Table 14 compares the differences between the national DDM, and the Western Cape provincial government developed JDMA.

Table 14: Comparison between the District Development Plan and the Joint Districted and Metro Approach

KEY ASPECTS	DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT MODEL (DDM)	JOINT DISTRICT AND METRO APPROACH (JDMA)
• **Description/Definition**	The DDM is an approach by which the three spheres of government and state entities work in unison with other development partners in an impact-oriented way and where there is higher performance and accountability for coherent service delivery and development outcomes.	The JDMA is a geographical and team-based, citizen-focused approach with a single implementation plan to provide developmental initiatives and government services. The approach is the Western Cape Provincial Government (WCG) designed mechanism to strengthen national, provincial, and private sector interface with local government to promote consultation, coordination, planning, and implementation of government budgets and programmes.
• **Objectives**	The overall objectives of the DDM include: • Solve the silo approach at a horizontal and vertical level • Maximise impact and align plans and resources at our disposal through the development of "One District, One Plan and One Budget" • Narrow the distance between people and government by strengthening the coordination role and capacities at the district and city levels • Build government capacity to support municipalities • Strengthen monitoring and evaluation at district and local levels • Exercise oversight over budgets and projects in an accountable and transparent manner	The objectives of the JDMA include: • To promote a horizontal interface between WCG departments • To promote a vertical interface between national, provincial, and local government • To enhance co-planning, co-budgeting, and co-implementation to ensure the silo approach is minimised • To avoid duplication and maximising impact through combined coordination efforts • To enhance alignment of long-term and short-term planning, as well as alignment between different sectoral planning • To strengthen and enhance the capacity to support local government
• **Product**	One Plan	JDMA Implementation Plan
• **Description**	An intergovernmental plan setting out a long-term strategic framework to guide investment and delivery in relation to a specific district or metropolitan space	District-specific implementation plans, consisting of all the catalytic and agreed projects; these plans are monitored continuously and reviewed annually
• **Timespan**	25 to 30 years to be reviewed every five years	Five years reviewed annually

KEY ASPECTS	DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT MODEL (DDM)	JOINT DISTRICT AND METRO APPROACH (JDMA)
• **Political oversight**	DDM Political Committee composed of: • The Minister or Deputy Minister assigned by the President to a district or metropolitan (metro) as a political champion • The Member of the Executive Council (MEC)assigned by the premier to a district as a political champion • Executive mayor of a district or metro • Mayors of local municipalities in a district	District Coordinating Forums (DCFs) comprising: • District mayors • Local mayors • The Minister or Deputy Minister assigned by the President to a district or metro as a political champion • The MEC assigned by the premier • Other relevant stakeholders, upon invitation
• **Technical coordination**	DDM Technical Committee composed of: • The Director-general from the province or designate • Heads of Departments from Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs • Municipal managers from district or metro municipalities • Senior managers assigned from provincial sector departments • Senior managers from the Department of Cooperative Governance • Senior managers from the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation • Senior managers from national sector departments • Senior managers from district and local municipalities (in the case of metros, senior managers of metro municipalities) • Senior managers from state-owned enterprises • Representatives from civil society • Representatives from the business community	DCF Technical Committees comprising: • All municipal managers • All relevant Provincial and National Departments and Parastatals • Other relevant stakeholders
• **Technical Support**	A DDM Hub as a functional network of support and a facilitation system for intergovernmental planning in relation to	The implementation of the JDMA is premised on the establishment and effective functioning of district-based teams.

KEY ASPECTS	DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT MODEL (DDM)	JOINT DISTRICT AND METRO APPROACH (JDMA)
	a specific district or metro space or a combination of district spaces or metro spaces The District/Metro Hubs are being set up as extensions of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs to facilitate technically the DDM model and One Plan. The Hubs are aimed primarily at facilitating intergovernmental joint planning and unlocking misalignment	These district-based teams, referred to as JDMA Interface Teams, report directly into the existing governance structures (DCFs and technical committees) at a district level. The Interface Teams comprise of the following members: • A team leader at a senior management level with a rank of at least a director from the department of local government • Team members (mostly at a management level) from the WCG departments, national departments within the Western Cape, and state-owned enterprises • Representatives from the respective local and district municipalities • A support team from the department of local government for secretariat and logistical support

Source: Mapping the requirements for a District IDP versus that for a District-wide One Plan. Department of Local Government, Western Cape Government, n.d

It, therefore, appears that the central government has or intends to convert the DDM into a regulated local government policy by declaring it a presidential project. Considering Arretche's (2011) observation that regulated policies result in conflict among government spheres, it is, therefore, possible to predict an intergovernmental relations conflict in this environment. This thesis, therefore, argues that these conflicts cannot be explained without paying attention to the complex political settings and power dynamics within the three spheres of government. These power and political interplays indeed pose a serious challenge not only to intergovernmental cooperations but also to service delivery.

Considering further Resnick's (2014) arguments that when national and sub-national governments are politically controlled by the same party, it is expected that national government will encourage service delivery. Similarly, the same principle holds for a municipality that is governed by the same political party, rather than a coalition. Indeed, one study participant has this to say:

> "*Our most stable municipality, Mossel Bay, has been ruled by one party now for the last 20 years. It's working. It's the best municipality in the country. So why? Because of stability, there's no infighting. So, one sense of rules, one sense of vision coming forward, that's what you get.*" (interview, Participant LC4)

However, from this statement, exceptions might apply if inter- and intra-party conflicts are present. These inter- and intra-party conflicts predictably escalated to inter-sphere conflicts, causing the district municipality officials to feel "squeezed" (Participant LC1) between the national and provincial spheres. The 'squeezing' happened because, during the ensuing battle of the development models (DDM and JDMA), local government officials had to choose between the national and provincial models. Thus, officials at the local government level were compelled to choose their allegiance between the central and provincial governments. However, it was evident during the interviews with participants that both the DDM and JDMA are not universally accepted developmental programmes. While there is resistance to implementing the DDM by the

Western Cape provincial government, the provincial JDMA is also not universally accepted within the province of the Western Cape. This further demonstrates that the idea of a 'vertically unified authority' is incompatible with a political system of multi-party democracy. Indeed, the provincial government indicated that the City of Cape Town Metropolitan Municipality will consider their own metropolitan Integrated Development Plan as their primary planning instrument. Furthermore, one district municipality in the province has chosen the national DDM over the provincial JDMA. This decision has led to the district feeling being "squeezed" between the national government and the provincial government. As a result of being "pressed" (Participant LC1) between the national and the provincial governments, when they had to compile reports for funding to the national and provincial governments, they had to use both names (e.g., DDM/JDMA). As one participant explains:

> "*We are pressed by the two in the middle…so, we didn't want to be seen bad this side and bad that side. We submitted it, but then when we submitted it, we submitted under two names, under two names DDM slash JDMA* [DDM/JDMA]*…these dynamics…people are scared to talk about these things because you might not have a job tomorrow.*" (interview with a senior district municipal official, Participant LC1)

This participant presented further evidence that the DDM is used to fight political battles, thus highlighting the political dynamics of decentralisation and the power centres it created. The participant explains that in other provinces, there are no issues with the district municipalities being "pushed between the province and national, except in the Western Cape:

> "*…it's only happening here* [in the Western Cape]. *So, then that need to give you a view of that, here is a political battle between your provincial and national* [government]. *So, for us as a district, we become then a casualty of a war. We become* [the] *grass when the two elephants fight.*" (interview, Participant LC1)

Indeed, it is worth mentioning that the other eight provinces are under the political control of the nationally governing ANC. Thus, the Western Cape has

become a political battlefield where public servants must choose between the national and provincial governments. In other words, in this battle between the "two elephants" (Participant LC1), there is no demilitarised zone; you are either on the national side or the provincial side. Confirming what his colleague in the district municipality said, another participant explain that their district municipality has aligned itself with the national government development plan, the DDM.

Thus, this particular district municipality has chosen the national side. However, a deeper analysis of why district municipalities are more inclined to 'follow the national example' is provided in subsection 7.1.3. Another participant related how the mayor of the same district municipality, who is a member of the DA, after meeting both the ANC-aligned national Minister of COGTA and the President, decided to implement the national programme rather than the provincial programme. This culminated in the district being chosen as one of the pilot sites for the DDM. This happened without the province being consulted, thus creating a potential intergovernmental dispute. This further reveals a clientelistic relationship between the central government and the district municipality further confirming the prevalence of patronage politics within decentralisation systems. The DDM in this instance, has favoured subnational governments as service providers that are more likely to offer support for the national government in a province that historically been under the opposition party to the governing party. This participant explains:

> "*…the district was mentioned as part of a pilot project for the DDM* [District Development Model]*. And it was only one district in the Western Cape of that part of that pilot. That made certain people angry in this province…We have a JDMA* [Joint District and Metro Approach], *we as a province, we're not* [going to] *entertain that thing* [the DDM]*. So, our mayor was supporting this thing* [the DDM]*...but because under his political principal, he needs to follow the toe line, you know, this thing was discussed, and he was vilified within his own political structures…But for him, he understood the vision; he could see the vision of the DDM.*" (Participant LC1)

These statements demonstrate that intergovernmental relations within decentralisation systems are replete with political tensions and factionalism. Thus, decentralisation, as an institutional mechanism designed to diffuse power and deliver services to citizens in their locality, can constrain the very same policy objectives. The dominant narratives that decentralisation facilitates the provision of services at the level at which they are needed are empirically disputed. However, this is not to say decentralisation is a failed system, but rather that multi-level power relations, fiscal arrangements, and political dynamics are the root cause of its limitations. Decentralisation is not able to resolve the tension between the central government hegemony and sub-national government autonomy. The DDM, therefore, must be understood in the context of the central government strengthening its hegemony, while the sub-national levels of government, on the other hand, entrench their constitutional autonomy. The DDM is described by the central government as a 'shift', which implies a major reorganisation of the local government delivery model, thus paving the way for a more dominant role for the central government in local government.

It is evidently clear that key governance actors are unable to resolve their political differences as each party deploys strategies of subversion to reach their political objectives. Thus, as this thesis argues, the political culture in South Africa is not mature enough to make decentralisation work. It was demonstrated in this chapter that the DDM represents a complex web of power dynamics within the different levels of the state apparatus. Some of the issues that came out of interviews with participants were contested meanings of concepts. Indeed, what was surprising in this study was the contested meanings of the term 'district' in the context of the District Development Model. The different understanding of the word is surprisingly one of the reasons fuelling the tensions among the spheres of government. The term has become a political football with ambiguous meanings depending on whose side of the playing field it is in. The following sub-section provides a brief discussion on the contested meanings of 'district' as it relates to the DDM.

7.1.3. Contested meanings of the 'district'

What is a district? This subsection explores how the term 'district' has morphed from an 'ordinary' word into what Chilton (2008) describes as political terminology and discourse that reflects particular kinds of meanings. For Chilton (2008, p. 226), "political terms" refer to "lexical items ordinarily understood by native speakers as typically used to refer to entities and processes in that domain of social life concerned with politics, where politics is understood to be primarily activities associated with the public institutions of the state". In this sense, according to Chilton (2008, p. 226), political terminology differs from political discourse, "which is the use of language to do the business of politics and includes persuasive rhetoric, the use of implied meanings, the use of euphemisms, the exclusion of references to undesirable realities, the use of language to rouse political emotions, and the like". Further, Chilton (2008) argues that a "sentence is assumed to be true because its meaning is true based on some model of the world". For example, to say that "we know the meaning of the word 'democracy' would mean that we know when a sentence using this word is true in some model of the world" (p. 226). Therefore, it is essential to understand to which model of the world a sentence is assumed to be true or not true, in this example, the political world.

Chilton's (2008) statements appear to support Bevir's (2001) postulations that a concept derives its meaning largely from within other concepts. In other words, a concept on its own remain meaningless. The vagueness of the term 'district' has led to much confusion and contestations among the different governance actors. According to Chilton (2008, p. 227), the notion of "essentially contested concepts" was proposed by political scientist W.B. Gallie. Gallie sought to establish a set of concepts that are distinct from other concepts in that they are always open to contestations. Critiquing Gallie's notion that political terms are essentially contested, Chilton argues that rather, "political concepts are prone to change, variable interpretation, re-interpretation, and deliberate attempts by political actors to bring about re-interpretation in the minds of the hearers" (ibid). To further analyse the contested meanings of 'district', a brief discussion of Ricoeur's Theory of Interpretation is employed.

Ricoeur's Theory of Interpretation

Ricoeur's Theory of Interpretation (1971) is primarily based on the argument that the way text is interpreted is problematic. Ricoeur starts by explaining that text "is every utterance, or a set of utterances fixed by writing":

> "In speech the function of reference is linked to the role of the situation of discourse within the exchange of the language itself: in exchanging speech, the speakers are present to each other, but also to the circumstantial setting of discourse, not only the perceptual surroundings, but also the cultural background known by both speakers. It is in relation to this situation that discourse is fully meaningful: the reference to reality is in the last analysis reference to that reality which can be pointed out 'around' so to speak, the instance of discourse itself. Language, is moreover, equipped to ensure this anchorage, the demonstrative articles, the spatial and temporal adverbs, the personal pronouns, the tenses of the verb, and in general all the ostensive indicators of language serve to anchor discourse in the circumstantial reality which surrounds the instance of discourse. Thus, in living speech, the ideal meaning of what one says bends towards real reference. Namely, to that about which one speak; at its limit this real reference tends to get confused with an ostensive designation wherein speech joins up with the indicative gesture, that of pointing out." (Ricouer, 1971, p. 138).

However, this is no longer the case when speech is replaced by text. As Ricouer further explains:

> "A text, we shall see, is not without reference; it will be precisely the task of reading, as interpretation, to actualize the reference. At least, in this suspension wherein reference is deferred, in that it is postponed, a text is somehow 'in the air' outside of the world or without the world; by means of obliteration of all relation to the world, every text is free to enter into relation with all the other texts which come to take the place of the circumstantial reality shown by living speech." (Ricouer, 1971, p. 138)

In this instance, Ricouer (1971) argues that live 'text' converted to writing now has a different audience because anyone who can read, can read it, so the audience is also now distanced from the social and psychological context intended for the original audience. In summary, because of how the world of the text interacts with interpreters, it should be accepted that there will be diverse interpretations of the same text.

What was surprising during this study was discovering how different governance actors interpreted the term 'district' in the context of the DDM. Therefore, a conceptual analysis is imperative to bring clarity to the term 'district', hopefully limiting future disagreements and contestations. As explained in the previous sub-section, the different understandings of the term further fuelled the tension between the B and C local municipalities.

The confusion stems from whether a 'district', in the context of the District Development Model, is a geographical construct rather than a municipal jurisdiction. This has resulted in a lot of contestations between the local (B) and district (C) municipalities. On the surface, it sounds like a mere misunderstanding. But in the hustle and bustle of political life, it revealed a power struggle between not only the two-tier local municipalities but also the provinces. Because of their fiscal power over the district municipalities, the local municipalities appear to assert and reinforce their autonomy and, therefore, in defiance of intergovernmental cooperation, refused to cooperate with the district municipalities. Another reason for the lack of cooperation is territorial competition between the two local municipalities and a quest to stay relevant, as this participant from the provincial Department of Local Government in the Western Cape explains:

> "*The debate between the districts and the locals that the District Development Model may seem, and I really use the word seem because everything that you deal with is a perception, it may seem that the District Development Model takes away some of the competencies of a local* [municipalities] *and give*[s] *it to the districts, which is, in my opinion, not*

the case." (interview with a senior local government official, Western Cape, Participant PS3)

As the former Director-general of the Department of Public Service and Administration, Professor Richard Levin clarified:

> "The term District [in the context of the DDM] is seen to refer to locality rather than the District Municipality, which no doubt forms an important part of the planning, delivery as well as Monitoring and Evaluation architecture." (Levin, 2019)

In addition, there are many "districting lenses" within government that further complicate the intergovernmental relations framework, as this expert participant explains:

> "*There are district municipalities, there are health districts that national Department of Health would view, but the provincial Department of Health would have maybe a similar or same view because of the concurrence of powers, but* [the] *metro* [metropolitan] *or municipality may have a different view of health districts. There are policing districts, there are education districts, so* [there are] *social development districts, and so, I think what you get is, it can be quite hard when you're underground delivering to figure out, you know, which district is it now that you're doing this for or part of and who is influencing what".* (interview, Participant X1)

A comprehensive explanation was provided by this participant from the Presidency. He acknowledged the confusion within government in relation to the meaning of district and explained that district refers to a geographical area rather than a municipal jurisdiction. The complete interview transcript is provided below to capture the intergovernmental confusion relating to the DDM:

> "[Do] *you know what the challenge with the DDM* [is]*? I think there's a lot of confusion amongst government, among sectors in terms of the language.* […] *So, the confusion now comes to the interpretation of the, of the model. People, when they read District Development, so they say it must be this is a district one, and that is not the case. So the district*

space is not a district municipality. So, there is what you call the district space, which is not the demarcation as per the municipal systems but then in the space within which the core functions of a specific thing can be able to be done [at] *that level. Let me give you an example. We want to focus on illegal mining, and I just* [want to] *give you an example. We want to focus on illegal mining in Gauteng around your West Rand, Kagiso, 1, 2, 3 and all that, so there is a district, this is called West Rand. But then the illegal mining activities go even outside the periphery of the West Rand district. But then it goes into the other district, let's say, for example, it goes into another one. So, in terms of the DDM, the district, therefore, will be the pipeline along where there is illegal mining, even if that involves three districts.*

The focal point around that [are] *the illegal mining issues. So, we say, now we demarcate this area, and say this is a district space, which, therefore, involved three district municipalities. So now that becomes a problem now in terms of the implementation because who's supposed to oversee the local government level? So, we then came* [up] *with what we call the district hubs and the district hub managers or champions. So, this is somebody who will be able to now, to become, if I use a lay word, an executive mayor of the DDM district or something like that because this person now oversees areas within three locals, within three district municipalities, which talks illegal mining and must ensure that these issues are being recorded in the district IDPs* [Integrated Development Plans]*."* (interview, participant NS1)

This misunderstanding has heightened the tension among the two-tier municipalities, as the districts, which, because of their small budget, now feel emboldened by their seemingly new prominent role together with the metropolitans. According to the Department of Cooperative Government

(DeCOG, 2021 p. 6)[8], "Districts and Metropolitan municipalities must be a starting point for consolidating the understanding of community needs". Adding to the confusion, DeCOG also mentions the term "district space" (p. 10). There is, therefore, a renewed energy among some district municipalities to work closer with the national government. From this thesis' analysis, this renewed energy is the result of debates about whether the government should do away with the provincial sphere or the districts. This is part of a much bigger debate within the ANC and the broader society on reducing the number of spheres of government. Indeed, as pointed out in the NDP (National Planning Commission, 2012), there is a great deal of discussion on whether the current structure of the state, as set out in the Constitution, needs fundamental restructuring. These debates have heightened competition among the lower spheres of government where the likely changes may occur. For instance, current debates centres around whether to do away with provinces or district municipalities

However, there is considerable pushback from the districts, with some questioning the role of provinces. These participants from the district municipalities blame provinces for draining financial resources while not offering any services to the local communities. According to the study participants, the provinces are far from communities, both physically and politically. This has been cited as the reason why they should be abolished.

This participant considers what the future structure of government should look like. This view aligns with the discussions in Chapter 8 on the shift in governance where the role of the districts and metropolitans have been elevated with closer collaboration with the central government:

> "*I hope, in future, for the sake of our people on the ground, that this whole government system is reconsidered, readdressed. There are too many layers of government. I think my honest opinion should only be two*

[8] The District Development Model: One Plan. Cooperative Governance, RSA. https://www.cogta.gov.za/index.php/docs/ddm-booklet/

levels. I would say national and the district with satellite offices." (interview, participant LC6)

However, this thesis makes the claim that the word 'district' is a deliberate attempt by the central government "to bring about a re-interpretation in the minds of the hearers" (Chilton, 2008, p. 226). The 'district', therefore, should not be equated with a geographical space or municipal jurisdiction. It should rather be seen as a political terminology designed to appear to empower local government, while in reality, it is a means for central government to recentralise power at the local level. This thesis further posits that this is a deliberate attempt by the central government to conceal its true intentions and cause divisions among the lower levels of government. This strategy of divide and rule is designed to strengthen central government hegemony. Sahide et al. (2016) asserted that central governments would like to maximise power by distributing power to lower levels of bureaucracy, which is also interpreted as the politics of "divide *et impera"* (2016, p. 81) to establish recentralisation. According to Sahide et al. (2016), divide *et impera* politics means that the stronger state bureaucracies divide mandates among the lower-level bureaucracies to break their concentration and make them compete against each other. The result is an augmented authority of the central state. Thus, the term 'district' has assumed different meanings based on the political objectives of governance actors. For example, the central government refers to 'district space' when it wants to exert dominance across the local government space. However, it also uses 'district municipality' when it seeks collaboration with the district municipalities. On the other hand, district municipalities use the term in its municipal jurisdiction context since it gives them more power over the local municipalities. Hence their enthusiasm to support the national government programme, the DDM. The district municipalities, in this role, are elevated to the same level, with the metropolitans in close collaboration with the central government. However, they are mere agents of the central government, as the relationship is of a patron and client in nature. By being elevated to partner with the central government, they gain a measure of dominated power, while the central government gains a position of dominating authority.

Conclusion

The main argument of this chapter is that decentralisation disperses power for its solidification at the sub-national level. The chapter, thus extends Gervasoni's (2010, p. 302) concept of "authoritarian sub-national enclaves". In this regard, it is demonstrated that the political system in South Africa lacks the maturity to deal with the diverse interests of governance actors and institutional variation.

Therefore, this chapter has illuminated the exercise of power at three levels of the state: national, provincial, and local. Through evidence, this chapter has demonstrated that contestation for power and administrative authority has emerged following the announcement of the DDM by the national government. Following an asymmetrical relationship displayed by sub-national governments, it will appear that the national government, through the DDM, has begun a process of recentralisation. This process could reflect the central government's dissatisfaction with poor service delivery. It could also be a political process to reclaim power and assert its central authority.

Finally, the chapter argues that intergovernmental failures among the cases under investigation are, among other factors, a result of variations in interpreting the term 'district'. Although this study did not include the local municipalities, it could be established through interviews with participants from the national and district level, including analysis of documents, that there is confusion created by the term 'district'. The study confirms Ricouer's (1971, p. 138) arguments that "when speech is reduced to text since it is out there in the world, it now has a different audience, because anyone who can read, can read it, so the audience is also now distanced from the social and psychological context intended for the original audience". However, the chapter also finds that the confusion is deliberate and is a strategy by governance actors to reach their political objectives. In its intersection with political power, the term 'district' has assumed a new meaning.

Despite the findings in Chapter Seven on the decentralised centres of power created through the process of decentralisation, the following Chapter argues that through the District Development Model, the central government is

attempting to render these centres of power powerless. This is achieved through a shift in governance which is achieved, among others, through a political strategy of divide and rule.

Chapter 8. DIFFUSION AND RECENTRALISATION: INSIGHTS FROM THE DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Introduction

> *"The DA rejects the ANC's hostile takeover of municipalities through the District Development Model…The DA strongly rejects this Soviet-era inspired idea of central planning. In short, the ANC wants to directly interfere in the running of municipalities in violation of the separation of governance responsibilities between national, provincial, and local government."* (DA, 2023)

Chapter 7 has shown the paradoxical outcomes of decentralisation, that while it disperses power, it also solidifies it at the sub-national level. Thus, the Chapter focused on the deployment of power by governance actors. Further, Chapter 7 illuminated the solidification of power as an outcome of decentralisation and an immature political culture. Thus, a critical analysis of the power dynamics of governance actors has made it possible to critically examine the District Development Model (DDM). The DDM represents a reaction by the central government apparatus to the power centres discussed in Chapter 7. The main argument of this chapter is that major political changes are sometimes not accompanied by violent action or high drama but can rather be subtle and slow.

According to Dickovick (2011), one of the forms in which the Executive can institute the process of recentralisation, is through institutional layering, (see Chapter 2, subsection 2.2.4 for in-depth discussion on institutional layering). Institutional layering approach highlights the variety of avenues open to central governments to work towards reducing sub-national autonomy. Further, as Dickovick indicates, institutional layering is a presidential strategy to undermine decentralisation reforms because it has the effect of rationalising institutional arrangements, allowing the central government to progressively undermine subnational governments. Thus, this thesis contends that the DDM is a form of institutional layering. However, since the DDM is in its formative implementation stage, this thesis makes a hypothetical statement that the model is a form of

recentralisation. Further studies can be conducted as the model is gradually implemented to test the hypothesis.

As stated in Chapter 1, what makes decentralisation policy popular is its ability to conceal more than it reveals. The issue this Chapter examined, is who is ordering local government development and for whose interest? For the DDM to reach its goals, it is important to explore how its intended goal of multi-sphere convergence can be achieved. Just as its intended goals cannot be ignored, neither can the role of the central government be dismissed. Thus, just as local government experiences constant developmental shifts, so also do the rules directing governance institutions.

In this chapter, the DDM, masked as a local government programme, is presented as a vehicle that shifts the balance of power and resources to the central government. According to Khan (2010) in his theory on political settlements, when powerful groups are not receiving an acceptable distribution of benefits from an institutional structure, they will strive to change it. During the CODESA negotiations, the governing ANC had accepted a political settlement that is at odds with its own ideological persuasion of central planning. And as Khan (2010, p. 4) indicates, “no political settlement is static, and all settlements are continuously evolving. This conclusion is in agreement with Riedl and Dickovick’s (2014) findings that South Africa has demonstrated patterns of recentralisation. Further, according to Dickovick and Riedl (2010), while post-apartheid a legal framework for local governance has been established, the ANC has been recalcitrant and hesitant to decentralisation reforms.

Thus, it can be argued that, through the DDM, the central government attempts to ‘dismantle’ the power centres discussed in Chapter 7 that appear to oppose its hegemony. The chapter provides some philosophical lessons about developmental policies within the broader architecture of decentralised governance because, with its ‘One Plan, One Budget’ approach, the District Development Model translates into a new centralist mode of governance, as noted in Chapter 2.

From the DDM's design, it appears the central government is moving towards a reconfigured three spheres of government comprising national government, metropolitan, and district municipalities. This thesis asserts that this reconfigured governance depicts a centralised approach, thus paving the way for the central government to play a more central role in regulating and controlling sub-national governments.

Summary of the main findings of this chapter

There has been a marked shift in the local governance architecture. Through the DDM, a process of recentralising power at the local level has been observed. This chapter concludes that national government collaboration with both the metropolitan and district municipalities signals a major shift in the delivery of services to communities. The challenges at local municipalities are well documented. This chapter makes the following arguments: (a) There is a major shift in central-local governance architecture. This shift will see the role of metropolitan and district municipalities being elevated while the role of local municipalities and provinces is being relegated. (b) The DDM is a vehicle for such a shift, which is a prototype of future governance arrangements. This chapter answers the third research question:

How have the shifting power dynamics within the spheres of government changed the governance landscape in South Africa?

The following section explores how the DDM, as a nationally driven development programme, is promoted as a decentralised local government development programme albeit within a centralised framework.

8.1. Shifting patterns of governance

The move towards decentralisation is generally accepted to transform government from systems of hierarchy to more dispersed arrangements (Faguet, 2014). However, an apparent paradox has also been observed that while decentralisation has many benefits, the system also tends to centralise over time (Pierre & Peters, 2019).

This process of “decentralized centralism” (Karlsen, 2000, p. 9) is not a straightforward, transparent process but rather an opaque one. Thus, the state retains its central hegemony mediated through the transfer of implementation roles to local units. As Karlsen explains:

> “Decentralization reforms can be perceived as being precisely the opposite, and they can also, in reality, be a strategy for strengthening central power. The decentralization of power to the local bodies also includes making them responsible for implementing central goals. We are looking at decentralization dynamics in which initiating is a central task, but in which implementation and accountability are local duties.” (Karlsen, 2000, p. 9)

Explaining this phenomenon, Romeo (2013) argues that local governments are bound to play a dual role. The first is of an agent for the central state in their jurisdictions. In this role, they ensure the efficient implementation of central state policies and programmes in their localities. The other role is that of agents of a local political constituency. In this role, they must be able to develop and implement their own policies and programmes to respond to the needs and priorities of the local polity. Further, Romeo (2013) posits that in both these roles, the developmental impact they can make is directly related to the degree of autonomy they enjoy. Thus, whether the responsibility is to localise national objectives and programmes or develop and implement local strategies and programmes, the degree of local autonomy is essential. Maintaining inter-governmental cooperation, however, requires a careful balance of political power among the different governance actors.

In recent years, South Africa has experienced contradictory regimes of governance. The ANC-led government has oscillated between decentralisation and recentralisation policies. For example, during the Mandela presidency, the RDP was the main policy framework of government. This programme was grassroots, bottom-up policy document crafted by the mass democratic movement before the ANC came into power. However, after the Mandela presidency ended, various political and social factors challenged the post-

Mandela governance architecture. The political factors were more apparent under the Mbeki presidency, while the social factors were more apparent under the Ramaphosa presidency. First, under the Mbeki presidency, the factional tensions within the governing ANC split the liberation movement along ideological, class, and tribal lines. The RDP was abandoned in favour of the Growth Employment and Redistribution Strategy, described by the ANC's left-leaning partners as a neo-liberal policy. Thus, under the Mbeki presidency, there was an observable shift characterised by a technocratic form of governance. The technocratically driven Growth Employment and Redistribution Strategy policy elevated the National Treasury and the Presidency to positions of political dominance while subordinating other ministries to mere implementing roles. Thus, the Mbeki presidency is often characterised as a period of political recentralisation because power was centralised within the Presidency. These ideological tensions led to Mbeki being recalled as president and the ascension of Jacob Zuma to the Presidency. Later, Zuma himself was also recalled as state president and replaced by Cyril Ramaphosa. However, as a 'COVID' president (Mathekga, 2022), the Ramaphosa presidency did not mean a return to a decentralised form of governance; rather, Mbeki's centralisation policy intensified.

In an opinion piece on the *News24* news site, for example, political analyst Ralph Mathekga (2022) observes "shades of Mbeki's imperial presidency" in the Ramaphosa presidency. While acknowledging that it is too early to court the idea of Ramaphosa concentrating power in the Presidency, being a "Covid president, [he] indulged dearly in using executive power with less effort devoted to justification" (Mathekga, 2022). Mathekga argues further:

> "The problem is excessive indulgence with power by democratically elected leaders disguised as Covid-19 regulations. Once the Covid pandemic is over, democratic nations must examine themselves and start the arduous task of ridding themselves off the habits of executive domination that came with lockdowns. Reorganising state institutions to respond to temporary crises bear long-term impacts on democracy and accountability in South Africa." (Mathekga, 2022, para. 9)

Indeed, Mathekga was echoing Palermo's (2020) argument during his presentation to the Council of Europe that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the recentralisation of multi-level governance structures and centralised policymaking. Palermo noted that "emergency situations are not friends of constitutions" as they often result in "the limitation of fundamental rights and a vertical reorganisation of powers" (Palermo, 2020, para. 1).

Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic left an enduring legacy on central planning, with 'command' being the new governance arrangements' characteristic. Post-COVID, the government of South Africa has sought to repurpose the National Corona Virus Command Council for implementation of the DDM. The Corona Virus Command Council was established for inter-governmental cooperation and to influence government-wide decisions regarding the response to COVID-19 (Blecher, 2020). As this participant explained:

> *"And you know, there was a lot of attention on the DDM a few years ago, and then during COVID* [the COVID-19 pandemic]*, there was talk about, the* [National Coronavirus*] Command Council structure was an example of how* [the] *DDM could perhaps be utilised."* (interview with an expert who used to work for the City of Cape Town, Participant X).

This statement is further confirmed by the DPME on a presentation to the Portfolio Committee on Public Service and Administration:

> "The current intergovernmental structures established to coordinate the COVID-19 response will be repurposed and strengthened to support to support the DDM" (DPME, 2020).

This refashioned governance environment is evident in the DDM's governance structure. The Department of Cooperative Governance itself indicates that the DDM represents 'a new shift':

> "The DDM focusses on [the] implementation of immediate priority projects, stabilisation of local government and long-term institutionalisation of integrated planning, budgeting and delivery anchored on the development and implementation of the 'One Plan'. This

> approach reinforces an outcomes-based IGR system where there is a systematic IGR programme and process associated with the formulation and implementation of a single government plan. This is a significant shift from a highly negotiated approach to alignment of plans to regulated cooperative governance's One Plan". (DeCOG, 2020, p. 1-5)

This 'shift from a highly negotiated approach', however, brings a new political dimension to local governance that may lead to conflict among the different spheres of government. Furthermore, this shift from local government autonomy to a top-down approach demonstrates the central government's agenda which links decentralisation and autonomy with accountability. This reflects a veiled attempt to steer local government from a distance through policy instruments while holding local service providers to account.

The DDM, thus, appears to conceal a subordination of local governance autonomy embedded in its design, which displays decentralised features simultaneously with centralised tendencies. Further, the DDM appears to bypass the existing governance structures that include duly elected municipal officials. Some participants have observed this as an approach to promoting a wider agenda of undermining the constitutional autonomy of local government by replacing them with the central government bureaucracy. This argument is reinforced by the central government deploying national ministers as DDM political champions and declaring the DDM, a Presidential Project, as this participant points out:

> *"But that's what the DDM says, the national minister must chair your meeting, and we said, but we already have structures in place* [that are] *working very well; we don't need a national minister to come in and chair our meeting, our mayor is chairing our meetings."* (interview with senior district municipality official, Western Cape, Participant LC2)

While in the last two decades, a lot has been done to capacitate local government through interventions like Project Consolidate, Back to Basics and the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development (ISRDP) programmes, among others, this sudden shift in governance is set to undermine not only the entire

process of local government empowerment but also the spirit of the Constitution. Rather than simplifying and improving intergovernmental relations as it claims, the DDM has only added a new layer, wherein the central government plays a dominant role. Indeed, as Dickovick (2011) has indicated, (see Chapter 2), institutional layering is an essential concept for recentralisation, and recentralisation in turn is an important illustration of the types of environments in which institutional layering can and will matter.

The DDM has fallen short in addressing the endemic incapacity, strengthening local municipalities, and solving institutional fragmentations. At present, it is difficult to visualise how the DDM will integrate within the current fragmented governance systems and deliver on the promised local government mandate. As argued in this thesis, the DDM is a form of institutional layering on top of other existing processes such as the Integrated Development Plan (IDP). While the IDP is a legislated local government programme driven by community engagements, the DDM is a top-down approach that undermines local engagements. And as Dickovick (2011), explains, in instances of institutional layering, new institutions in the form of new organisations, processes, or rules, are added on top of preexisting institutions. The new and old institutions can mutually shape one another, and the new may even displace the old in importance over time, but the process is initially additive in nature.

The introduction of the DDM, therefore, produces conflicting regimes of collaboration and power for local government actors. While it encourages local government participation, it imposes central government priorities even where these conflict with local priorities. For instance, there might not be convergence among the different spheres of government on developmental priorities. This point is illustrated by one participant citing diverse national and local government perspectives:

> *"But I have a couple of reservations,* [about the DDM. *So, for example, from a district planning perspective, a district might think that they want two or three new police stations in various areas, but from a national perspective, the South African Police Service might say that actually,*

> *looking at it nationally, those two or three are not our priorities."* (interview, senior national government official, participant NS6)

When one considers South Africa's constitutional structure, one can observe that local government is constitutionally strong but structurally and operationally weaker. This implies that in South Africa, the local government impact, or lack thereof, appears to be based on its ability or inability to deliver on its constitutional mandate rather than its constitutionally derived powers. This is demonstrated by the number of reconfigurations and interventions to its structures, responsibilities, and governance arrangements, the latest being the DDM.

Central to the main scholarly arguments presented in this thesis is whether a strong central government is necessary to ensure positive policy outcomes and, therefore, reduce territorial inequalities inherent in decentralised systems. Of course, the other side of the debate advocates for weaker central governments and strong sub-national governments that are closer to communities that are beneficiaries of public policy. The following section questions the notion that the DDM represents a decentralised approach to local governance.

8.2. District Development Model: Prototype of recentralisation?

> "New systems mean new problems. When a new system is set up to accomplish some goal, a new entity has come into being – a new system itself. No matter the 'goal' of the system, it begins to exhibit system behaviour, that is, to act according to the general laws that govern the operation of all systems. Now, the system itself has to be dealt with. Whereas before there was only the problem – such as warfare between nations, or garbage collection – there is now an additional universe of problems associated with the functioning, or merely the presence of the new system." (Gall, 1977, p. 9)

Based on empirical data and content analysis of documents from different spheres of government, this chapter examined the characteristics of the DDM and the actions of national government actors. After an analysis of empirical

data and scrutiny of government documents, this section concludes that the DDM is promoted within the framework of national government control despite the Constitution's promises of local government autonomy. Instead of being a local government programme, it is reasonable to assume that the DDM has been absorbed into the centralised component of the national sphere, that is, the Executive Branch, with the local sphere being mere implementers.

Considering Romeo's (2011, p. 7) argument that local governments "act as agents of the central state in their jurisdictions…to bear on their efficient designs and implantation of central policies and programs in the localities", this section begins by looking briefly at notions of control as it relates to planning and development programmes. It then proceeds to analyse the DDM's design. It argues that strategic actors from the national sphere of government provide the necessary influence to control local development programmes. This is achieved through collaboration between the national government, the metropolitan, and the district municipalities, excluding the provinces and local municipalities.

According to Wardana (2018), two dominant approaches to spatial planning can be observed. The first is "the functionalist approach, which embraces planning as a technocratic exercise of the state and planners" (2018, p. 1). This approach emphasises what functions spatial planning performs, for example, "economic development, environmental protection, and sustainability" (p.1). The second is "the critical approach, which considers the planning processes' social and political reality" (Wardana, 2018, p.1). However, according to Yiftachel (2001), spatial planning is "constantly intertwined with the exercise of power" (p. 10), as such, power can be and is "often regressive and exploitative" (p.1). As Yiftachel (2001) further indicate, "beyond its well-documented ability and (deficiencies) in enhancing progressive and enlightened aims", urban and regional planning is "often used for less enlightened purposes" (p. 10). For instance, the same "policy tools can be employed to harm communities, reduce prosperity, intensify conflicts, marginalize minorities, and move resources from the weak to the strong" (p. 10). In summary, Yiftachel (2001) argues that urban

planning can bring about various aspects of social control into the project of governance of cities and regions.

Control, however, as Yiftachel (2001) indicates, is seldom shown as a policy goal but rather as a set of social goals for a specific defined group who work in the interest of powerful actors that generally set the agenda for society. And as Yitachel also argues “actors who are involved in social control often conceal or ignore the regressive consequences of their activities” (p.11). As Yiftachel (2001) further posits, the actions of these “actors are often portrayed as worthy projects; for example, inner-city developers will rarely promote their proposals as promoting the interests of capital over people or as causing the displacement of residents”. Yet their projects will often have these controlling and stratifying effects… which are legitimised by words like ‘urban regeneration’, ‘renewal’, ‘efficiency’, or global image” (p.11).

This section, therefore, moves from both Yiftachel’s (2001) and Resnick’s (2014) claims that development projects are not necessarily undertaken for progressive reasons but to limit the autonomy of sub-national governments while simultaneously holding them responsible for poor service delivery. Although this chapter does not claim that the introduction of the DDM can be explained as a “strategy of subversion or tactic designed to limit the autonomy of sub-national officials” see (Resnick, 2014, p. s8), its ‘One Plan, One Budget’ design proposes that the three spheres of government operate as one sphere. This may represent a prototype of how a recentralised governance system and or central planning may look like in future. This participant notes that the DDM’s design did not consider that the country consists of three spheres of government:

> *“Now, the District Development Model was a good idea, but then its implementation has a challenge, one, that there was no consensus among political parties, but two, it was not taking cognisance of the existence of the different spheres of government, that the provincial governments have a way of working, has got its own budgets, its own*

plans." (interview, senior national government official and member of the ANC, Participant NS4)

The DDM does not consider the diversity of political actors from different spheres of government, even those from the same ideological background. This implies that the DDM has failed to predict potentially dissenting voices from the lower spheres of government. Thus, the DDM in its design, has considered the role of other spheres of government peripheral while the role of the centre has been greatly enhanced. While it is elaborately presented as a mechanism to improve intergovernmental relations by breaking down silos, it understates the centrality of planning, party politics, and diversity of governance actors. This observation is not surprising when one considers the ANC's ideology of democratic centralism, which, as Murray and Simeon (2012) noted, places a high value on cohesion, and party discipline. Indeed, the ANC fashions itself as a unitary party guided by the principle of democratic centralism, where decisions of the higher structures are binding on the lower structures (ANC, 1997). Popularised by Vladimir Lenin, (see Patnaik 2020), democratic centralism fuses two opposing forms of party-political leadership: central control and democracy.

The decision to adopt a quasi-federal form of government, therefore, was in sharp contrast to the ANC's hegemonic policy of democratic centralism, which manifests itself in its own governance architecture. The doctrines of democratic centralism that the ANC pursued meant that grassroots lower-level deliberations at the party level over policy and action had to move up to the central level, where decisions took place. Once a decision was taken by the upper structures of the party, the lower levels were expected to adhere to and implement the decisions (ANC, 1997). Similarly, as a presidential project, the DDM escaped the scrutiny and deliberations of any lower-level structures of government, such as local government.

Decades after the ANC assumed control of government, however, the contradictions between the ANC's democratic centralism and the Constitution's democratic decentralisation have become evident. The ANC's historical

mission of lifting the marginalised Black people out of socio-economic inequalities engendered upon them by colonial and apartheid regimes has not been realised. As Murray and Simeon (2012) noted, few people can argue on the success of multi-level system of government and its contribution to effective governance and democracy. As discussed in Chapter 6, greater consideration for the adoption of the multi-level system of government was political rather than developmental, thus creating a path dependency. The question to ask is whether decentralisation in South Africa has reached its sell-by-date. The ANC believed that to deal with deep inequalities and eradicate the legacies of colonialism and apartheid, a strong central government was needed.

Further, the governing party has experienced electoral decline, especially at the local government level. The result of this decline has seen opposition parties, sometimes through coalition governments, wrestle control of major cities from the nationally governing ANC. As Resnick (2014) pointed out, opposition parties first gain power in cities before gradually gaining support in the national sphere. This observation is further illuminated by Riedl and Dickovick (2014), who argue that dominant political parties in competitive democracies limit decentralisation reforms where it is likely to give opposition parties political power at the sub-national level. Thus, cities, indeed, local governments, are battlegrounds for political power.

Legislated local governance interventions, such as the IDP, introduced participative and collaborative governance strategies to deal with local communities' developmental priorities. However, the DDM extends forms of direct control from the centre through a strong central government presence in local affairs. This highly political and ideologically driven governance approach produces an intergovernmental tension that constrains, rather than facilitates delivery of services to communities.

The DDM represents a shift from the current local government delivery model to a new model where the central government manages service delivery through both the metropolitan and district municipalities. In this model, the metropolitans and the districts are mere agents of the central government with

reduced authority and autonomy. While, for instance, Dickovick (2011) accepts that South Africa is an exemplary case in "the burgeoning trend of African decentralisation, sub-national autonomy is much more circumscribed in terms of functional administration" (p. 184; 190). The DDM is a centrally determined reconfiguration of previous local government programs for improving service delivery. The DDM is also distinct in its administrative designs in that it avoids the local municipalities (B) by working directly with both the districts and metropolitan municipalities

As explained by this participant, who is a senior official within the Presidency, there is a cluster consisting of only national government departments such as the Department of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation, The Presidency, National Treasury, Department of Public Service and Administration, and Department of Cooperative Government. This further demonstrates this centrality. Considering also that the President is the DDM champion, it can argue that, indeed the President and his senior officials are the political drivers behind recentralisation, and thus, its key institutional actors.

> *"We have got what we call a centre of government. Therefore, they've clustered themselves and called themselves the centre of government…. they've now created what we call The Presidential Steering Committee on the DDM."* (interview with participant NS1).

Thus, the Cluster of Government is an accountability structure tasked with overseeing the implementation of the DDM at the local level. However, recentralisation is often masked as accountability, see, for instance, (Mifsud, 2016). Similarly, Olowu (2003) has cautioned against exploitation of accountability systems:

> "Most African countries have tried to resolve the problem of accountability of local governments by asserting central government hierarchical control of local governments. They usually designate a specialised Ministry or department in the Presidency or Cabinet secretariat" (p. 46).

Indeed, decentralisation does not necessarily translate into democracy. As Phillimore (2013) and Erk (2014) argued, decentralisation can be present even in some unitary systems of government, while some federal systems have displayed highly centralised models of governance. Thus, even though the Constitution has devolved autonomy to local government, decentralisation in South Africa is modelled on a top-down approach.

Section 139 of the Constitution authorises the Provincial Executive Committee to intervene in a municipality when it does not fulfil its executive obligation in terms of legislation, while Section 154 emphasises support and strengthening of local government by both national and provincial spheres of government (RSA, 1996). The following section presents an analysis of the DDM in the context of the exercise of power by the central government.

8.2.1. Decoding the District Development Model

A deeper analysis of the 'One Plan, One Budget' questions whether the DDM represent a new model of collaborative governance constituted by the central government, metropolitans, and district municipalities. The aims of the DDM mirror those of the legislated IDP, which questions whether this is another governance layer. However, while the IDP emphasise public participation and local government autonomy, the DDM displays centralisation tendencies because it marks a departure from the way other plans were designed. Ordinarily, local-level development projects are institutionally managed by the National Department of Co-operative Governance through its provincial departments in all nine provinces. The provincial departments and the local government spheres determine what projects to embark on as per their individual IDPs. Indeed, in assessing the DDM pilot projects in eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality, Waterberg and OR Tambo district municipalities, one of the concerns raised by officials was the legality of the DDM in relation to the legislated IDP and IGR:

> "The often-asked question in every DDM Platform is – what is the legal status of the 'One Plan'? Is the One Plan not another approach for better

operationalizing the IDP? Is this a flavour of the Government of the Day like many past initiatives (SALGA, 2021)?

Thus, the DDM appears to subordinate established legal frameworks such as the IDP and the intergovernmental relations framework. This is demonstrated by another assessment at a pilot project in the Waterberg district municipality. The municipal officials questioned the link between the DDM and the IDP and the IGR processes:

> "The existing structures in the form of IDPs and IGR processes should be taken into full consideration. For a year and to some extent, we still find ourselves all districts having to justify the need for the link of DDM to these legislated processes, IGR and IDPs. It should be noted that as a district we still maintain that these are the legislated processes and there is nothing wrong with them, however, should the DDM be a municipal process we propose that it follows internal structures and municipal processes and be structured to ensure that they are fully functional" (SALGA, 2021). It can thus be argued that in local government circles there is concern about the true intentions of the DDM while there are already legislated frameworks available.

Thus, it can be argued that there is some resistance to the District Development Model which, as the assessment above demonstrates, appears to subordinate the legislated Integrated Development Plan.

Table 15: Contrasting the District Development Model and Integrated Development Plan

Framework	Features
District Development Model (DDM) (2019)	Anchored as a 'One Plan, One Budget, One District' programme, the DDM aims to harmonise the relationship among the three spheres of government, give effect to the intergovernmental relations mechanism that will enable all three spheres of government to work together with communities and stakeholders, plan, budget, and implement in unison.
Integrated Development Plan (IDP) (1996)	IDPs are meant to outline strategies to manage municipal finances for the purpose of facilitating everything from basic service provision to infrastructural development. A mandatory component of the IDP is a spatial development framework (SDF), which is an indicative plan to guide spatial development and investment and land development decisions. Every municipality in South Africa is required to produce an IDP.

Source: Author's design based on COGTA, 1999.

The role of district municipalities is to build capacity in local municipalities. Indeed, central government constantly attempts to build new coalitions to shift central-local relations in their own benefit (Ojha et al., 2014).This is clarified in the statement by the Department of Cooperative Governance (DeCOG.n.d) that "Districts and Metropolitan municipalities must be a starting point for consolidating the understanding of community needs" (DeCOG, n.d. p. 6).

It is fair to ask: In this changing governance arrangements, what will the future role of provinces and local municipalities be? The Department of Cooperative Governance thus highlights the roles of different actors in the implementation of the DDM:

National government

From an implementation perspective, the DDM is driven and managed by the Department of Cooperative Governance in line with the department's cooperative governance mandate. The President is an overall champion, supported by a relevant inter-ministerial committee.

Role of the Presidency

- To ensure national sector alignment with the district/metropolitan intergovernmental working sessions by approving and adopting Single Joined-Up Plans, capacity-building plans, and shared resourcing initiatives.
- To convene the President's Coordinating Council, receive reports from provinces and provide feedback and strategic guidance to provinces in respect of district coordination model implementation.
- To receive and engage with progress reports from the district/metropolitan coordination hubs via the Department of Cooperative Governance and the President's Coordinating Council.

Provincial government

The provinces will play an integral role in the programmatic approach through the President's Coordinating Council by leading the coordination processes at the provincial level, utilising the Premiers Coordinating Forum structures, and participating via the Provincial Department of Cooperative Governance in the district/metropolitan Coordination Steering Committees.

Role of provincial departments of cooperative governance

Support the implementation and institutionalisation of the DDM in the province and utilise it to assist the province with its coordination, support, and local government oversight responsibilities.

Local government

The Department of Cooperative Governance will decentralise the capacity to support and drive IGR coordination by establishing district/metropolitan

coordination hubs. Local government will lead at the district and metropolitan levels by participating in the district/metropolitan Coordination Steering Committees and working closely with the established coordination hubs (DeCOG, 2021). Following Romeo's (2011) argument, a conclusion can be made that the metropolitan and district municipalities have become local agents of the central government, while local municipalities have been relegated to a subordinate level.

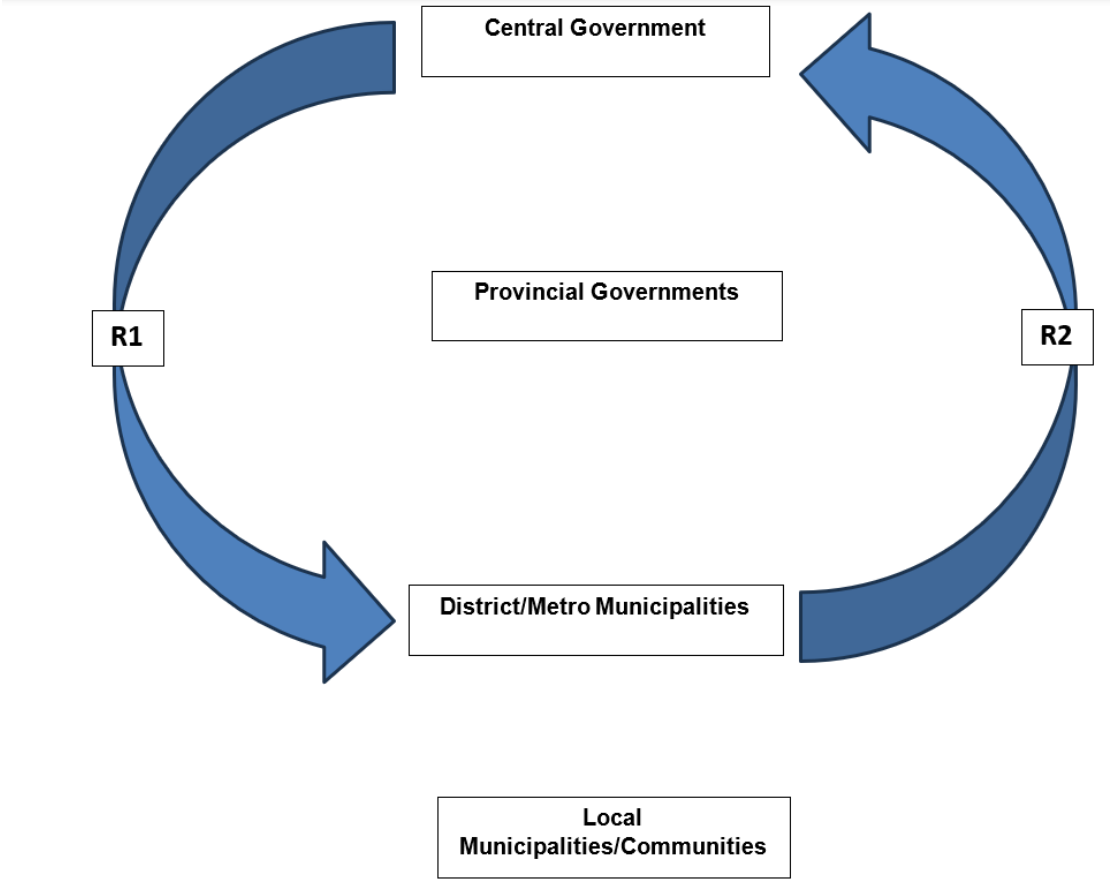
Considering the presence of the central government apparatus within the DDM and its strong political character, it is, therefore, possible to observe a subordination of the local government level in contravention of the Constitution. The decentralised design of the DDM is paradoxically compatible with a recentralisation of power by the central government. Underlying the model is a strong political interest of recentralising power. Due to the slow, subtle process of recentralisation, some participants, while acknowledging some form of centralisation in the DDM, nevertheless argue that, in reality, the DDM represents decentralisation:

> "*And they are trying to use the model to almost in some way; I suppose it could be called decentralisation, to decentralise to a district level and to the long-term planning district with all its locals.*" (interview, Participant PS3)

Despite this statement, no evidence was presented that local government was resisting the imposition of central government control through the DDM. Rather, it appears a passive local government has accepted its role as central government agents. As this thesis has argued, the DDM can be employed in a way that enhances both decentralisation and recentralisation simultaneously. This can be achieved through a reconfiguration of power relationships among the three spheres of government. Figure 10 depicts a recentralised governance arrangement where central government has forged closer cooperation with both the metropolitan and district municipalities. The relationship can either be a top-down approach, where 'R1' represents recentralisation or a bottom-up

approach, where both the metropolitans and districts have accepted their role as central government agents, represented by 'R2'.

Figure 10: Analytical Framework of the reconfigured spheres of government



Source: Adapted from Sahide et al., 2016

To reach its political objective, this altered governance arrangement can either be coercive or through incentivising the lower spheres of government. In this arrangement, the role of provinces and local municipalities and, thus, local communities is undermined. However, in some instances, factors driving the collaboration between the central government and some district municipalities are funding incentives. Thus, the central government can recentralise power through collaboration with both the metropolitan and the district municipalities. The following section demonstrates how, through funding incentives, the central government was able to engage in a clientelistic relationship with some district municipalities.

8.2.2. 'One Plan, One Budget': Fiscal recentralisation?

Following Fenwick's (2010, p. 160) contention that in trying to understand the "politics of the federal game", it is important to know the rules as they determine the level of political control. For Arretche (2010, p. 590), in such situations, distributive policies are driven more by "pork barrel politics" than reducing inequalities (Arretche, 2011, p. 589) thus reflecting clientelistic tendencies. Indeed, Fenwick (2010) argues further that political motives are often behind the reasons central governments may extend fiscal support to sub-national levels. Likewise, fiscal support may be given for patronage if there is concern from a higher level that it will lose support if it does not do so.

Decentralisation is a multifaceted concept consisting of three interrelated concepts: administrative, political, and fiscal elements (OECD, 2019). Arguably, without fiscal decentralisation, political and administrative decentralisation are meaningless (Allain-Dupré et al, 2020). As Allain-Dupré et al (2020, p. 4) indicates, "Decentralisation reforms are often planned and implemented with a uniform or symmetric approach, where all sub-national governments are treated in the same way despite their differences." This is especially the case in unitary countries but also in many federal countries. However, many scholarly deliberations have recently shifted towards the concept of asymmetrical decentralisation. Proponents of asymmetrical decentralisation advocate for a differentiated approach to sub-national levels.

Indeed, Chapter 13 of the National Development Plan of South Africa advocates for an asymmetrical approach to local government. While acknowledging that South African local government has significant autonomy, the National Development Plan indicates that it must meet different needs across different parts of the country with different capacities. Thus, the trend in South Africa has been towards greater differentiation in the treatment of local government (National Planning Commission, 2012). In recognition of these realities, the Constitution has allowed for differentiation in the assignment of powers and responsibilities by distinguishing the different categories of municipalities, that is, Categories A, B, and C. Therefore, the funding model for local government is based on a differentiated approach that considers the

variation in their revenue-raising capacity. However, the DDM design is based on a symmetrical approach that subsumes the funding to local government under the 'One Plan, One Budget' model.

Cognisance of Arretche's (2011, p. 595) argument that "homogeneous national rules do not necessarily imply equal results", this section briefly discusses the main political motives for an asymmetric decentralisation. According to Allain-Dupré et al (2020, p. 8-11), often the reasons for choosing an asymmetrical or differentiated approach could be "political, administrative, or economic":

Political reasons

Historical, cultural, and ethnic circumstances, sometimes originating from the formation of states, may lead to political tensions within countries or even agitation to secede. To maintain the unity of a nation-state, allowing a differentiated approach, such as a partial or full autonomous status to some regions or sub-national governments, can be an appealing policy alternative.

Administrative motivations

Sub-national governments often differ in their administrative, human resources, and fiscal capacities. Asymmetric decentralisation is one of the solutions for deficiencies at the sub-national level. The traditional ways to address capacity problems at the sub-national level include amalgamating sub-national government units, enhancing inter-municipal or interregional cooperation or outsourcing tasks to private sector producers. Another option is for the central government or other higher levels of government to assume responsibility for some tasks from sub-national government to ease the pressure. Paradoxically, asymmetric decentralisation can help central governments promote national goals for uniform service delivery.

Fiscal motives

To clarify the concept, fiscal decentralisation refers to the percentage of total government expenditure affected by sub-national governments taking cognisance of the level of tax autonomy of such governments. Asymmetric

fiscal decentralisation is often justified with a variety of practical arguments and by using diverse fiscal tools, such as:

- Improving the efficiency of service provision using differential spending assignments. For example, some regions or sub-national governments may be assigned tasks in specific services, which are otherwise provided by central governments or higher-level sub-national governments.
- Considering the special circumstances of public service provision with differential revenue autonomies. The sub-national governments with more capacity may be given more tax autonomy than usual. Asymmetric autonomy could also be used for collecting user fees or selling property.
- Assisting the regions with unique service needs or exceptional operating environments with differential treatment in transfer systems. This can be put into practice with special purpose grants or the use of certain criteria in formula-based grants. Specific transfers may be used as an alternative to differential revenue autonomies.
- Considering the special needs for public investments at sub-national government levels using differential fiscal rules. Some sub-national governments may be given more room for manoeuvre in borrowing, for example (Dupré et al (2020, p. 8-11).

Following this argumentation, a centralised, symmetrical approach to governance in the South African context is a contentious policy position. However, to overcome this contestation, the central government has embarked on a subtle process of transforming the DDM from a non-regulated public programme to a regulated one. Initially, the DDM, unlike the IDP, was implemented outside any legal framework. Thus, its ‘One Plan, One Budget’ violates both the Public Finance Management Act and the Municipal Finance Management Act 41 of 2003. With the loss of their fiscal autonomy, sub-national levels of government have been transformed into mere administrative units of the central state in contradiction to both the Constitution and the 1998 White

Paper on Local Government. Indeed, the White Paper states that “under the new Constitution, local government is a sphere of government in its own right, and not a function of national or provincial government” (COGTA, 1998, p. 1). Thus, the ‘One Plan, One Budget’ approach affords the central government discretionary powers to limit local government autonomy, as this senior official from the Presidency explains:

> “*The notion of a ‘One Budget’,* [National] *Treasury has told them there is no ‘One Budget’ because the Public Finance Management Act, while, in fact, it starts with the Constitution,* [which] *clearly says there is a separation of revenue. There's a provincial equitable share, there's a local equitable share, they get their shares, and they decide what they do with it.*” (interview, a senior government official at the Presidency, Participant NS2)

According to Arretche (2011, p. 599), it is possible to distinguish two types of decentralisation policies.

> **“Regulated**: those in which federal legislation and supervision limit the decision-making autonomy of sub-national government establishing spending levels and standards for policy implementation.
>
> **Nonregulated:** those in which policy making is associated with autonomy in policy decision-making. For example, regulated policy applied to public education and healthcare where nonregulated policies are Urban Development Housing and Urban infrastructure in public transport” (p. 599).

According to a new Government Gazette Notice number 49079 of August 2023, the central government has published new regulations for comment that aim to "institutionalise" the DDM, giving the central government more power and control over local government. As per the Gazette, (RSA, 2023):

1. “Institutional arrangements for the DDM must be aimed at sustaining a programmatic approach to cooperative governance and intergovernmental relations centred around the One Plans.

2. The President of the Republic is the overall champion of the DDM and may appoint Ministers or Deputy Ministers as National DDM Political Champions for each district and metropolitan space.
3. The Minister is responsible for the institutionalisation and implementation of the DDM in terms of the cooperative governance mandate of the Department and as directed by the President of the Republic.
4. Each premier is the overall provincial champion of the DDM in his or her province and must establish provincial DDM intergovernmental structures as contemplated under section 21 of the Act and may appoint MECs as provincial political champions for each district and metropolitan space within the province".

However, as this thesis has argued, the role of the Category C (district) municipalities and Category A (metropolitan) municipalities has been elevated, while the Category B (local) municipalities, which are closer to communities, have been relegated, as per the intentions of the Gazette:

> "A Mayor of a district and a metropolitan municipality is the local champion of the DDM in his or her municipality and lead the district or metropolitan DDM political structures as contemplated under section 24 of the Act. A Municipal Manager of a district and a metropolitan municipality is the local champion of the DDM in his or her municipality and lead the technical district and metropolitan DDM committees as contemplated under section 30 of the Act." (RSA, 2023, p. 228-229)

Indeed, following Allen's (2003) argumentation, the mere presence of decision-making authority does not guarantee success or non-resistance. In alignment with a differentiated approach, certain functions should reside with the central government, while others should be devolved to the sub-national spheres of government. Currently, there are concurrent functions among the spheres of government, resulting in poor cooperation. One participant has this to say:

> "*It would be ridiculous, for example, if Cape Town* [City of Cape Town Metropolitan Municipality] *were to say, the national government is failing*

to manage the South African National Defence Force, so Cape Town is going to take over the South African National Defence Force. That would be ridiculous. I think each function needs to [look], *and I know these things are politicised, and it's partly become a party-political issue because the Western Cape has been dominated by the DA* [Democratic Alliance] *and Cape Town by the DA for so long, as the national government's been dominated by the ANC* [African National Congress]. *But actually, if you look at the function of passenger rail, which PRASA* [Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa] *is responsible for,* [there is] *almost no way in the world, in fact, it would be very difficult for you to find anywhere in the world where passenger rail in cities is managed by a national government.*" (interview, Participant NS5)

The participant makes comparisons that in other parts of the world, passenger rail is managed by cities because it is a local competence and integrates transport systems within the city. Therefore, it is better managed at the local level. According to Gervasoni (2010), sub-national units with large financial resources can depend on their privileged fiscal positions to restrict political competition and weaken the institutional constraints on their power.

Thus, the district municipalities, in the context of South Africa, have low levels of autonomy because they rely on central government funding since they are no longer allowed to levy or raise taxes. On the other hand, local municipalities can raise their own taxes. This thesis argues that it is not a coincidence that the central government has chosen the districts rather than local municipalities for collaboration on the implementation of the DDM. Thus, the central government entrenches its hegemony in local government affairs through its fiscal powers. As one participant at the district municipality pointed out:

"The budgets of the B municipalities, in general, [are] *much bigger* [than] *the Cs because we depend on grants coming from the state. So, and the bargaining power of district municipalities…If you don't have the money, who's going to listen to you? And the problem is that although at a higher level at a national level, they are proposing the District Development*

> *Model. If the money doesn't come with it, that concept is not* [going to] *fly."* (interview with a senior official at a district municipality, Participant LC4)

This statement refers to what appears to be unfunded mandates, where the districts have been given additional responsibilities to manage the DDM, but not funding to carry out such responsibilities. However, a closer analysis of the 'One Plan, One Budget' approach reveals that funding is available and is being implemented directly from the central government to the district municipalities. As one participant pointed out, *"money will need to follow function"* (Participant LC1).

This means that through the 'One Plan, One Budget' approach, local municipalities have been stripped of their fiscal autonomy in a clear case of fiscal recentralisation by the central government. According to Dickovick (2011), examining local government autonomy is an important factor, as it allows for a reasonable approach to treating unfunded mandates as a reduction in sub-national prerogatives, rather than as a form of decentralisation.

Thus, while local government is *de jure* autonomous, it is also *de facto* subordinate to the national government. An argument can, thus, be advanced that decentralisation in South Africa rests on the dualism of power, *de jure* and *de facto*, reminiscent of Mamdani's (1996, p. 18) 'bifurcated state' conception. While the Constitution guarantees local government autonomy, the central government, through discretionary powers exercised outside the constitutional parameters, subordinate local government autonomy. Indeed, this argument supports the claims of this thesis that both the codified and uncodified factors coalesce in a complex web that renders decentralised governance in South Africa inefficient.

Arretche (2010) brings another dimension to the arguments on fiscal federalism by suggesting that rules and national policies governing the regulation and supervision of spending constitute a central component of a federal state. In other words, where sub-national governments are accountable to the central government for their expenditures, these rules limit the autonomous decision-

making power of sub-national governments. This view supports the arguments advanced above. Accordingly, Mifsud (2016, p. 452) considers the relationship between “autonomy and accountability problematic” because it “reflects the paradox of decentralized centralism” espoused by Karlsen (2000) where “the state relentlessly strives for the retention of hegemony, as mediated through the exercise of disciplinary power and the shadow of hierarchy”.

In the South African context, the fiscal decentralisation regime consists of two components: nationally raised revenue and autonomously raised revenue by local government. Through the Fiscal Relations Act of 1997, the Financial and Fiscal Commission is the institution responsible for managing the fiscal transfer to provinces (National Treasury, 2011; Van Niekerk, 2012). However, unlike municipalities, provinces in South Africa do not raise any revenue and rather depend and rely on the equitable share from the national government. According to Van Niekerk (2012), this arrangement “established a perverse incentive” for provinces because they can “allocate funds without accountability to their electorate since funds are derived from national government and not directly from the provincial taxpayers (p. 625)”.

According to Cameron (2007), one of the consequences of the decentralised system was the emergence of local clientelistic and patronage interests that have not promoted service delivery to communities. According to Cameron (2014) and Resnick (2014), however, in South Africa, unlike in political decentralisation, fiscal decentralisation are fixed and therefore are not subjected to interference from the central government. However, with the DDM’s ‘On Plan, One Budget’ approach, this argument is contestable. As Nel and Minnie (2022, p. 46) observed, the DDM assumes that “national and provincial sector departments will agree to share their budgets and plans and not revert to their current autonomous approaches to managing their budgets and projects”. Following the 2005 Budget Review, sub-national governments are empowered to determine their own resource allocation decisions within the context of the government’s broad medium-term strategic objectives (National Treasury, 2005, p. 143).

In support of this view, citing a Constitutional Court's ruling, De Visser (2019, p. 20) writes:

> "Any national or provincial legislation that removes executive authority from municipalities with respect to their municipal planning powers is unconstitutional. In the same vein, no law may empower a national or provincial body to 'second-guess' municipal decision-making with respect to any of its constitutional powers, in the form of vetoes, appeals, or other attempts to override a municipality's powers (De Visser, 2019, p. 20)."

Another obstacle in the way of the "One Plan, One Budget" approach is the poor intergovernmental relations and power struggles between the B and C municipalities, as discussed in Chapter 7. The intergovernmental relations framework has been designed to harmonise the relationship among the three spheres of government. The insistence by the local municipalities on their constitutional autonomy creates another obstacle not only to sound intergovernmental relations but also to the "One Plan, One Budget" approach. This brings forth this thesis' argument, and thus Gervasoni's (2010, p. 302) assertion of "authoritarian sub-national enclaves", that decentralisation has created autonomous centres of power. A participant from a district municipality argues that, in principle, the "One Budget" approach can work but needs a proper governance framework:

> "*It's not* [going to] *work; we were talking about the municipalities* [local] *because now, I mean, they put the autonomy from the position, you know, but also their funding makes them even more autonomous. And like I said in terms of the District Development Model, once again, you know funding should accompany the whole concept. You know money should flow from national to the district and not to the Bs. That's the only way you will ever get it right.*" (interview, Participant LC4)

According to Fenwick (2010), rules regulating sub-national finances help determine fiscal incentives available for intergovernmental policy collaboration. These rules have a bearing on political actors' decision-making in implementing

policies. Further, Fenwick (2010) posits that political motives often induce a fiscal support by the national government to a lower level of government. This exchange is a political strategy known as clientelism and involves an unequal but mutually beneficial relationship (Roniger et al, 2004).

On the other hand, according to Lemieux, as cited in Roniger et al. (2004, p. 354), clientelism triggers a "double transformation in both the patron and the client's statuses. The patron is at the centre of a power transaction, in which a relaxation of hierarchical control in the client's favour is exchanged for its reinforcement in the patron's favour. The client gains a measure of dominant power, while the patron gains a position of dominating authority" (p. 354).

Considering the above discussion, this thesis disagrees with both Cameron (2104) and Resnick (2014) that fiscal decentralisation rules in South Africa are fixed and, therefore, cannot be interfered with. The DDM 'One Budget' approach to funding displays a measure of dominated power on local government. This was demonstrated at one district municipality in the Western Cape province. After the mayor of the district in the province took a decision to support the national programme (DDM) rather than the provincial one (JDMA), funding from the national government followed, as this participant from the district municipality explained:

> "*…the money will need to follow the function. When national* [government] *issue the money, it is not going to issue the money under the banner of JDMA* [Joint District and Metro Approach]*. So, if you are under the banner of JDMA, you're* [going to] *get a zero. Hence,* [*there are*] *a lot of projects now coming here, so then we can get money to do certain things. I was talking to the National Office of Public Works, which is based in Cape Town. It's a …National Regional*[9] *office within the province now. The guy was talking to me and said that* [name omitted]*, I*

[9] Some national departments in South Africa, like the Department of Public Works, do not have provincial offices or departments; rather, they have regional offices that report directly to the national office and not the provincial government. Thus, decision-making powers are deconcentrated rather than decentralised to the regional offices.

started realising [a] *lot of money is coming now to the district through the department. The department* [Public Works] *is funding* [a] *lot of projects, which are creating employment for this district. It doesn't happen to other districts in the province.*" (interview, a senior official, Garden Route District Municipality, Participant LC1)

In other words, those districts that support the national programme (DDM) received funding for their projects from national government. The ones that are "*under the banner of JDMA*", which is a Western Cape provincial government-led programme, are "[going to] *get a zero*" (Participant LC1). Thus, decentralisation provides opportunities for a patronage and patrimonial relationship between the central government and some sections of the local government sphere that are not under its political control.

The above statements assert arguments advanced in this thesis that while the Constitution guarantees local government autonomy, it does not necessarily guarantee adherence to administrative, political, and, indeed, fiscal autonomy. In other words, as argued above, the Constitution does not guarantee constitutionalism.

The findings of this study thus support Roniger et al. (2004) and Stokes (2011) that the central government maximises its political power through programmatic redistribution politics, where it draws resources from some groups to fund those that support its agenda. According to Sahide et al. (2016, p. 82), this strategy can be interpreted as "the politics of *divide et impera"* (divide and rule) and is used to recentralise the lower-level bureaucracy. According to Sahide et al. (2016), *divide et impera* politics means that the stronger bureaucracies fragment mandates among lower-level bureaucracies to break their collectiveness by making them compete with one another.

Conclusion

The main point presented in this chapter is that major political changes are sometimes not accompanied by violent action or high drama but can rather be subtle and slow. Chapter 2 highlighted how the three governance modes,

centralist, balkanisation, and recentralisation, create layered and fractious governance historiography in South Africa. This chapter demonstrates how one of these modes, recentralisation is being manifested through the DDM. The DDM sets out the framework for how the sub-national levels of government should function within the limits of central government. This chapter argues that the DDM is a mechanism for central government control. While there have been notable debates on the shift from government to governance (see Rhodes, 1994), that is, from state power to a broader reconfiguration of power, it is noted in this thesis as recentralisation. While the DDM can be projected as a constellation of governance actors, it paradoxically reasserts central government hegemony.

The main finding of this chapter is that the DDM represent a prototype of recentralisation and a reconfigured IGR. Influential actors from the central government have, through the DDM, subsumed local government powers and, therefore, local communities, thus undermining the objectives of decentralisation. The chapter concluded by examining the fiscal arrangements and was able to detect clientelistic tendencies in the relationship between the central government and the district municipality under study. The fragmentation is demonstrated in two ways: through direct funding to those districts under opposition control to gain political power. This action has disregarded the provincial government and thus undermines IGRs and cooperation among spheres of government. The second strategy is what Sahide et al. (2016, p. 87) refer to as "*divide et impera"* (divide and rule). In this strategy, the central government has elevated the roles of the metropolitans and the district municipalities but relegated local municipalities to non-influential roles within the DDM.

As this thesis has argued, this represents a reconfigured governance arrangement comprising the central government, with both the metropolitans and district municipalities playing the role of central government agents. In this new role, they are mere implementers of the central government policies. However, the sustainability of such an arrangement cannot be determined when one considers the significant powers, both financially and politically, that

the metropolitans wield. The other reason for the doubt is driven by the changing trends of local governance because of coalition governments.

Further, the passivity of the local sphere in countering the centre has facilitated the reconfigured power relations mentioned above. This analysis appears to contradict conclusions drawn in Chapter 7, which claimed that decentralisation has led to the formation of centres of power. This is the paradox of decentralised governance, confirming Karlsen's (2000) concept of "decentralised centralism". Additionally, this analysis also dispels rumours of the death of the state and notions of "hollowing out of the state", as argued by, among others, Rhodes (1994). Finally, the DDM represents an incontestable expansion of central government control.

Chapter 9. CONCLUSION, SUMMARY, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the conclusions, summary, and recommendations following the empirical exploration of the thesis topic. In Chapter 1, the thesis argued that decentralisation is often fashioned as a grandiose policy reform that reorganises governments for better service delivery. However, new bodies of scholarly work are emerging that challenge the dominant narratives of these claimed benefits. This thesis sought to contribute to the current discourse on decentralisation and, indeed, multi-level systems of government.

Multi-level systems of government, such as federalism and decentralisation, are inherently complex and unstable. Much scholarly work in South Africa has tended to focus on local government incapacity and managerial incompetencies in relation to poor service delivery. The purpose of this thesis was to examine decentralised governance and IGRs in South Africa. Further, the study explored whether decentralised governance systems play a facilitative or constraining role in public policy outcomes and the resulting programmes.

To this end, the DDM was adopted as a window to explore the complex, dynamic and volatile political environment embedded within decentralisation systems. Rather than exploring individual spheres of government, the thesis took a 'whole of government' approach to better understand the interplay among the different governance actors. This was achieved by drawing insights from various officials within the three spheres of government, that is, national, provincial, and local government. Through semi-structured interviews, data was collected from officials from the two provinces of Gauteng and the Western Cape.

The thesis argues that it is important to explore the persistent colonial legacies that continue to influence South Africa's post-colonial governance architecture to understand the current governance challenges and or successes. Firstly, I argued that a resilient pre-democracy political formation has ensured the country remained fragmented along ethnic and tribal lines through a quasi-federal system that entrenches regionalism. The study finds that while

colonialism and the apartheid system ended, the colonial machinery remained and persists in shaping the post-colonial and post-apartheid governance architecture.

Secondly, decentralisation has not only created new institutions but has also resulted in the creation of what this thesis calls ‘decentralised centres of power’. Rather than working cooperatively to realise the objectives of public policies and programmes, governance institutions have worked in a fragmented way and in opposition to one another. As a result, against the spirit of the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act 13 of 2005, which advocates for a cooperative system of governance, governance actors interact with each other in an adversarial way.

Thirdly, I argue that the DDM, represents a new form of governance that alters the central sub-national government relationship. This thesis, thus, argues that this shift in governance represents a prototype of future governance arrangements, which will see the nature of IGRs changing from a cooperative to a coercive one.

To this end, the central arguments of this thesis are:

Firstly, South Africa’s current decentralised governance arrangements are based on consensus-seeking CODESA negotiations rather than transformative political engagements, ensuring continuity as much as change. Because of these continuities, different political cultures and power centres continue to shape the post-1994 governance arrangements.

Secondly, decentralisation is fashioned on the assumption that South Africa’s political cultures, and indeed developing countries, are mature enough to deal with the contrasting interests of political actors and institutional variations.

Thirdly, following the different political cultures, governance is underpinned by power, which is exercised within both coded and uncoded frameworks driven by variations in the interpretation of the Constitution.

The study's empirical findings, as discussed in Chapters 6 to 8, are summarised below to answer the research questions. The research questions the study sought to answer were:

What are the institutional, political, and contextual factors of decentralised governance in South Africa?

The study further asks the following sub-questions:

(a) Does decentralisation create autonomous centres of power? If so, does it play a facilitative or constraining role in policy outcomes?

(b) How have the shifting power dynamics within the spheres of government changed the governance landscape in South Africa?

Below is a summary of the main empirical findings.

The institutional, political, and contextual factors of decentralised governance in South Africa

The study's first conclusion is that the persistent colonial legacy influenced the architecture of South Africa's governance regime. Through analysis of empirical data and an examination of the structure of the state, this thesis concludes that decentralisation reforms were more influenced by political considerations than developmental objectives. These continuities are evident in South Africa's governance architecture, both structurally and bureaucratically and have impacted how services are delivered to citizens. Further, the structural continuities impacted the state's bureaucratic component. Bringing together a bureaucracy previously fragmented along regional and cultural lines has proven difficult. The CODESA political settlement has merely recreated these ethnic and regional fragmentations through a system of decentralisation. The urgent desire to reach a political settlement avoided a more radical transformation of South African society. Thus, the peaceful resolutions left both the colonial and the apartheid artefacts intact. The new governance arrangements have failed to alter the material conditions of the masses, who continue to remain as they were and, arguably, have even worsened. This is evident in the poor service delivery to communities because, to quote one of the participants, "*We are*

indoctrinated with previous systems, and I don't think we've cleared them off our heads. Whether it's the colonial system or the apartheid system." Thus, to reflect on the research question, the contextual factors behind the adoption of decentralisation policy were driven more by a peaceful resolution than developmental imperatives. At the point of negotiations, all that the negotiating elite was concerned about was gaining state power, but the 'colonial order of things' remained.

Decentralisation and the creation of autonomous centres of power

The study's second finding centres around the power of governance actors. The study revealed that, while decentralisation fragments power, it also leads to the formation of autonomous centres of power that paradoxically solidified power and established what Gervasoni (2010, p, 302) called "authoritarian sub-national enclaves". Significantly, these centres lack coordination and coherence and work in opposition to one another. As such, neither do these centres work collaboratively nor interdependently as advocated for in the Constitution. Instead, the constitutional provisions of autonomy became the dominant narrative advanced by different actors to justify their non-cooperative actions. As this thesis has argued, adopting a quasi-federal system has fragmented public administration between the unitarists and the federalists. Proponents of a unitary state insist on the state's centrality. In this environment, decentralisation is an act of the centre. Thus, local government autonomy can be revoked at its discretion. The central state will and can take action that reinforces its authority by generating public policies to find solutions for societal problems. In this environment, central government may act beyond the reach of other governmental components, for example, sub-national units, to reach its objectives. This is demonstrated by the launch of the national government's DDM, which has faced some resistance from some governmental institutions.

On the other hand, federalists insist on their constitutionally derived autonomy. This autonomy can only be revoked by a change in the Constitution. As such, there is no strong incentive for cooperation among governmental institutions, with each pursuing its own policy interests. This is demonstrated by the

Western Cape province launching its counterplan, the JDMA. Both these notions of the state have led to a divided public administration that is "squeezed", to use a participant's word, between the spheres of government. In this environment, balancing the central government hegemony and the autonomy of the constituent units is required to find a solution for a particular problem. On the one hand, seeking solutions for nationwide problems is unlikely to be achieved by government institutions that control particular regions. Likewise, the central government may lack understanding of communities' needs because they are not close to such communities.

Finally, when exploring the contested meanings of the term 'district' in the context of the DDM, it became apparent that the meaning of 'district' is highly contested and has become a political football. Its use depends on the context, the political objectives to be achieved, and the institutional hierarchies. At other times, for example, it is used to refer to a municipal jurisdiction. This is prevalent among the district-level bureaucracy who regard it as an opportunity to elevate their political profile. This is driven by the political discussion on the relevance and rationality of having three spheres of government in South Africa: provinces, districts, and local municipalities. As a result, these spheres of government continuously question each other's relevance. However, the term is sometimes used by the central government to refer to a geographical space, referred to as a 'district space'. This thesis posits that this is a deliberate attempt by the central government to conceal its true intentions and cause divisions among the lower levels of government. This strategy of divide and rule is designed to strengthen central government hegemony. Sahide et al. (2016) assert that central bureaucracy would like to maximise their power by distributing power to various lower layers of bureaucracy, which is also interpreted as the politics of "*divide et impera"* (2016, p. 87) (divide and rule) to establish recentralisation. Divide *et impera (ibid)* politics means that the stronger bureaucracies separate mandates among the lower bureaucracies to break their concentration and to make them compete with one another. The result is enhanced authority of the central bureaucracy and a weakened local government. Indeed, this thesis observed a shift to a new form of local

governance collaboration. This shift sees a reconfigured central-metropolitan-district collaboration that relegates provinces and local governments to non-influential positions. Indeed, the thesis reveals the complex political settings and power dynamics of decentralised governance in South Africa. In answering the second research question, decentralisation created not only new institutions but also autonomous centres of power. However, these centres of power constrain rather than facilitate positive policy outcomes through non-cooperation and constant fights for political domination.

The shifting power dynamics within the spheres of government and the changing governance landscape in South Africa through the District Development Model

This study adopted the DDM to decode the decentralised governance in South Africa. As in the previous finding, power is the main theme in this finding. Chapters 2 and 8 focused on the power of the local government level as creatures of decentralisation. This thesis shows how the DDM reconfigures the structure of power. Following Krott et al. (2014), power is the ability to shape a programme according to one's own interests, even when facing resistance from other actors.

Analysing the DDM revealed a marked shift in central-local government relations. This thesis concludes that the DDM is promoted within the framework of national government control despite promises of local government autonomy by the Constitution. Instead of being a local government programme, the DDM has been absorbed into the centralised component of the national sphere, that is, the Executive Branch. In this role, the local government sphere is a mere implementor, thus undermining its constitutional roles. Thus, while the discourse from national government presents the DDM as a diffusion of power to the local level, this thesis argues that rather, it represents a recentralisation of power. Secondly, this thesis argues that the DDM represents a marked shift in the local governance architecture, which is a prototype of future governance arrangements. This new reconfigured governance arrangement sees a new collaboration between the central government and both the metropolitan and

district municipalities. This shift will see the role of these municipalities being elevated while the role of local municipalities and provinces is being relegated. In other words, this new relationship is paternalistic and seeks to undermine local government autonomy.

Finally, the study revealed a clientelistic relationship between central government and some district municipalities. Funding incentives appear to be used by central government to buy political favours in an opposition-controlled district municipality. The central government has funded projects in a Western Cape municipality without involving the relevant provincial government. However, a similar strategy was observed where the Western Cape provincial government directly funded a local municipality without involving the district municipality in that jurisdiction. The district municipality in question has taken a decision to support the national programme, DDM, instead of the provincial JDMA.

Thus, this thesis concludes that through the 'One Plan, One Budget' approach, the central government has 'merged' the three spheres of government. The thesis argues that, through the DDM, the ANC-led government is attempting to reconcile its democratic centralism ideology with constitutional, democratic decentralisation. Thus, through the DDM, the national government is recentralising power by playing a dominant role at the local government level. The DDM represents recentralisation in all its guises, that is, administrative, political, and fiscal.

In conclusion, to answer the research question, the DDM recentralises power by being absorbed into the central government apparatus. This is demonstrated by the role of national government ministers as champions of the DDM, ignoring locally elected officials. This reinforces Erk's (2014) and Resnick's (2014) arguments that sometimes development programmes can be used as strategies to recentralise power by central governments. This is normally done through the pretence of capacitating local government. This confirms Oliveira's (2018, p. 4) assertion that "considers decentralisation as a non-static but

dynamic phenomenon that presupposes its connection with centralisation, implying the conjuncture of most governments as mixed and moving systems".

This thesis has attempted to understand the complexity of decentralised governance and the IGRs framework in South Africa. Through the DDM, the thesis highlighted many deficiencies of the system. The study explored the interplay among the three spheres of government, that is, national, provincial, and local. The study further reveals a lack of cooperation driven more by power dynamics and regionality. The study finds that having a hybrid political system in a country coming out of conflict was not a good political decision. The quasi-federal system has led to diverse interpretations of the Constitution, with each faction interpreting it according to their political ideology. Further, having a two-tier local government system controlling the same functional areas has caused great political friction as each side fights for relevance. Decentralisation further entrenches ethnic mobilisation, leading to the fragmentation of the polity as in the days of apartheid. Thus, as the thesis argued in Chapter 2, the post-1994 governance architecture is built on the pre-1994 template.

One of the important findings of the study is that through the DDM, the governing ANC is reconciling its democratic centralism ideology with democratic decentralisation. Pre-1994, the ANC has always believed in a unitary state with a strong central government. The ANC believed that a strong central government was required to fulfil its historical mission of transforming the lives of Black people who were marginalised through both the colonial and apartheid eras. Thus, decentralisation created decentralised centres of power; these centres are rendered powerless through the DDM, which reasserts central government control in local government affairs.

9.1. Recommendations

Following the empirical data analysis, the following recommendations are suggested for policymakers. Decentralisation is a complex and complicated political process that requires maturity from political actors. The current structure, as set out in the Constitution, is not optimal for dealing with the socio-economic challenges facing the country. The creation of the nine provinces and

having three categories of municipalities is counter-productive and has caused an IGR nightmare. While the Category A municipalities are generally strong and productive, the B and C categories are problematic. The Category A municipalities control their exclusive areas, while the B and C municipalities share the same functional areas, leading to contestations and competition for relevance. The lack of cooperation between these two categories of municipalities has led to poor service delivery.

Thus, political actors need to relook at the structure and consider having only two tiers, that is, metropolitan and local municipalities. Further, from the adversarial relationship observed between the district and the local municipalities, I believe that similar conflicts between the provinces and the metropolitan municipalities may occur in the future. Metropolitans command huge resources and are responsible for much bigger roles than even the provinces they are based in. Cities have become hubs of economic activities and innovation and contribute massively towards national wealth. Further, metropolitans can raise their own revenue, while the provinces rely on conditional grants from the national government. The issue of funding between the district and the local municipalities has come out strongly in this thesis. The local municipalities can raise their own revenue while the districts rely on conditional grants. As one senior district municipality official asked, "*Who listen[s] to you when you don't have money?*" referring to the lack of cooperation from the local municipalities.

Finally, an asymmetrical approach to local government should be fully implemented as provided for in the Constitution. The current approach treats local government the same by not considering local peculiarities. The DDM is an example of a symmetrical approach to local governance. The argument that a differentiated approach will lead to inequalities is not sustainable because all provinces contribute revenue raised by the National Revenue Fund, which is then distributed to all spheres of government through an equitable share formula.

9.1.1. Theoretical implications

The single lens of analysing decentralisation needs a relook. For example, when examining problems with service delivery, attention, understandably, is often focused on one sphere of government where implementation takes place, the local level. This approach is limiting as local governance involves a constellation of other state and non-state actors. It is possible that the local-level failures are a result of failures at another level of the state. The 'whole of government' approach this study adopted is productive in explaining governmental interactions and helps to define policy implementation gaps. The 'whole of government' approach also makes a methodological contribution and thus expands data collection strategies for future research projects.

From the study, the hybrid political system, as practised in South Africa, has largely failed. Also, the mere existence of the Constitution does not imply that political actors will act within the framework of constitutionalism. Through the DDM, the central government subsumes the autonomy of local municipalities by managing local government affairs. The 'One Plan, One Budget' design not only violates the Constitution but also subsidiary legislation like the Public Finance Management Act and the Municipal Finance Management Act, which does not make provision for the 'One Budget' approach. This finding confirms both Resnick's (2014) and Erk's (2014) observation that development projects are often used to undermine local government autonomy.

This study has also expanded on Gervasoni's (2010, p. 302) "authoritarian sub-national enclaves" concept through the concept of decentralised centres of power. This concept reveals the paradox of diffusion of power and, thus, decentralisation, on the one hand, and its solidification at the local level, on the other hand. This demonstrates that the exercise of power takes place within any level of institutions. It also shows that authoritarian tendencies are not the sole preserve of central states but can be exercised at any level of the state.

The study has demonstrated that developmental projects, like the DDM, can serve as vehicles to transition to new forms of governance without necessarily changing the country's foundational law. Thus, there is a slow process of

recentralisation as the central government reclaims its political power. This process is not violent or dramatic in nature but is slow, subtle, and often disguised with good intentions, while its political ends are recentralisation. The argument presented by, for example, Rhodes (1997) of a hollowing out of the state cannot be sustained when one considers the presence of the central state everywhere. Rather, as this study demonstrated, central governments use sub-national levels to entrench their hegemony.

In terms of conceptual contribution, the term 'district' is often used to describe a geographical demarcation for a particular purpose. However, in the context of this study, it was found that each actor has a different conception of a district based on their political motives. The term is linked with the power of actors. For example, the central government use the term 'district space' when it wants to exercise its coercive power over a vast local government space. However, it also uses the term 'district municipality' not only as an incentive for district municipalities to foster closer collaboration, where the district becomes its subordinate and local agent. It can also be used as a strategy to divide and rule the local government sphere, that is, the B and C municipalities. As already mentioned, there are already long-running battles between the two tiers of local government. Thus, by expanding the concept of 'district', the study demonstrates that an ordinary word or text can acquire a different meaning when it is linked with political power.

Finally, questions have been asked about the deemed benefits of decentralisation policies. This study agrees with other studies that cast doubt on the deemed benefits of decentralisation (see, for example, Treisman (2002), Faguet (2014), and Erk (2014)). As Uniyal (1988), in his work on Mahatma Gandhi and Karl Marx, *A Search for Alternatives: Beyond Decentralisation, Gandhi and Marx*, argued:

> "*Democratic decentralisation…it undoubtedly embodies a fine ideal, but is it also a good programme in our present context? A programme is derived from some ideal, but its implementation is not merely a question of general principles, but also of concrete facts, and it cannot be*

recommended if concrete facts seem likely to produce results exactly opposite to those intended by general principles. What problems does democratic decentralisation propose to solve? And what are the ground realities?" (Uniyal, 1988, p. 32)

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Annexures

Annex A: Draft interview questions

Intergovernmental relations

1. How would you describe the relationship between your department/institution and other spheres of government?
2. According to you, what role does each of these spheres of government play in policy-making? (a) National government (b) Provincial government (c) Local government.
3. Do municipalities have decision-making powers? Please explain your answer
4. Who is the most influential actor in the making of policy?
5. How do you interact with colleagues from different political formations and institutions in relation to delivery to citizens?
6. What do you understand by a decentralised governance system?
7. In your opinion, does a decentralised approach to governance facilitate or constrain policy outcomes?
8. How do you cooperate with other spheres of government?
9. How would you describe the intergovernmental framework designed to harmonise relations among government spheres?
10. In your opinion, what system works better, a hierarchical approach or decentralised approach to governance? Please explain your response.
11. Do you think a centralised approach to governance will work better for service delivery?
12. Do you think a differentiated approach to governance should be adopted, in other words, sub-national levels of government with more capacity be given more responsibilities and resources? Please explain your answer.

13. If there is a policy failure, in your opinion, which sphere of government must take the blame?
14. How did the DDM come about? Was its adoption universally accepted?
15. What is your general observation of the District Development Model?

Annex B: Draft interview schedule

Location	Position of interviewee	Dates of interview
GAUTENG CLUSTER		
National sphere	Planning & policy experts	September 2022
National sphere	Planning & policy experts	October 2022
National sphere	Planning & policy experts	October 2022
National sphere	Planning & policy experts	November 2022
National sphere	Planning & policy experts	March 2023
National sphere	Planning & policy experts	March 2023
National sphere	Director-general	April 2023
Experts	Policy expert	Sept 2022
Expert	Policy expert	June 2023
WESTERN CAPE CLUSTER		
Local Govt Dept	Senior municipal officials	November 2022
Local Govt Dept	Senior municipal official	February 2023
District municipality	Senior municipal official	December 2022
District municipality	Senior municipal official	December 2022
District municipality	Senior municipal official	December 2022
District municipality	Senior municipal official	December 2022
District municipality	Senior municipal official	December 2022
District municipality	Senior municipal official	February 2023

Annex C: Participant information schedule



Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Pogisho Godfrey Kgosinyane, and I am a PhD student in the Wits School of Governance at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I must undertake a research project, and I am attempting to understand decentralised governance in South Africa under the supervision of Dr Caryn Abrahams. The Constitution has established a decentralized form of government in SA. The aim of this research project is to understand how a decentralised governance system influences or constrains the performance of developmental programmes and public accountability. This study will use the District Development Model (DDM) as a case study to answer this question.

As part of this project, I would like to invite you to take part in an interview. This activity will involve answering semi-structured questions and will take about 20 minutes. With your permission, I would also like to audio record the interview using a digital device. This recording will be securely stored in a cloud-based storage and only the researcher will have access to this recording. It will be deleted after three years.

There will be no personal costs to you if you participate in this project. You will not receive any direct benefits from participation, and you may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. The interview will be completely confidential and anonymous, as I will not be asking for your name or any identifying information. I will be using a pseudonym to represent your participation in my final research report.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me using the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library

website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you. With your permission, the data collected from this research project may be used by other researchers. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical): telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408 or email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,

Godfrey Kgosinyane

Email address: 1535858@students.wits.ac.za

Cell number: 066 565 2396

Annex D: Draft consent form

Title of project: Decoding the District Development Model to understand the complexities of decentralised governance in South Africa.

Name of researcher: Pogisho Godfrey Kgosinyane

I, ……., agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me, and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous.	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his research report.	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously after this project has ended for academic purposes by other researchers, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained.	YES	NO

…… (Signature)

…… (Name of participant)

…… (Date)