



**STRUCTURAL CONFIGURATIONS ON THE GOVERNANCE OF URBAN WATER
SUPPLY IN CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Public Administration

in the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences

at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology

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Co-supervisor: Dr Sandra Williams**

**District Six
28 January 2026**

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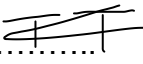
Abstract

This thesis investigated the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town. The thesis focused on how structural configurations, such as the code of conduct, institutional culture, and the hierarchy of authority, shape the decisions and actions of different actors in the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. In post-apartheid South Africa, the process of urban water governance has been marked by a lack of financial and technical capacity to implement existing urban water policies and strategies. This thesis drew insights from the structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) to explain the influence of structural configurations on the decisions and actions of various actors participating in the urban water governance process in Cape Town. The thesis describes how structural configurations embedded in the post-apartheid urban authorities have regularised and confined the decisions of urban water governance actors in Cape Town. The study was grounded in an interpretivist research philosophy and thus adopted a qualitative approach to analyse the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town. The study used an interpretive case study research design, with in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to collect data. Purposive and snowball samplings were used to recruit key informants. Primary data were analysed using content and thematic analysis techniques with the aid of *ATLAS.ti* software. The main findings of the study demonstrate that the structural configurations embedded in post-apartheid urban authorities determine and constrain the decisions and actions of various actors involved in urban water governance in Cape Town. The thesis argues that structural configurations continuously thwart creativity and innovation in the process of urban water governance- a situation that has contributed to the urban water policy implementation failure, manifesting in the persistent water access inequalities in Cape Town. This challenge has been compounded by the limited financial and technical capacity of both the national and local governments to promote community participation in the formulation and implementation of urban water policy in Cape Town. There is a need to transform and revitalise existing structural configurations to strengthen the efficacy of urban water governance in post-apartheid South Africa, particularly in Cape Town. The thesis proposes a participatory urban water governance model as a contribution towards strengthening community participation in the formulation and implementation of urban water policy in Cape Town.

Keywords: Cape Town, community participation, South Africa, structural configurations, urban water supply, water governance, water policy.

Declaration

I Thembelani Tyhotyholo, declare that the contents of this thesis represent my unaided work, and that the thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Signed.....

28 January 2026
Date

RESEARCH OUTPUTS

Journal articles

1. **Tyhotyholo, T.**, Ncube, B. and Williams, S. Pitfalls of community participation in urban water governance: Lessons from Cape Town, South Africa. *Journal of Local Government Research and Innovation (under review)*
2. **Tyhotyholo, T.** and Ncube, B., 2025. Social movements in South African urban water governance: A review, *African Journal of Public Administration and Environmental Studies*, 4(3), pp.151-173. https://hdl.handle.net/10520/ejc-aa_ajopaes_v4_n3_a9
3. **Tyhotyholo, T.** and Ncube, B., 2023. The rhetoric of community participation in urban South African water governance. *Utilities Policy*, 82, p.101573. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jup.2023.10157>

Conference Presentation

1. **Tyhotyholo, T.** and Ncube, B., 2023. Structural configurations of urban water governance in the City of Cape Town, South Africa. 24th Symposium WaterNet/WARFSA/GWPSA Symposium: Accelerating Change: Fostering Innovation and Integration for Sustainable Water Resources Management in East and Southern Africa. Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania. October 2023.

DEDICATION

This epistemic project is dedicated to an exceptional woman in my life, someone responsible for my upbringing and growth; a woman who rendered it possible that I can traverse any rocky terrain with agility and dexterity- my mother, Nofikile Tyhotyholo.

Acknowledgements

This work is based on the research supported wholly by the National Research Foundation of South Africa (Grant Number 142208). Opinions expressed in this thesis and the conclusions arrived at, are those of the author, and are not necessarily to be attributed to the National Research Foundation. The task of knowledge production, especially in African societies, cannot be an individual endeavour. Knowledge production is a collective action made possible through countless acts of support, generosity, and guidance from different people. In exploring the urban water governance phenomenon and the perennial water access struggles faced by the preponderance of the urban poor in South Africa, and particularly in Cape Town, I was supported by numerous individuals. Let me extend my heartfelt gratitude to my parents Mr Thanduxolo Tyhotyholo (Mngwende) and Mrs Nofikile Tyhotyholo (Matita), for their continuous support throughout my academic journey. Thank you for your financial support and encouragement during this long intellectual endeavour. I know that I have spent more time in the university than envisaged but you never gave up on supporting my decisions. Your love and support have strengthened me throughout this academic journey. I am because you are, without you this academic journey would have never been possible.

My beloved wife, the event of my life Mrs Lichume Tyhotyholo (Mamcete), thank you for your steady love and support throughout my studies. When things were falling apart and the going got tougher during the research process, you always reiterated that there would be a rainbow after a storm. Thank you, Mamcete, for offering succour during the tough times of this academic journey. I often left you alone during harsh times of our relationship, but you never ceased supporting and encouraging me. I had to commit myself to reading and writing at the expense of our family time, but you stood firm and remained loyal. Thank you for taking care of our beautiful kids Alunamda and Ndivho when I was away for an exceptionally long time. You kept our house warm and attractive despite the enormous challenges we faced while I was chasing academic deadlines. The proverb *Induku entle igawulwa ezizweni* resonate well with me. My dear wife, I shall forever be grateful for your love, respect and support.

I wish to extend my profound gratitude to my supervisor and teacher, Professor Bongani Ncube, for the continuous support and guidance during the research process.

Thank you, Prof, your intellectual acumen, particularly in the field of urban water governance, has inspired me throughout this academic journey. Your participatory mentorship sessions often triggered alternative perspectives on the study of urban water governance. I am equally grateful to my co-supervisor Dr Sandra Williams, for the continuous guidance and support during the research process. Your critique of my submissions since the proposal stage of this research has often led to greater improvements in my academic writing skills. This kind of critical scholarship is vital for African development.

Words of appreciation to my cherished friend, Mrs Lungile Baloyi, for always reminding me about the need to keep on going in life despite all the obstacles. To my brother Simlindile Mafuna, our casual yet critical interrogation of general existential questions has sharpened my thinking during this research journey. My words of thanks to my Aunty Nomasister Tyhotyholo (Mamngwende) for facilitating my transitioning from rural Port St Johns in the Eastern Cape province to Cape Town. It was this transition that led to my enrolment at the university, and I shall forever be grateful. I must also extend my gratitude to my brothers and sisters in the Light of Life Church of South Africa for their continuous spiritual support and encouragement throughout my studies. I must acknowledge the consistent support and generosity from my brother and friend Sizile Komtini and his wife Nomzi Komtini. Thank you for your support during the tough times in both my social and academic life; I shall forever be grateful.

To my late grandfather Makomani (Mngwende) and my grandmother Nongaphuthwa (Mangcitshane) thank you for inculcating the principles of Ubuntu and education in our family. I hope this thesis will serve as an inspiration to the current and upcoming generations of this beautiful family to seek knowledge beyond the corridors of higher education. Words of thanks to my fellow students at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Centre for Water and Sanitation Research, for their serious critiques of this thesis during our monthly research seminars. I am grateful to Dr Evans Shoko for his critical, constructive comments and assistance with data analysis. To my fellow doctoral students, Kudzai Mugejo, Refiloe Maphiri, Sonia Manyumwa thank you for your continuous support and encouragement during this academic journey. I also acknowledge all key informants who participated in this research by sharing with me their invaluable water governance experiences in Cape Town.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACTs	Area Co-ordinating Teams
ANC	African National Congress
APF	Anti-Privatisation Forum
AWCC	African Water Commons Collective
CBUWG	Community-Based Urban Water Governance
CDWs	Community Development Workers
CEP	Community Engagement Platforms
CF	Community Forums
COCT	City of Cape Town
COCTC	City of Cape Town Council
CPM	Community Participation Mechanisms
CPUT	Peninsula University of Technology
CSS	Citizen Satisfaction Surveys
CTDWS	Cape Town Department of Water and Sanitation
DA	Democratic Alliance
EPWPs	Extended Public Works Programme
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
HDI	Human Development Index
ICM	Integrated Catchment Management
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IGR	Intergovernmental Relations
ILWRM	Integrated Land and Water Management
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management

JPM	Joint Public Meetings
LGMSA	Local Government: Municipal Structures Act
MFMA	Municipal Finance Management Act
NDP	National Development Plan
NDWS	National Department of Water and Sanitation
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
NRF	National Research Foundation
NSOG	National School of Government
NWRC	National Water Research Commission
OAU	Organisation of the African Unity
PCC	Policy Coordinating Committee
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
PPPs	Public Private Partnerships
PSC	Public Service Commission
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SANGOCO	South African National NGO Coalition
SDBIR	Service Delivery Budget and Implementation Report
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SECC	Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee
SMs	Social Movements
SOP	Standard Operation Procedures
UN	United Nations
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
WCAEC	Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign

WCWC	Western Cape Water Caucus
WDM	Water Demand Management
WHPF	Water Homeless People's Federation
WPLG	White Paper on Local Government
WPWSSS	White Paper on Water Supply and Sanitation Services

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Declaration	iii
RESEARCH OUTPUTS	iv
Conference Presentation.....	iv
DEDICATION	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Abbreviations and Acronyms.....	viii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY: INTRODUCING THE PERSISTENT GLOBAL CHALLENGE OF URBAN WATER GOVERNANCE	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Research Problem.....	7
1.3 Rationale and Significance of the Study	9
1.4 The Objectives of the Study	9
1.5 Research Questions	10
1.6 Research Proposition	10
1.7 Description of the Research Area.....	10
1.8 The Global Challenge of Urban Water Governance	11
1.9 Urban Water Governance in Cape Town	15
1.10 Limitations of the Study	17
1.11 Delimitation of the Study	18
1.12 Organisation of the Thesis	18
1.13 Chapter Summary	21
CHAPTER TWO.....	22
THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: THE DISCOURSE ON THEORIES AND NOTIONS GERMANE TO URBAN WATER GOVERNANCE	22
2.1 Introduction	22
2.2 Theoretical Framework for Urban Water Governance.....	22
2.2.1 Structuration Theory.....	23
2.2.2 Co-Design Theory	25
2.2.3 Just City Theory	26
2.2.4 Communicative Action Theory.....	28
2.2.5 Insurgent Planning Theory	30

2.3 Colonial Planning and Water Governance in African Cities.....	32
2.4 The Argument for Radical Community-based Urban Water Governance.....	36
2.5 Conceptualisation of Urban Water Governance	38
2.6 Different Approaches to Urban Water Governance	39
2.6.1 Experimentalist Urban Water Governance	40
2.6.2 Polycentric Urban Water Governance	41
2.6.3 Adaptive Urban Water Governance.....	42
2.7 The South African Urban Water Governance Model	44
2.8 Conceptualisation of Structural Configurations	45
2.8.1 Hierarchy of Authority.....	48
2.8.2 Institutional Sanctions	49
2.8.3 Institutional Rules and Directives	50
2.8.4 Institutional Culture and Tradition.....	51
2.9 Community Participation and Urban Water Governance.....	53
2.10 The Resurgence of Social Movements in African Water Governance.....	55
2.11 Social Movements in Urban South African Water Governance prior to 1994 ...	57
2.12 Social Movements in Water Governance in the Post-apartheid South Africa...	58
2.12.1 Water Homeless People's Federation	60
2.12.2 Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign	60
2.12.3 The Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee.....	61
2.12.4 The Anti-Privatisation Forum.....	61
2.13 Contestations, Contradictions and Alliances in Water Governance.....	62
2.14 Chapter Summary	64
CHAPTER THREE	65
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: EXPLICATING THE SALIENT METHODOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE STUDY	65
3.1 Introduction	65
3.2 A Model for Research Design.....	66
3.3 Research Philosophy	67
3.4 Research Approach.....	70
Table 1: Characteristics of a Qualitative Research Approach	72
3.5 Research Design.....	75
3.6 Target Population	76
3.7 Sampling Strategy	77

3.8 Data Collection Techniques	78
3.8.1 In-depth Interviews	79
Table 2: Research Participates by Category	79
3.8.2 Focus Group Discussions	83
3.8.3 Life Histories.....	85
3.8.4 Document Review	85
3.8.5 Archival Research	86
3.8.6 Purposive Observations	87
3.9 Data Analysis Methods.....	88
3.9.1 Content Data Analysis Method.....	89
3.9.2 Actor Analysis Method.....	90
3.9.3 The Hermeneutic Data Analysis Method.....	90
3.9.4 Software Analysis.....	91
3.10 Trustworthiness and Credibility of Research Findings.....	91
3.10.1 Trustworthiness.....	92
3.10.2 Credibility.....	94
3.11 Presentation of Research Findings	95
3.12 Ethical Considerations.....	95
3.13 Chapter Summary	96
CHAPTER FOUR	97
POST-APARTHEID URBAN WATER GOVERNANCE LEGISLATION AND POLICIES IN SOUTH AFRICA: REFLECTIONS ON THE PERSISTENT URBAN WATER SUPPLY CHALLENGE IN CAPE TOWN	97
4.1 Introduction	97
4.2 Urban Water Governance in pre-colonial South Africa.....	98
4.3 Urban Water Governance in Colonial South Africa	99
4.4 Urban Water Governance in the post-apartheid South Africa	104
4.5 Legislative Framework for Urban Water Governance in South Africa	107
4.5.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996.....	107
4.5.2 The Water Services Act 108 of 1997	109
4.5.3 The National Water Act 36 of 1998	109
4.5.4 Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999.....	110
4.5.5 Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003.....	110
4.5.6 Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998.....	111

4.5.7 Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000	112
4.5.8 The White Paper on Water Supply and Sanitation Services (1994)	113
4.5.9 Reconstruction and Development Programme (1994)	114
4.5.10 White Paper on Local Government (1998)	115
4.5.11 National Development Plan (2012).....	116
4.5.12 National Water Resource Strategy	117
4.6 Urban Water Governance Protagonists in post-apartheid South Africa.....	118
4.7 Community Participation in South African Urban Water Governance.....	126
4.7.1 Non-governmental Organisations.....	129
4.7.2 Area Coordinating Teams	130
4.7.3 Community Development Workers.....	131
4.7.4 Ward Committees.....	132
4.7.5 Imbizos and Kgotlas	133
4.8 The Persistent Challenge of Urban Water Supply in Cape Town	134
4.9 Critiquing the post-apartheid Urban Water Policy in South Africa	136
4.10 Chapter Summary	140
CHAPTER FIVE	141
THE ROLE OF STRUCTURAL CONFIGURATIONS ON URBAN WATER GOVERNANCE IN CAPE TOWN.....	141
5.1 Introduction	141
5.2 Branches within the Department of Water and Sanitation	141
5.3 Structural Configurations and Urban Water Governance in Cape Town	145
5.3.1 Hierarchy of Authority.....	146
5.3.2 Vision and Mission Statement.....	151
5.3.3 Code of Conduct	154
5.3.4 Rules and Regulations	158
5.3.5 Institutional Disciplinary Measures	161
5.3.6 Institutional Culture and Tradition.....	164
5.4 Urban Water Governance in a Fractured Cape Town	167
5.5 Chapter Summary	170
CHAPTER SIX	171
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS IN URBAN WATER GOVERNANCE IN CAPE TOWN	171
6.1 Introduction	171

6.2 Community Participation in Urban Water Governance in Cape Town	171
6.3 Mechanisms for Community Participation in Urban Water Governance	177
6.3.1 The Office of the Ward Councillor	177
6.3.2 Area Coordinating Teams	180
6.3.3 Community Development Workers.....	183
6.3.4 Ward Committees.....	186
6.3.5 Walkabouts.....	188
6.3.6 Joint public meetings.....	191
6.4 Bureaucratised Community Participation in Urban Water Governance	193
6.5 The Politicised Urban Water Governance Process in Cape Town	197
6.6 Chapter Summary	200
CHAPTER SEVEN	201
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING URBAN WATER GOVERNANCE IN CAPE TOWN.....	201
7.1 Introduction	201
7.2 Conclusions.....	201
7.3 Research Contribution: Participatory Urban Water Governance Model	212
7.4 Suggested Measures to Strengthen Urban Water Governance in Cape Town	219
7.4.1 Transformation of the Existing Structural Configurations	219
7.3.2 Reliable Mechanisms for Community Participation	220
7.3.3 Increased Budget for Urban Water Governance	221
7.3.4 Improving Communication.....	222
7.3.5 Improving Public Policy Coherence.....	223
7.3.6 Research and Training	223
7.4 Suggestions for Future Research.....	224
7.5 Chapter Summary	225
References.....	226

List of Tables

Table 1: Characteristics of a qualitative research approach.....64
Table 2: Research participates.....72

List of Figures

Figure 1: The main Elements of Structural configurations.....	42
Figure 2: The Research Onion.....	58
Figure 3: Urban Water Governance Actors in South Africa.....	105
Figure 4: Branches within the Department of Water and Sanitation in Cape Town...	125
Figure 5: The organogram of the Department of Water and Sanitation.....	126
Figure 6: Structural configurations in Cape Town.....	128
Figure 7: Participatory urban water governance model.....	197

List of Appendices

Language Editing certificate.....	223
Ethics clearance certificate.....	224
Ethics Consent Letter.....	225
Research Instrument 1: Interview Guide.....	228
Research Instrument 2: Focus Group Discussion Guide.....	231
Consent to Participate in the study.....	234

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY: INTRODUCING THE PERSISTENT GLOBAL CHALLENGE OF URBAN WATER GOVERNANCE

1.1 Introduction

This thesis has investigated the influence of structural configurations on water governance in urban South Africa with a focus on Cape Town. The thesis used Cape Town as a case study to analyse how structural configurations, such as the code of conduct, disciplinary measures, hierarchy of authority, vision, and mission statement shape the process of urban water governance. The persistent lack of access to water services constitutes one of the main challenges facing humankind, particularly the urban low-income communities across the globe. This challenge has been associated with rapid processes of urbanisation that contribute to the perpetual increase of the urban population against a weak financial capacity of governments to provide water to all people (Ordor & Michell, 2022; Pollard et al., 2023).

The processes of urbanisation have intensified throughout the world as more than half of the global population is living in urban areas (Blekking et al., 2022). In this context, urban residents, activists, leaders, and managers are faced with challenging pressures and choices as they attempt to adapt and thrive in the face of the current wave of urbanisation. While urbanisation can be seen as one of the factors that lead to the shortage of urban services such as water, especially in low-income communities, it can also play a positive role in economic and social transformation. Urbanisation poses a challenge to “local and regional governments to establish policies that optimise its benefits, which makes it a constructive force for socio-economic and political transformation” (Ordor & Michell, 2022:21). As most people move into urban spaces, poverty becomes a serious challenge, particularly in low-income communities. The challenge of poverty is common in low-income townships characterised by poor provision of basic services such as water.

In urban water management literature (Patrick, 2021; Lukat et al., 2023), the notion of water governance has been considered as a broad and multidimensional concept. In this regard, Patrick (2021) defines water governance as the political, economic, social processes and institutions through which governments, the private sector and civil

society make decisions about how best to use, allocate, develop and manage water resources. In this thesis, the concept of water governance refers to the political, institutional, and administrative processes for effective formulation and implementation of water governance legislation, policies and strategies with the drive to cultivate and promote sustainable provision of water services to all people, including low-income groups (Whaley, 2022).

Structural configurations is a comprehensive and broad concept that has been used in different context (Thompson, 2016). Despite the complex nature and various application of this concept, In this thesis, structural configurations can be defined as the constituent aspects that give an institution a unique identity. The concept of structural configurations covers institutional, legal, organizational, and relational dimensions of water governance, including actor networks, hierarchies, resource flows, and decision-making norms. These nonmaterialistic internal features of an institution include, the institutional culture, code of conduct, values, hierarchy of authority, vision and mission statements embedded in institutions (Giddens, 1984; Thompson, 2016). The concept of low-income community in this study refers to peripheral urban townships that are characterised by poor service delivery. In the South African setting, in these communities, most residents who are working earn around one thousand five hundred to seven thousand five hundred rands per month, and much of the population depends on the government to provide housing and other important social amenities, such as water and sanitation services (Ordor & Michell, 2022). Such communities are characterised by a lack of basic services, compounded by the swelling of informal settlements like backyard shacks.

Harvey (2012:141) argues that urbanisation plays a “crucial role in the absorption of capital surpluses while at the same time dispossessing urban masses of the right to the city”. This means that, as most of the population lives in urban areas, most of the urban poor will have limited or no access to social services like water. To avoid this marginalisation of urban masses, water governance institutions must be designed to promote equally the needs of the urban low-income communities (Cinnamon & Noth, 2023). Otherwise, without the role of low-income urban communities in the formulation and implementation of water governance policies and strategies, large cities like Cape Town tend to be occupied primarily by the rich people, with most of

the low-income urban population pushed to peripheral townships characterised by poor water access. While housing and poor access to water continue to be a global challenge, the situation is greater in the African continent in relation to the other parts of the world. In the African continent, the challenge of housing and access to water is high (Baumgart, 2023; Cinnamon & Noth, 2023). For instance, Pollard et al. (2023:124) argue that “72% of the urban population are slum-dwellers, followed by Asia at 46% and Latin America at 32%”. The pressing challenge faced by the government is how to promote an inclusive process of urbanisation that takes into consideration the demands and plights of the urban poor population.

To solve present and future urban issues, including lack of housing, poverty, water shortages, climate change, and rapid urbanisation, urban planning processes, particularly in relation to water governance, must be reformed (Calverley & Walther, 2022). Governance approaches such as integrated water management that promote the role and voices of the urban poor in water governance are imperative. Statistics indicate that an estimated number of 3 billion people need housing and water services by 2030 (Sarkar, 2022; Baumgart, 2023). This presents a serious challenge to urban municipalities and all stakeholders, including international development organisations and local communities, to critically rethink urban water governance approaches, considering the global factors and the African experiences.

Within this global context of rapid urbanisation and the subsequent poor access to water in the urban areas, the Africa Agenda 2063 was adopted in 2013 by the Organisation of the African Unity (OAU). The Africa Agenda 2063 is a blueprint and strategic plan for transforming the African continent into a significant global actor, characterised by the sustainable provision of basic services such as water to all people (Enqvist et al., 2022; Ordor & Michell, 2022). However, urbanisation without proper planning and governance has contributed to poor service delivery in African cities, especially in low-income areas. Access to water is one of the challenges confronting the urban poor in African cities such as Kampala in Uganda and Harare in Zimbabwe (Poshai, 2022). In this situation, South Africa is no exception as cities such as Cape Town are marked by the exponential expansion of informal settlements with poor access to water (Enqvist et al., 2022).

As one of the leading countries that aligns its developmental plans and practices with the Africa Agenda 2063, South Africa has committed itself to developing strategies that will enhance the accessibility of basic social services like water to all people. With the intentions of improving the accessibility of water services to all people, the government has formulated and implemented several legislation and policies. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996, the supreme law of the country, Section 27(1)(b) provides that “everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food and water”. To give effect to this constitutional right, the Water Services Act 108 of 1997 and the National Water Act 36 of 1998 were enacted by the South African democratic government. This legislation means that the post-apartheid South African government has a constitutional responsibility to ensure progressive access to water services by all people in South Africa. However, rapid urbanisation, compounded by the weak financial and technical capacity of the government to strengthen effective water governance contribute to limited water access particularly in South African poor communities. Due to the failure of the government to provide water services, the country has experienced continuous community protests and tensions at grassroots level with main themes on lack of water access (Enqvist et al., 2022).

Sarkar (2022) argues that effective water governance is a prerequisite for progressive access to water services by all people, including the urban poor. There has been a growing number of water governance approaches to promote the sustainable supply of water services to all people worldwide. Such water governance approaches include, amongst others, the “Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), Integrated Land and Water Management (ILWRM), Integrated Catchment Management (ICM), and Water Demand Management (WDM)” (Sarkar, 2022; Lukat et al., 2023:124). However, numerous factors, such as rapid population growth and urbanisation, derail the efforts of governments to provide basic social services. As a result, access to water has become one of the pervasive global challenges facing humankind in general and the urban low-income groups in particular (Patrick, 2021; Sundararaman et al., 2022). This is an urban water governance challenge manifesting in the critical shortage of water, especially in developing nations like South Africa (Pollard et al., 2023).

Previous research has revealed that, alongside the global issues of rapid population growth and consistent urbanisation, poor institutional design for water governance has contributed to the pervasive poor water access for all people, especially the urban poor (Ordor & Michell, 2022; Pringle et al., 2023; Van Borek & Abrams, 2023). However, research with direct emphasis on the role of institutional arrangements on water governance in South Africa is scanty. This thesis seeks to fill this gap in the body of water governance literature through developing an empirically anchored understanding of the influence of structural configurations on the process of water governance in urban South Africa, using the case of Cape Town. Cape Town is the oldest and the second-largest city in South Africa. Since the dawn of democracy in South Africa in 1994, Cape Town has been marked by rapid urbanisation, contributing to an expanding population against a limited financial and technical capacity of the local government to provide urban social services such as water (Cinnamon & Noth, 2023; Pringle et al., 2023). For example, recent figures indicate that in 2023, the City of Cape Town's population was 4,890,000, with a household of 1,315,000, representing a 1.85% increase from 2022. Approximately 21.2 percent of the population resides in informal dwellings, lacking sufficient urban services such as water (Cinnamon & Noth, 2023; City of Cape Town, 2023).

While Cape Town has been considered as one of the best cities in terms of governance and development in Africa, the participation of the urban poor in the formulation and implementation of water policies remains a challenge (Cinnamon & Noth, 2023). In other words, water governance policies and projects are developed and implemented without the direct participation of the urban poor. This contributes to an urban water governance policy failure at the grassroots level (Faragher & Carden, 2023). Post-apartheid South Africa, the water access situation in Cape Town has been marked by the failure of the government to provide water services to all people including the urban poor population. It is therefore crucial to examine how the Cape Town council engages the masses of urban poor population to ensure a successful formulation and implementation of the urban water policy (Enqvist et al., 2023).

The demand for basic services including water is constantly growing especially in peripheral urban townships within Cape Town. In government service delivery processes, water and housing are interlinked because it is through the provision of

housing that communities get to have water in their homes (Cinnamon & Noth, 2023). This reduces the burden of getting water from community taps outside the house. In the fiscal year 2018/19, the government delivered about 530 houses against a target of 749 and during the year 2019/20 the government delivered about 1 102 against a target of 1 606. In the fiscal year 2020/21, the government delivered 6 247, against a target of 8 506 houses and during the year 2021/2022, the government delivered about 6 191 housing units against a target of 8 272. During the 2022/23 fiscal year, the target was to deliver 8 463 housing units, but the actual delivery was 5 380 (South Africa, 2022; Western Cape Government, 2023). Urban water supply in Cape Town is typified by the weak technical capacity of both the national and local government to meet the water demands of all communities.

Research shows that a lack of coordination between the government and various urban water governance actors, like communities, contributes to the failure of water programs and projects (Enqvist & Ziervogel, 2021; Calverley & Walther, 2022). Poor institutional arrangements and political interference with administrative functions also impede the process of water supply to urban low-income communities (Faragher & Carden, 2023; Cinnamon & Noth, 2023). However, there is limited information on the relationality between the urban water governance process and institutional features (read structural configurations) in the post-apartheid South African cities like Cape Town. There is a need to understand the influence of structural configurations on the process of urban water governance within Cape Town. Previous studies (Enqvist & Ziervogel, 2021; Millington & Scheba, 2021; Cinnamon & Noth, 2023) have revealed that various challenges, such as the rapid population growth, poor institutional design, public policy implementation failure, and lack of coordination between the government and other stakeholders, like low-income communities face the practice of water governance in Cape Town. Calverley and Walther (2022) argue that there is a need to dive deeper into the impact of the various water governance policies and structural design on different social groups, multiple locations, and different users within Cape Town. Thus, the study focuses on the role and influence of structural configurations such as organisational culture, vision and mission statement, code of conduct, and the hierarchy of authority on urban water governance in Cape Town. The central problem investigated in this thesis is explained in the ensuing section.

1.2 Research Problem

The governance of urban water supply has been characterised by the lack of sufficient water access especially in low-income communities, across the globe (Rankoana, 2020; Ordor & Michell, 2022; Enqvist et al., 2022). Research suggests that that “over 1 billion people lack access to safe drinking water, and 1.8 million children die every year from waterborne diseases” (Sundararaman et al., 2022:144; Bell et al., 2022). Limited access to water services constitutes one of the global challenges especially in developing countries like South Africa. There is an indispensable need for countries to develop strategies towards adequate provision of water services to the people particularly the urban poor. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Africa Agenda (AA) 2063 outlines the necessity for countries to formulate and implement effective urban water governance policies and strategies to promote continuous access to water services (Calverley & Walther, 2022). But, in low-income economies, “disparities in the availability of water constitute one of the primary underlying determinants of global health inequities” (Omotayo et al., 2021:201; Ordor & Michell, 2022).

Poor water access can contribute to the spread of life-threatening diseases. Scholars such as Bell et al., (2022:55) argue that “half a million people die every year from preventable cases of diarrhoea associated with drinking contaminated water”. More than half of the cases of diarrhoea in middle- and low-income sub-Saharan African countries like South Africa are attributable to drinking polluted water (Bell et al., 2022). In sub-Saharan Africa, treating contaminated water-related diseases consumes 12% of the health budget (Rankoana, 2020). Tamuka et al. (2021), suggest that poor institutional design and a lack of collaboration among different water governance stakeholders, including communities, are key factors contributing to the shortage of water in urban settings. In Cape Town, water governance is marked by a “consistent increase in backlogs of historically disadvantaged households trapped on waiting lists for basic services such as housing and water” (Hara et al., 2021; Williams & Zacheous, 2022:27).

One of the main factors that contributes to poor water governance and the subsequent shortage of safe drinking water in Cape Town’s low-income regions is the lack of community participation (Enqvist & Ziervogel, 2021). This anomaly has triggered the

rise of social movements like the African Water Commons Collective (AWCC) and the Western Cape Water Caucus (WCWC) in the struggle for access to water, particularly for the urban poor in Cape Town (Rankoana, 2020; Ordor & Michell, 2022). The Day Zero situation experienced during the 2015-2018 drought has also shown flaws in Cape Town's water governance system, as urban residents were running out of water daily (Ziervogel, 2019). While this was considered a climate change phenomenon, it has triggered more emphasis on effective water governance in Cape Town (Ordor & Michell, 2022). With intensifying processes of statistics for 2022 projected that the population would increase from 4,927,071 in 2024 to 5,099,742 in 2026. This is compounded by a swelling of informal settlements within Cape Town's poor townships. Out of 1,315,000 households, the proportion of informal homes with a lack of access to water within Cape Town is 21.2 per cent, and this is higher than the provincial rate of 19.1 per cent (City of Cape Town, 2023).

Research (Rankoana, 2020; Enqvist et al., 2022) shows that urban water management has been marked by the limited financial and technical capacity of both the national and provincial government to provide urban water services. However, research directly focusing on the role and influence of institutional arrangements on water governance in South Africa, particularly in Cape Town, is scant. Commenting on this gap in urban water governance literature, Enqvist and Ziervogel (2019) and Enqvist et al. (2022) suggest that it is imperative for countries and government to emphasise on knowledge production and technical capacity of municipalities to promote effective urban water governance. The government should thus focus on promoting inclusive urban water supply policy to ensure trust and public-civic collaboration by acknowledging the context-specific challenges faced by residents from all walks of life. It is this background that has given impetus to this study. Based on structuration theory (Giddens, 1984). This study aims to create an empirically grounded understanding of the influence of structural configurations on the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. The thesis provides a comprehensive analysis of how institutional arrangements (read structural configurations) has affected urban water governance and water access in the post-apartheid South Africa (since 1994). To be sure, the thesis enquires how governance structures influences equity and inclusion in urban water governance. The following section provides the rationale and significance of the study.

1.3 Rationale and Significance of the Study

The study seeks to develop an empirically grounded understanding of the water governance process and how it is influenced by structural configurations such as institutional culture, codified rules, and hierarchy of authority embedded in Cape Town. Research on water governance in South Africa has focused on water insecurity and public policy implementation failure (Lebek et al., 2021; Enqvist et al., 2022; Pollard et al., 2023), with less attention given to the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance. Insights from this study may contribute towards the effective implementation of Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) particularly Goal number 6 which emphasises the need for countries to ensure the provision of clean water to all people. In the domain of water management, this study contributes to scholarly literature on urban water governance through developing an empirically grounded understanding of the influence of structural configurations on the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. Such an understanding can assist public policy makers and administrators to formulate and implement effective water governance policies and strategies in Cape Town. This study has proposed some key measures to improve the process of urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water services to all people, especially the urban poor, in Cape Town. Based on the research findings, a participatory urban water governance model has been developed as a contribution towards strengthening community participation in the formulation and implementation of the urban water in Cape Town. This study can also help other researchers to identify variables that need further investigation and develop models to promote water governance efficacy in urban South Africa at large. The following section outlines the objectives of the study.

1.4 The Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the study was to investigate the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town. Emanating from this, the secondary objectives of the study were to:

- Assess the legislative framework for urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa.
- Analyse how the existing structural configurations are aiding or constraining effective urban water governance in Cape Town.
- Explore the role of communities in urban water governance in Cape Town.

- Recommend possible measures to strengthen urban water governance efficacy in Cape Town.

1.5 Research Questions

The primary research question of the study was: What is the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town? This raised the following four sub-research questions:

- What is the legislative framework for urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa?
- How are the existing structural configurations aiding or constraining effective urban water governance in Cape Town?
- What is the role of communities in urban water governance in Cape Town?
- What measures should be adopted to strengthen urban water governance efficacy in Cape Town?

1.6 Research Proposition

This thesis suggests that structural configurations such as the hierarchy of authority, institutional culture, and disciplinary measures embedded in South African urban councils, particularly in Cape Town, influence the process of urban water governance. This study investigates the veracity of this research assumption through evaluating how structural configurations are shaping the decisions and actions of different actors in the process of urban water governance in Cape Town.

1.7 Description of the Research Area

This thesis utilizes Cape Town as a case study to examine the impact of structural configurations on urban water governance. Cape Town is the legislative capital city of South Africa. This means that the parliament, which is responsible for making laws in democratic South Africa, is based in Cape Town. Cape Town also serves as the capital city of the Western Cape Province. Geographically, “the city lies at the northern end of the Cape Peninsula some thirty miles (50 kilometres), at its southernmost boundary, north of the Cape of Good Hope” (Enqvist et al., 2022:111). As the second largest city of South Africa, in terms of the population size, Cape Town attracts people from different provinces in search of employment opportunities.

Figures indicate that in 2023, the City of Cape Town's population was 4,890,000, with a household of 1,315,000, representing a 1.85% increase from 2022. Approximately 21.2 percent of the population resides in informal houses, lacking access to basic urban services, such as water (Western Cape Government, 2024). While Cape Town has been regarded as one of the best-governed cities in post-apartheid South Africa, access to water, particularly for previously disadvantaged communities, remains a serious challenge (Williams & Zacheous, 2022). Water governance has been organisations, and the urban poor. Such a context makes Cape Town a suitable social laboratory for analysing the urban water governance process and how it is influenced by structural configurations. The following section provides a global overview of the urban water governance challenge and the resultant lack of access to water, particularly for most of the urban poor across the globe.

1.8 The Global Challenge of Urban Water Governance

Globally, poor urban water governance has become one of the major challenges characterised by the weak financial and technical capacity of governments to deliver basic services such as water (Rankoana, 2020; Sundararaman et al., 2022). It is concerning that "at the international level, by the year 2030, the urban expansion is estimated to encroach into protected areas by more than three times from the 2000 base area of 450,000 km" (Nhamo et al., 2021; Bell et al., 2022:23). It is also true that while government is failing to provide basic services to the urban poor, the demand for these services is rapidly growing. This is due to the rapid processes of urbanisation and population growth that are turning to supersede both the technical and financial capacity of the government to provide clean water to all people (Bell et al., 2022). There appears to be a connection between urbanisation and the increasing demand for water services worldwide. The processes of "urbanisation and their attendant effects are among the prominent twenty-first century challenges confronting humanity globally" (Lebek et al., 2021:214). Thus, means that there is a consistent mismatch between the capacity of the government to deliver basic services like clean water and the demand for these basic services (Nhamo et al., 2021).

The notion of urbanisation refers to the "demographic process of shifting the balance of usually national population from 'rural' to 'urban' areas" (Lebek et al., 2021:7). This movement of people from rural to urban areas has proven to increase in the population

in urban townships. In this context, the government must devise appropriate strategies to manage urbanisation while ensuring sustainable water provision. As urban spaces, effective urban water governance is necessary. According to Rankoana (2020), one of the key methods in managing the waves of urbanisation and the challenge of poor service delivery in cities is effective governance. Effective urban water governance is currently perceived and defined as a much broader concept that involves a wide range of actors in water affairs (Sarkar, 2022). Put differently, urban water governance is about the processes of making choices, decisions and trade-offs regarding the provision of water services. Effective water governance addresses linkages and processes for the delivery of water “between and within organisations and social groups involved in decision-making, both horizontally across sectors and between urban and rural areas, and vertically from local to international” (Rankoana, 2020:35).

In the global South, the contemporary trends of urbanisation “presents daunting pressures and decisions for urban citizens and especially activists, leaders and managers as they figure out how to cope and flourish” (Bell et al., 2022:10). An analysis of the current waves of urbanisation shows that more than half of the people globally are living in urban areas (Sarkar, 2022; Bazaanah & Mothapo, 2024). However, it must be asserted that while the process of urbanisation presents some key challenges such as the shortage of basic services in the urban space, “urbanisation is a positive force for socio-economic and political transformation in that it presents local and regional governments with a challenge to adopt policies that maximise the benefits of urbanisation” (Di Vaio et al., 2021:104). As most people consider living in cities in search for better living conditions, and employment opportunities the “urbanisation of poverty is also a perennial challenge facing the modern government. The lived realities of urban poverty are evident in informal settlements characterised by overcrowding and no or limited access to such services as water, sanitation and transport” (Bell et al., 2022:23).

As already asserted thus far, urbanisation can play a crucial role in pressuring the government to fast-track the processes of urban development characterised by the effective delivery of basic services such as water and sanitation. People from all over the world move to cities in search of greater opportunities in employment, education, health care, and culture, and they disproportionately support local and national

economies (Myers et al., 2021). It is equally important to note that, in this context, competition for basic services and employment opportunities in urban spaces intensifies (Di Vaio et al., 2021). This normally result in the contestations and tensions between the urban masses and the government typified by active demonstrations for service delivery, including clean water and sanitation services. In this regard, Sarkar (2022:241) contends that “the market does not favour social cohesiveness but generates tensions: it reinforces economic polarisation and inequalities in cities, the recomposition of space unveils power conflicts among major actors, and hundreds of thousands of marginalised people and their children may use their ‘voice’ as a threat to express their claims”. This has been one of the key features of the urban poor populations, an ongoing struggle for the survival of urban poor populations in cities (Nhamo et al., 2021).

In sub-Saharan Africa, cities like Kampala in Uganda face the challenge of urbanisation, leading to a shortage of housing and other basic services, such as water and sanitation. Kamuzhanje (2021) argues that in most African cities, including Lilongwe in Malawi, the new millennium has brought about previously unheard-of levels of urbanisation. The rate of urbanisation climbed from 33.9 to 57.1% between 1990 and 2015, and it is expected to keep rising if rural poverty persists. In African cities like Harare in Zimbabwe, the government is struggling to provide these basic services to the urban poor, and this challenge contributes to the swelling of informal settlements typified by squalid living conditions (Patrick, 2021; Tamuka et al., 2021). The reality is that in African countries, including South Africa, the majority of people, particularly poor urbanites, do not have access to clean water and sanitation services (Kamuzhanje, 2021). This paints a disturbing picture regarding the challenge of urbanisation at the global level in general and in the African continent in particular. That South Africa is no exception to the persisting challenge of rapid urbanisation and the resultant poor water governance issues in cities is precisely not in doubt.

In South Africa, the challenge of urban water governance has been outlined by different scholars, including Hara et al. (2021) and Lebek et al. (2021), as a serious challenge facing the current democratic government since the fall of the apartheid regime in 1994. The challenge of water governance in South Africa has been water, characterised by health issues in urban areas. In post-colonial South Africa,

urbanisation has intensified. This was partly a result of the removal of the colonial legislation that prioritised the white population regarding access to basic urban services such as safe drinking water (Omotayo et al., 2021). Rapid urbanisation, coupled with poor urban planning and a lack of technical capacity within the local government has contributed to various urban challenges, such as the shortage of safe drinking water in urban South Africa (Lebek et al., 2021).

At the centre of these urban challenges is poverty exacerbated by the scarcity of jobs associated with sluggish economic growth. The lack of water and sanitation services continues to worsen with the rapidly increasing number of people living in urban South Africa (Myers, 2021). It suffices to state that poor water governance and lack of political will by South African local authorities to improve the lives of the urban poor seem to be a significant factor leading to slow service delivery in urban South Africa. In South Africa, the delivery of basic services, including water and sanitation, is the responsibility of different stakeholders, with the central, provincial and local government playing the key role (Bell et al., 2022). The national government, through crafting regulations and strategy, plays a crucial role in providing water and sanitation services. The national government formulate water laws and programmes in coordination with provincial and municipal authorities to bring water and sanitation services to the communities (Omotayo et al., 2021). The interaction between these three spheres of government in managing the challenge of urbanisation and the delivery of water and sanitation services has proven to be ineffective. This is supported by the current mismatch between the demand and supply of these services in the impoverished townships of South Africa, in general, and in the Western Cape Province, in particular.

In the Western Cape Province, urbanisation has proven to be a significant challenge confronting the government. History shows that the rapid growth of people moving to the Western Cape Province began after 1994, following the official end of the apartheid regime and the dawn of democracy in South Africa (Tamuka et al., 2021). As mentioned above, the fall of the apartheid regime and the dawn of democracy were characterised by the promulgation of various legislation, including the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, which allowed the majority of black people to live in cities that were previously reserved for the white race. Subsequently, the processes

of urbanisation started to intensify. The rapid movement of people to the Western Cape Province in search employment and better living conditions meant the higher demand for basic services, including water and sanitation. According to Williams and Zacheous (2022:24), urbanisation in the Western Cape Province has “led to various challenges, including urban poverty, inadequate housing and provision of services (water, energy and refuse collection) and environmental degradation.” Cape Town, as part of the Western Cape Province, is no exception to this patent challenge of rapid urbanisation, resulting in the higher demand for water and sanitation services in the urban setting.

1.9 Urban Water Governance in Cape Town

The situation in Cape Town confirms the general challenge of rapid urbanisation and the resultant lack of basic services like safe drinking water confronting the South African country in general (Calverley & Walther, 2022). Cape Town as the second largest city following Johannesburg in terms of population, attracts people from different African countries in search of employment opportunities (Williams & Zacheous, 2022). This has contributed to rapid population growth due to the backlog of the limited financial capacity of the government to provide basic social services like clean water, especially to the urban poor in Cape Town. The failure of the local government to plan and implement existing urban water governance policies and strategies has proven to be one of the main challenges resulting in the lack of water services, especially in poor communities of Cape Town. Urban water governance in Cape Town has been marked by various challenges, including the lack of community participation in the decision-making process.

A legitimate urban water governance process requires that local authorities in Cape Town promote the inclusion of different actors, including communities, in decision-making. In this regard, Juta (2023:27) argues that “community engagement on public policy formulation requires the inclusion of all participants, those with an interest in the outcome and those affected by the legislation”. As a result, the local government in Cape Town has put little emphasis on “how community engagement on public policy formulation should be implemented and bring methods that will create opportunities for policy to respond to the actual needs of the communities” (Enqvist et al., 2022:65). The local authorities have been struggling to incorporate other usable methods of

community meetings to affect the continuous participation of communities in the process of urban water governance and the subsequent provision of water services in Cape Town. Literature shows that for community participation to be effective in urban water governance; there is a need for the local government to commit to educating the communities about the policies and their significant role in the implementation of the urban water policies and strategies in Cape Town. Ordor and Michell (2022) argue that Cape Town continues to face challenges of poor service delivery characterised by increasing violent protests with central themes on water shortages, particularly in low-income communities. Alongside the burden of unemployment and political instability, poor institutional design for water governance has been considered as one of the main drivers of water shortages in Cape Town (Enqvist et al., 2022). Research with direct emphasis on the relation between water governance and institutional arrangements is to be sparse, especially in Cape Town (Enqvist & Ziervogel, 2021; Calverley & Walther, 2022).

Cape Town's deeply unequal waterscape and acutely divisive politics are among the most crucial factors that continue to shape urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water to all people (Rodina, 2019). The challenge of urban water supply in South African cities, including Cape Town, has manifested in continuous contestations and tensions between municipal councils and the urban poor. The government has been struggling to meet the demands of low-income communities in relation to water services in Cape Town. This has led to the increase of SMs like Western Cape Water Caucus (WCWC) in urban transformation and water governance. In Cape Town, social movements have emerged to challenge the state-driven urban water management approach through advocating for the role of low-income communities in the formulation and implementation of urban water governance policies.

However, the conservative authority of urban water governance institutions, such as municipalities, continues to play a central role in marginalising local communities in decision-making processes. These loopholes in urban water governance in Cape Town were more evident during the 2015 to 2018 drought, which was then known as day zero, marking the day on which the city was expected to cut off water supply to communities. Scholars such as Enqvist et al (2022:34) insists that "Cape Town's

experience with the drought between 2015 and 2018 once again exposed the deeply divisive politics around water, contentious jurisdictions in the water domain, and a lack of trust”, all of which shaped how different populations and communities experienced the crisis. Even after the 2015 to 2018 drought, most of the urban poor around Cape Town still have limited access to water services.

Juta (2023:141) asserts that Cape Town is “an environment of diverse cultures, beliefs, and increasing demands”. In the quest to promote effective urban water governance and the continuous provision of water services to the communities, urban authorities are confronted with poor financial muscles to respond to the water demands of all people and the urban poor in particular. Williams and Zacheous (2022:10) argue that to promote inclusivity and social justice the government in the post-apartheid South African government has to “focus on core goals that will have a knock-on effect throughout the communities and the urban poor in particular”. Such an approach to urban water governance the provision of water services carries the potential to resolve the pervasive legacy of colonial and apartheid governance systems in Cape Town. This fundamental to meet the water demands of the communities across the post-apartheid South African urban space. As such, in the post-apartheid South Africa, the government, in the White Paper on Local Government (1998:17), argues that “building local democracy is a crucial role of local government, and that municipalities should develop strategies and mechanisms to engage with communities, business, and community groups continuously”. This study seeks to understand the process of water governance and how it is influenced by structural configurations in urban South Africa and in Cape Town in particular.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study was that some people have viewed the topic of urban water governance as political and sensitive. As a result, some targeted key informants were unwilling to participate in the study, and this has prolonged the process of data collection. To deal with this, the researcher avoided asking political and sensitive questions during the interviews. The study was conducted in Cape Town, which cannot be considered representative of the entire post-apartheid urban South Africa. However, the results of the study can help other cities to understand the dynamic characteristics of urban water governance. The study was configured around

an interpretivist paradigm and the subsequent qualitative methods, which can lead to vast and complex data that is difficult to interpret and understand. However, relevant qualitative data analysis methods were employed to assist the researcher in interpreting and understanding the collected data. The following section explains the delimitation of the study.

1.11 Delimitation of the Study

Urban water governance is a diverse concept that has been analysed from different perspectives, including community-based, human rights and institutional approaches. The review of the literature shows that urban water governance is a much-researched area in the global arena, and scholars have covered various aspects like public policy implementation failure, water insecurity, and privatisation of water across the globe. However, this study focused on the water governance process and analysed how it is influenced by structural configurations embedded in South African urban councils such as Cape Town. This study has analysed the process of urban water governance departing from a global analytical framework down to the urban South African context. The following section describes the organisation of the thesis through outlining and briefly explaining the contents of each chapter.

1.12 Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. As a way of framing and directing the research, the first chapter explained the research problem, the rationale and significance of this research, the objectives of the study and the research questions. The chapter has also provided a global overview of the phenomenon of urban water governance and the persistent urban water access inequalities that characterise the post-apartheid South African cities, including Cape Town.

Chapter Two of the thesis focuses on a literature review by discussing the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of the study. The chapter has critiqued different theories that provided insights into understanding the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in the post-apartheid urban South Africa, particularly in Cape Town. Thus, the chapter discussed the structuration theory (Giddens, 1984), co-design theory (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004), the just city theory (Harvey, 1971; 2012), communicative action theory (Habermas, 1981) and the radical planning theory

(Sandercock, 1998; 2024). The chapter also discusses some pertinent extant literature on the phenomenon of urban water governance.

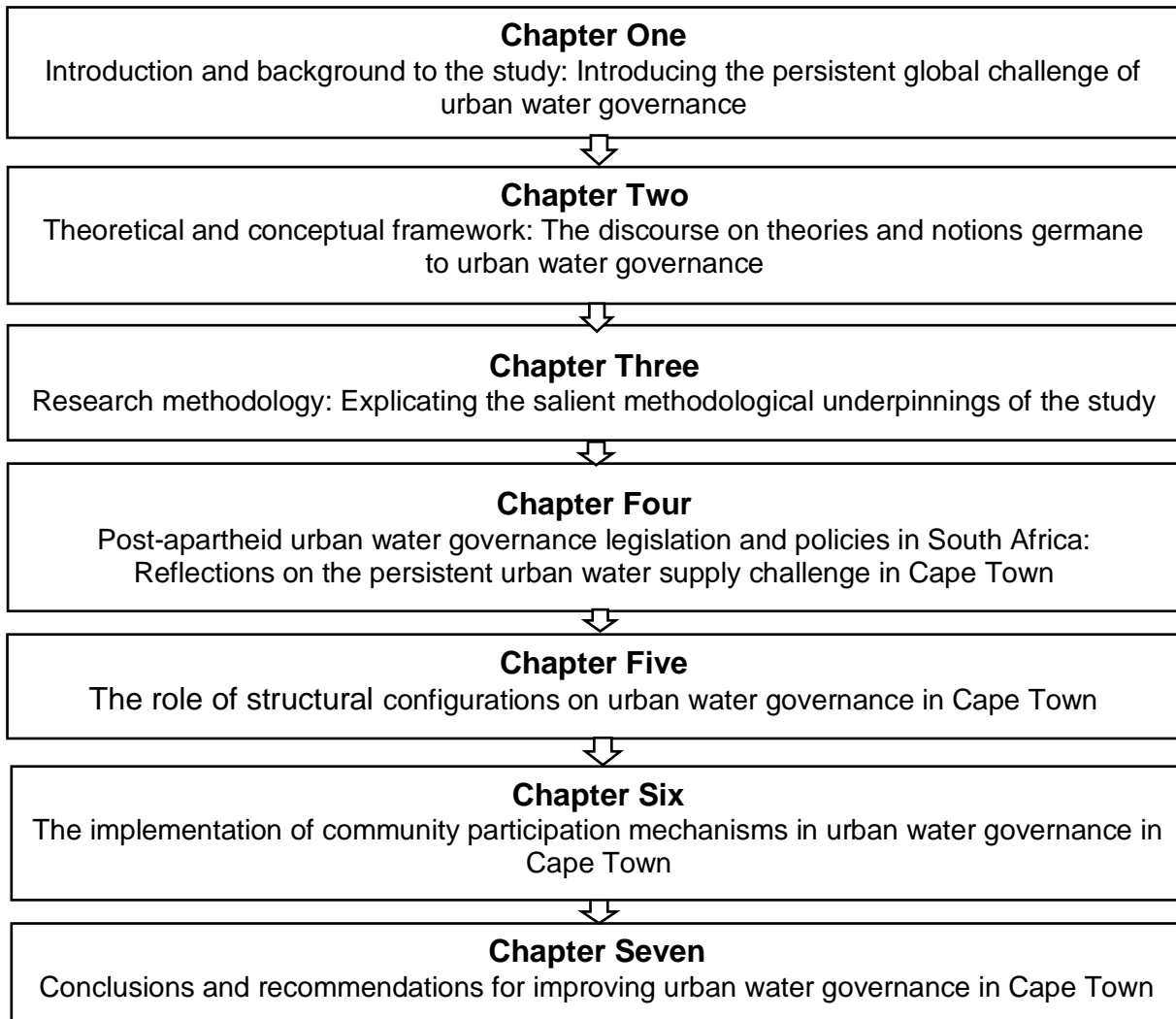
Chapter Three has discussed the research methodology adopted to analyse how structural configurations influence the process of urban water governance in urban South Africa, particularly in Cape Town. The chapter has justified the use of qualitative methods to investigate how urban water governance is shaped by structural configurations embedded in South African urban councils like Cape Town. The chapter has discussed how the researcher has collected qualitative data using different methods, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, life histories, document analysis, archival research, and purposive observations.

Chapter Four has discussed the evolution of the urban water governance legislation and policies, starting from the period before the implementation of European colonialism to the post-apartheid epoch in South Africa. The chapter has argued that despite the existing legislation and policies to enforce effective urban water governance, most of the urban poor are still trapped in filthy living conditions with limited access to water services. The chapter has argued that factors such as lack of policy coherence and the confusion of municipal administrative functions with politics have hindered effective urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa.

Chapter Five has presented and discussed the main research findings concerning the influence of structural configurations on the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. Based on numerous key informants' interviews conducted, the chapter has demonstrated that structural configurations partly contribute to urban water policy implementation failure, characterised by the persistent water access inequalities in Cape Town. The chapter has argued that the existing structural configurations, including the hierarchy of authority and institutional culture, limit the autonomy of government officials and various actors when participating in the formulation and implementation of urban water governance policies and strategies in Cape Town. Throughout the chapter, there is a dynamic interaction between the water governance experiences of the people in Cape Town and the set of theoretical propositions discussed in Chapter Two of the thesis. The researcher has interrogated theory through experience and in the same way experience has been interrogated through theory.

Chapter Six has presented and discussed the main research findings with particular focus on the aspect of community participation for improved urban water governance in Cape Town. In this chapter, the key research findings revealed that the government is consistently struggling to implement the existing community participation mechanisms, such as joint public meetings, to improve urban water governance in Cape Town. Drawing on key informant interviews, this chapter argues that multiple factors, including a lack of community participation, have hindered the implementation of Cape Town's urban water policy.

Chapter Seven has concluded the thesis by providing the main conclusions based on the research findings. The chapter has also proffered some recommendations to strengthen urban water governance efficacy in the post-apartheid urban South Africa, particularly in Cape Town. Based on the extant literature and main findings of the study, the chapter has provided a participatory urban water governance model to foster community participation in municipal decision-making processes in Cape Town. In the coda, the chapter has presented some of the key areas for future research concerning water governance in the post-apartheid urban South Africa. The following diagram shows the flow of the thesis chapters with their headings and focus.



1.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced the study and sketched the context for the analysis of the urban water governance phenomenon in the post-apartheid South Africa particularly in Cape Town. Furthermore, the chapter has described the research problem, research objectives, research questions, and the rationale for the study. The chapter has concluded by outlining the organisation of the thesis through briefly explaining the contents of each chapter. The seven chapters of this thesis are dialectically connected to explain the relationality between the process of urban water governance and the existing structural configurations embedded in the post-apartheid urban South Africa, particularly in Cape Town. The ensuing chapter discusses the theoretical and conceptual framework used to analyse and understand how structural configurations shape the decisions and actions of various actors partaking in the process of urban water governance in Cape Town.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: THE DISCOURSE ON THEORIES AND NOTIONS GERMANE TO URBAN WATER GOVERNANCE

2.1 Introduction

This thesis seeks to develop a contextual and empirically grounded understanding of the influence of structural configurations on water governance in urban South Africa, particularly in Cape Town. The first chapter presented the general introduction and background to the research problem. Hence, the present second chapter focuses on the discourse of various theories and extant literature on urban water governance. The chapter begins with a discussion of the different theories that have guided the research on the influence of structural configurations on water governance in urban South Africa. The study has mainly drawn insights from the structuration and co-design theories as discussed in the present chapter. Other relevant theoretical propositions, such as the just city, communicative action and radical planning, have also provided an important analytical framework for analysing how structural configurations in Cape Town shape decisions and actions of different urban water governance actors.

The chapter emphasises theoretical propositions that are fundamental in inferring conclusions about the relationality of the urban water governance process and structural configurations embedded in South African urban councils like Cape Town. Starting from the premise that the post-apartheid urban water governance system in South Africa continues to cherish colonial legacy and practices characterised by the dominant exploitative role of the state, the thesis argues for a radical community-based water governance approach. Such an approach to urban water governance considers the needs and views of the urban poor in relation to water access. The second part of this chapter provides an analysis of extant literature on the intrinsic connection between structural configurations and the urban water governance process. This has been done through a discussion on how the urban water governance process is shaped by structural configurations in cities.

2.2 Theoretical Framework for Urban Water Governance

The focus of this section is on developing a theoretical framework that forms the basis for interpreting and understanding the phenomenon of urban water governance and how it is influenced by structural configurations in Cape Town. Worth mentioning is

that in social science research, theories provide the philosophical foundations for the study (Irsova et al., 2023). This section begins with the premise that the theories discussed below offer a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of urban water governance. Theories such as structuration theory, co-design theory, the just city theory, communicative action theory and the radical planning theory have provided a comprehensive framework for explaining the nature and characteristics of the interaction between the different urban water governance actors in Cape Town.

One should be cautious and register the point that the relationship between theory and existential experiences is dialectical (Gramsci, 1971; Wolff, 2023). This is because human observations, which form the basis for theoretical formulations, can never capture the totality of social or existential experiences, as societies are complex and always in constant flux. Therefore, change is inevitably one of the main features of society (Irsova et al., 2023). Combined, the following theories provide a comprehensive understanding of the urban water governance phenomenon and how water policy has been shaped by structural configurations embedded in Cape Town urban authorities. Despite the strengths of the theories in explaining the intrinsic connection between the urban water governance process and structural configurations, it is important to note that these theories are limited and cannot capture the totality of social experiences related to urban water governance.

2.2.1 Structuration Theory

This research was guided by the structuration theory coined by Anthony Giddens in 1984. In the Structuration theory, Giddens attempts to analyse the interconnectedness between two crucial aspects of an institution, namely the structure and agency (Mahmood, 2024; Takahashi & Kimata, 2023). The former can be understood as non-materialistic aspects such as institutional culture, code of conduct, values, and hierarchy of authority, vision and mission statements embedded in public institutions. The latter refers to various stakeholders or actors associated with an institution. These features are what define the uniqueness of an institution (Giddens, 1984). In the structuration theory, structure and agency are considered intertwined or connected. This is based on the argument that the way institutions are structured and designed influences the decisions and actions taken by actors such as employees. In the same way, the structure is determined by the knowledge and support of the agency or the people working for the institution (Elliott, 2020; Takahashi & Kimata, 2023). This

interlink between the structure and agency is fundamental in understanding Giddens's Structuration theory.

Giddens argues that institutional rules play a central role because they determine what must be done within an institution. Actors or employees are always expected to comply with these existing rules. In this way, institutional rules create a tradition or culture of behaviour within an institution as they turn into rubrics and norms (Lawal, 2023). In his book titled *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Giddens insists that because they outline the social interaction's methodological processes, institutional norms play a crucial role in determining how institutions operate (Giddens, 1984). Therefore, this study investigates how the urban water governance process is influenced by institutional regulations or rules embedded in the City of Cape Town. Put differently, the thesis analyses how the decisions of urban water governance practitioners (read agency in Giddens's terms) are shaped by structural configurations (the structure) in Cape Town.

The central question is -how are the decision-making processes within the context of the Cape Town council influenced by structural configurations? But this is broad; it needs to be framed down to the gist of the study. Then the question is: how is the urban water governance decision-making process influenced by structural configurations embedded in Cape Town? The concern here is whether decisions taken by the Cape Town water governance practitioners are a product of the cognition of human agency or a result of the structure, to use Giddens's concepts. Structuration theory proposes that there is always a mutual relation between the structure and agency in organisational processes. For Giddens, actors within an institution cannot make decisions independently; they are always bound to comply with institutional internal arrangements (read structural configurations). This means that the behaviour of actors in a particular institution is controlled and directed by structural configurations. Giddens (1984:124) suggests "that the structure of an institution has a direct effect on agency activities because the structure produces a system of organised relations between the actors and the institutional structures in which they are situated to perform their duties". Guided by this proposition, this thesis seeks to determine how the behaviour of the Cape Town water governance actors is disciplined and predetermined through structural configurations.

However, it is equally important to point out that Giddens' Structuration theory has been challenged by different scholars, including Lawal (2023), Bryant and Jary (1991), and Mohamed (2017). Giddens asserts that while the structure determines the actions and decisions of the agency, in some cases, people, as rational beings, can exercise a degree of autonomy and act independently. According to Lawal (2023), this is rather confusing and misleading regarding the duality element of the Structuration theory. The practicality of the Structuration theory has also been questioned. For instance, Nehemia and Iyamu (2023) insist that Giddens' proposition is mystic and has nothing to be empirically tested. However, these critiques of structuration theory present a rather interesting dimension for this study; that is, to analyse the practicality of the structure and agency relationship in the processes of water governance in urban South Africa, specifically in Cape Town.

2.2.2 Co-Design Theory

The theory of co-design was instigated by Prahalad and Ramaswamy in 2004. This theory departs from the understanding that complex governance problems demand a systematic and all-encompassing approach that cuts across cultural, economic, social and political barriers and delineations. The central premise of the co-design theory is that the users themselves are the subject-matter experts. It is the responsibility of the designers or governments to make the participation of the end-users or communities easier (Busse et al., 2023). For participants to actively and effectively participate in the design process, it is necessary to help them as they conceive, articulate, and access their experiences and aspirations. A core tenet of participatory design is that people should be included in the design process because they have the right to impact their own lives. This theory postulates that for any effective product, there is a need for all concerned actors to participate in the design processes (Schwoerer et al., 2022). Put simply, the end users of the product should be allowed to become co-designers or creators of the product. The co-design process is fundamental for accommodating the needs of the various stakeholders regarding the product. In the co-design process, both the government driven top-down and community-based bottom-up approaches are equally important, particularly in the context of public service delivery.

Scholars such as King et al. (2022) argue that despite the possibilities of conflict, this participatory approach normally produces a synergetic design characterised by the outputs of all interest' groups. One of the central principles of the co-design theory is

the recognition of diversity in the public policy formulation and implementation processes. To provide the government with a pertinent solution, co-design activities must involve all significant stakeholders, including the low-income communities. Every stakeholder, including the local communities, is a subject matter expert whose judgment matters (Busse et al, 2023). The designer who is in a state driven role usually the government must figure out a means to ensure everyone, regardless of how different the participants are, gets to engage in the decision-making process activities because every stakeholder's viewpoint is important and should be incorporated into public projects and strategies.

The dominant role of the state in the provision of basic social services, such as safe drinking water, has been criticised for its inability to promote community participation in the formulation and implementation of urban water governance legislation and policies. The co-design theory is an attempt to disrupt the conservative government-led development approach through an emphasis on the fundamental role of different stakeholders, including the low-income communities in urban water governance (Schwoerer et al., 2022; King et al., 2022). However, it is important to note that the limitation of the co-design theory is that it does not provide ways or mechanisms to ensure stakeholder participation in public decision-making processes. The proponents of the co-design theory have been criticised for their failure to provide measures on how to reduce or manage the potential conflicts in engaging with different stakeholders in diverse social and political challenges. Despite these critiques of the Co-design theory, its propositions are fundamental in understanding the complex challenge of urban water governance in Cape Town.

2.2.3 Just City Theory

The just city theory is attributed to the works of a prominent urban geographer, David Harvey (2010). The just city theory considers equality and justice as the main building blocks towards achieving a just city. The just city, according to Harvey (2010), should be economically, politically, socially and culturally inclusive. This alludes to the importance of equity and justice-driven institutional processes, including urban water governance. The principles of social equity and justice are fundamental in developing a just city marked by sustainable access to urban services such as water (Moroni, 2020). In one of his main books, titled *Social Justice and the City*, published in 1971, Harvey suggests that the application of justice in social and institutional transformation

is a necessity to promote the rights of the urban poor to the city. This is essential for Harvey (2015) to reverse and discontinue the prevalence of capital accumulation through the dispossession of the urban poor masses.

The just city theory suggests that in an unjust society characterised by unequal access to basic urban services, such as housing and access to water, there is always a possibility of tensions and conflicts between the nationalists' elite and the urban poor (Moroni, 2020). In seeking justice, the urban poor normally arrange themselves into interests' groups and social movements to push their demands for a just city. Considering this assertion, this study investigates how justice and equality form the basis upon which the urban water governance processes are carried out in Cape Town. In a post-colonial society like South Africa, the intention is to evaluate the manner through which equality and justices have been placed at the centre of urban water governance and the subsequent access to water by the urban poor in Cape Town.

One of the central elements of the just city theory is the principle of redistribution, which speaks to the need for equal access to social urban services such as housing and water. Harvey (2015) insists that the ever-widening gap between the poor and the rich needs to be addressed through the application of redistribution. This means that in countries like South Africa, where history is mainly a story of colonialism and racial prejudices, the practice of urban water governance should be considered as an instrument to close the gap between the urban poor and the privileged white minority. The Just City theory is based on the understanding that there is an indispensable need to disrupt the persistence of social inequalities that are prevalent in 'post-colonial' societies such as South Africa. The proponents of the just city theory suggest that laws and regulations should be formulated and implemented to promote an inclusive city where difference is not merely tolerated but treated with recognition and respect (Hughes & Hoffmann, 2020; Hayashi, 2023).

This thesis is concerned with evaluating the existing urban water governance legislation in South Africa, particularly in Cape Town, to determine whether it promotes or undermines the principles of an inclusive city as proposed by the just city approach. Harvey (2015) contends that social inequalities and a lack of justice can contribute to continuous contestations and tensions between the government and the

urban poor. Based on this insight, the study aims to understand the existing contestations and conflicts between different urban water governance actors, including the state, political parties, interest groups, and urban social movements in Cape Town. Despite its strengths outlined above, the just city theory has been critiqued and accused of the failure to clearly delineate the meaning of a just society in a complex world marked by different interests (Moroni, 2020). What the proponents of the just city approach have lacked in explaining is how to tolerate cultural differences while promoting a just society.

Furthermore, the just city theory seems to suppress or tone down the fundamental role of the state in institutional processes such as urban water governance and the subsequent provision of water to communities. If the role of government is downplayed, it is also hard to know who will make judgments and decisions on the right course of action (Hughes & Hoffmann, 2020; Bush & Doyon, 2023). However, these critiques of the just city theory seem to be ignorant of the prevalent failure of the government-driven bureaucratic and technocratic institutional processes. The just city theory provides crucial spectacles to interpret and understand the impact of institutional arrangements on urban water governance in the South African urban context. It enables one to critique the government's desire to redress the injustices inherent in the colonial rule in South Africa. The colonial legacy can be partially reversed through the promotion of equity and justice in urban water governance and the subsequent access to water by the urban poor in Cape Town.

2.2.4 Communicative Action Theory

The theory of communicative action was initiated by the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas in 1981. In his 1981 book titled *The Theory of Communicative Action: The Critique of Functionalist Reason*, Habermas argues that communication is a crucial aspect of any project involving more than one actor. The central argument is that for any developmental project to be successful, communication is fundamental. This theory suggests that differences between actors can be resolved through open communication and interaction (Bonell & Melendez-Torres, 2023). Communicative action theory views effective urban water governance because of constant communication and collaboration amongst various actors, including the urban poor. In this regard, urban water governance becomes an inclusive process with all stakeholders such as government, political parties, interest groups and urban social

movements. This approach disrupts the dominant top-down model that considers urban water governance as an exclusive responsibility of the government.

Habermas (1990) suggests that a rigorous process of interaction and negotiations between the state and other actors is commendable, as it normally produces better results for all. Therefore, various mechanisms should be in place to facilitate continuous collaboration between the government and other water governance stakeholders, including the urban poor (Sandberg, 2022). Considering the propositions proffered by the theory of communicative action, this thesis seeks to evaluate how various urban water governance actors are interacting to advance effective and adequate provision of water to the urban low-income communities within Cape Town. The thesis analyses the existing mechanisms for community participation in urban water governance in South Africa, with a particular focus on Cape Town's low-income communities.

Habermas (1981) acknowledges the point that in practical situations, communication between different actors can face serious challenges, such as distortion. The proponents of the communicative action theory, such as Sandberg (2022) and Blau (2022), have suggested some key measures or ways to ensure effective communication. One of these measures is that the communication process must embrace the principle of transparency. This means that the process must be open and allow all stakeholders to express their views freely so that the outcomes can be based on diversity and tolerance of cultural differences. However, the theory of communicative action has been questioned by various scholars (Bonell & Melendez-Torres, 2023). For instance, Sandberg (2022) suggests that Habermas' argument does not provide a clear explanation of how power dynamics play out when different actors engage and collaborate for common outcomes. While the theory of communicative action presents some fundamental elements to be considered to ensure effective communication, in practice, it remains flimsy and mystical. The social imaginary of this theory does not consider the power contestations and contradictions in institutional processes such as urban water governance and water access.

Despite such critiques against Habermas' propositions, the communicative action theory provides essential grounds and insights to understand the phenomenon of urban water governance and how it is influenced by structural configurations

embedded in South African urban councils and in Cape Town in particular. This study investigates how communication in relation to water governance flows from the Cape Town Councils to poor urban communities. The concern is to determine how power dynamics play out in the practice of community participation in urban water governance within Cape Town. The purpose is to critique and read the state-driven approach to urban water governance against itself. This will allow the researcher to unravel some of the key discrepancies or limitations of the experts guided top-down water governance model. This ultimately put us in a better position to ground and argue for the suggested community-based water governance approach.

2.2.5 Insurgent Planning Theory

The Insurgent Planning theory can be associated with the work of the theorist Sandercock in 1998. The insurgent planning theory emphasises radical planning from the grassroots level. In her 2024 article titled; *Reimagining the soul of urban planning* Sandercock argues that civil societies and social movements are the fundamental agents for urban transformation. The insurgent planning theory considers urban transformation because of continued struggles between civil societies, social movements and government. Such struggles are maintained persistently outside formal government and political terrains (Sandercock, 2024). The determination for social justice and inclusive institutional processes like urban water governance is what drives communities and social movements to challenge conventional top-down approaches to urban transformation.

The radical approach to planning is crucial in disrupting the dominating role of the state in urban water governance, with civil societies and social movements promoting alternative community driven water access models (Sandbu, 2020; Mahadevia & Bhatia, 2021). In African cities like Cape Town, marked by the long history of colonial planning and neoliberal water policies, the theory of radical or insurgent planning becomes “counter-hegemonic, transgressive and imaginative” (Miraftab, 2009:32). It challenges colonial planning and water governance approaches that undermine the plights and rights of the urban poor. The radical planning theory suggests that the urban poor, through community-based organisations and social movements, will seek spatial justice and inclusion of their basic needs in government policies (Mahadevia & Bhatia, 2021). This struggle often includes infringement of state authorities and constitutional provisions by civil societies and social movements.

Insurgent planning theory is primarily concerned with grassroots mobilisation to reverse the European enlightenment bequeaths, nationalist urban water governance led by the state. According to Sandercock (2024), this enlightenment bequeaths nationalists driven urban water governance paradigm, undermining the role of the urban poor in social transformation., The insurgent planning approach suggests that continued contestations, tensions, and contradictions between civil society and the nationalist elite contribute to alternative urban water governance practices led by the urban poor (Sandercock, 2004). This thesis is concerned with examining how civil society and social movements struggle for inclusive urban water governance in Cape Town. The intent is to find out how the authority of Cape Town, as one of the South African urban councils, is pushed and trembled by civil society actions in the struggle for effective water governance.

The proponents of the insurgent or radical planning theory insists that this theorem focuses on the mobilisation of civil society to challenge influential elites and expand democratic action and citizen rights, as opposed to participation as a form of conventional civic engagement, by placing planning and governance within an agonistic interplay between the state and the insurgent (Huchzermeyer, 2013; Mahadevia & Bhatia, 2021). In a post-colonial South Africa, the practice of urban water governance has been shaped by systematic colonial processes. Radical planning thus seems to be relevant in reversing the long history of colonialism and unjust spatial segregation. That proper planning is essential for any effective urban water governance model, and subsequent provision of water is precisely not in doubt.

Sandercock's insurgent planning theory has been criticised for undermining the role of the state in institutional processes like urban water governance (Kraus et al., 2022). This criticism has been expanded to claim that the insurgent planning theory promotes a social imaginary that has no respect for laws and policies. For example, the mobilisation of civil society to challenge state powers can be achieved even if it means contravening or violating the existing government laws that are intended to promote social order (Kraus et al., 2022; Turesky & Crisman, 2023). According to this critique, this can contribute to social disorder and a lawless society with no sense of accountability. Despite such criticism laid against Sandercock's theorem, the insurgent planning approach remains fundamental in understanding the dynamics characteristic of the water governance phenomenon in urban South Africa. In this regard, the

insurgent planning theory provides some valuable analytical insights to investigate the impact of structural configurations on the urban water governance process in Cape Town. Radical planning approach places governance at the centre of the colonised and marginalised urban population (Sandercock, 2024). It considers fundamental the needs of the urban poor in relation to water governance and the resultant provision of water to communities. It advocates for a water governance process that is grounded in the existential experiences of the disadvantaged urban poor communities.

The insurgent planning theory suggests that for every urban water governance model to be successful, it must directly arise from the lived experiences of the colonised and destitute urban population (Mahadevia & Bhatia, 2021). In other words, the experiences of the urban poor regarding water access must form the basis upon which water governance laws and policies are formulated and implemented. At this stage, it would be crucial to register the point that the lived experience of the urban poor within Cape Town and elsewhere in South Africa is the challenge of water shortages. This thesis focuses on how the urban poor organise themselves to challenge the prevalence of the European enlightenment, bequeathed the nationalists' urban water governance process led by the South African government and the Cape Town Council in particular. To illuminate the problem with the European enlightenment bequeaths nationalist thought like colonialism, let us read how colonial planning has shaped urban water governance in African cities, including Cape Town.

2.3 Colonial Planning and Water Governance in African Cities

Proper planning is key to any urban water governance practice to be successful and effective. To understand the present features of African cities and their urban water governance systems, one must grasp how colonialism and its planning apparatus have shaped and continue to influence these urban spaces to date (Ordor & Michell, 2022; Cinnamon & Noth, 2023). Colonialism, as a philosophy and ideology based on racial segregation, has left a disturbing spatial planning legacy in African cities, including Cape Town. The way African cities have been planned and designed was based on racial discrimination and the perpetuation of social inequalities (Mamdani, 1996; Muchadenyika & Williams, 2017). The dominance of European colonial planning has contributed to enormous disparities regarding access to basic urban social services like housing and water in African cities (Calverley & Walther, 2022;

Muchandenyika & Williams, 2017). African cities were created as places of European hegemonic governance and control. With its genealogy and philosophy bending over backwards toward Western enlightenment, colonialism has destabilised and recreated in its own image and sensibilities the present African cities.

It is in such European cities in the African continent that most of the urban population were and continue to be deprived of the right to access basic services like housing and water (Ordor & Michell, 2022; Calverley & Walther, 2022). Colonialism in the African continent has meant that the practice of urban planning and water governance is a “tool for attaining political and ideological goals of the state or ruling class” (UN-Habitat, 2022: 49). This means that most of the African people (read urban poor) were excluded from participating in processes of planning and urban water governance. The reason for their exclusion from these governance processes is simply that the philosophy of colonialism viewed African people as non-being. By this, the point is that planning and urban water governance under colonialism were based on the premise that only European people are considered to exist at the level of humanity (Faragher & Carden, 2023; Enqvist et al., 2022).

Thus, the exclusion of the African people was not considered an unjust course of action precisely because it was not a denial of the people's self-determination and access to basic services. On the contrary, the exclusion of African people from planning and urban water governance processes was considered a right course of action because, according to the European colonial rule, these were non-beings lacking all qualities that qualify one to be a human being (Pollard et al., 2023; Dladla, 2017). By virtue of existing in the zone of non-being, African people and the urban poor were denied the right to the city. As a result, the planning and design of African cities precluded *ab initio* the possibility of European people living together with the urban poor in cities (Enqvist et al., 2022; Omotayo et al., 2021).

Colonial planning has contributed to most of the urban poor presently living in peripheral urban communities characterised by inadequate access to essential services such as housing and drinking water. This also gives reasons as to why most of the poor urban population ended up residing outside cities on their own continent (Ziervogel, 2019). Despite the official end of European colonialism in many African countries, including South Africa with no exception, the participation of the urban poor

in planning and water governance processes remains a major challenge, expressing itself in the majority of the urban poor living in dilapidated communities with lack of access to water services (Lebek et al., 2021; Tyhotyholo & Ncube, 2023). The practice of planning and water governance under colonial rule was used to emphasise the point that the lives of the European people are qualitatively superior to those of African persons.

In post-colonial African cities, including Cape Town, little has changed, as most planning and urban water governance approaches continue to undermine the rights of the urban poor (Williams & Zacheous, 2022). The majority of the urban poor still lack access to basic services like housing and water. Urban water governance practice is mainly marked by various challenges, such as the lack of community participation and policy implementation failure- a problem characteristic of the situation under the European colonial rule in African cities (Enqvist et al., 2022; Calverley & Walther, 2022). Urban planning and water governance, legal frameworks, government institutions and educational programs require interventions and changes. This will help to ensure that planning and water governance are inclusive and address the daily existential experiences of the African colonial people (UN-Habitat, 2021).

However, in current African cities, planning and water governance resemble colonialism, marked by the hegemonic role and control of the European Enlightenment bequeathed to bourgeois nationalists' states. The hegemonic role of the European inherited state and government can be seen, for instance, in the processes of formulating and implementing urban water governance legislation and policies (Williams & Zacheous, 2022). Here, the state assumes the responsibility of crafting and enforcing laws and policies to effect urban transformation. Like in the colonial epoch in Africa, the state takes a position of authority and power to make decisions affecting the entire population (Enqvist & Ziervogel, 2021). In this regard, the Western inherited intent is to change the lives of the people through addressing the water access injustices and inequalities created by European colonialism in African cities.

In doing so, this thesis argues that it fails, the reason being that the state itself is a product of European colonialism and thus is incapable of addressing the needs and sufferings of the people, particularly the majority of the urban poor (John et al., 2023; Dladla, 2017). By concerning itself with eliminating the plights of the urban poor

regarding access to water, the state would be committing self-negation. Its primary objective is to push further or continue with the colonial business of undermining the rights of the people who are predominately urban poor (Césaire, 2023; Zibima et al., 2023). Put differently, the state, as a product of colonial rule, has a fundamental objective to perpetuate injustices and inequalities (Dladla, 2017). As a result, to expect the state to develop African cities resembles the supposition that colonialism can emerge against itself and attempt to address the needs of the people.

African history and experience have taught us that colonialism cannot develop African cities because, as previously mentioned, it views African people as existing in a zone of non-being (Zibima et al., 2023; Lushaba, 2015). In any post-colonial country, a state remains an agent of European colonialism and its fundamental ideology of power and control. Therefore, it is not in the spirit of the state to formulate and implement urban planning and water governance policies that would benefit most of the urban poor (Lushaba, 2015). This is of the urban poor that remain trapped in peripheral urban spaces with limited or no access to housing and drinking water, as was the case under the rule of European colonialism. Initially, proper urban planning is the prerequisite for effective urban water governance and the subsequent provision of water to all people (du Plessis, 2023; Ordor & Michell, 2022).

Urban water governance and planning are intertwined practices that must fundamentally deal with “material problems that demand urgent and clear solutions” (Millington & Scheba, 2021: 120), and “those material problems clearly include the gross inequalities, social and spatial, which African cities inherited from European colonialism, problems these cities were ostensibly created to militate against” (Di Vaio et al., 2021:49). This narrative paints a rather disruptive picture about the problem of European colonialism and its aftermaths in African cities. Here, the claim is that the state driven technocratic and bureaucratic urban water governance models fail. This failure, as previously asserted, manifests itself through the proliferation of the urban poor with lack or no access to water services in most of the African cities, including Cape Town (Mokoena, 2023; Enqvist et al., 2022). That radical transformation of African cities and their water governance models is a necessity, and it is precisely not in doubt. It is now imperative to ground the argument for a radical community driven urban water governance approach that crucially considers the needs of the people and particularly the urban poor.

2.4 The Argument for Radical Community-based Urban Water Governance

In post-colonial African cities like Cape Town a radical community driven approach to urban water governance is a necessity. Such an approach emphasises the crucial role of grassroots mobilisation to shape the practice of urban water governance. According to Mahadevia and Bhatia (2021:32), the radical approach should be characterised by “grassroots insurgent citizenship for planning, and the decolonisation of urban water governance framework”. This challenges the hegemonic role of the European inherited state in urban water governance. The radical approach suggests that institutional processes like urban water governance cannot be effective while undermining the direct participation of communities (Sandercock, 2024; Sandbu, 2020). In other words, it proposes an inclusive urban water governance model characterised by active engagement among various stakeholders, including the urban poor.

Radical water governance asserts that water governance in African cities should cease being technocratic and bureaucratic; it must not be a process for people without their involvement. On the contrary, urban water governance must incorporate the demands of the people through continuous engagement between the state and communities (Millington & Scheba, 2021). The lack or absence of this consistent collaboration of different urban water governance actors has been one of the main factors contributing to the failure of the state to provide water services to the urban poor across the African continent and elsewhere across the globe. According to scholars such as Schwoerer et al. (2022) and King et al. (2022), the complacency of the state towards a community-based urban water governance characterised by active participation of the urban poor in water affairs and projects is what has continuously led to policy implementation failure in post-colonial African cities like Cape Town. The aftermath of European colonialism, particularly in relation to water governance and the subsequent access to water by the majority of the urban poor, demands serious interventions (Mokoena, 2023). Planning of urban water governance in African cities owes much to the continuous legacy of European colonialism.

This colonial legacy continues to shape and inform the practice of planning and urban water governance in post-colonial African cities (Pollard et al., 2023; Muchandenyika & Williams, 2016). The problem of the current water governance systems and models in African cities is that they seem to be a colonial mindset. By colonial unknowing here

the point is simply that contemporary urban water governance systems in the African continent “erases and overlooks the immoral and unjust historical foundations of settler-colonialism, treating it instead as an immutable, unproblematic and naturalised social fact- as something that happened and can no longer be reversed or challenged” (Simpson & Povinelli, 2024:121; Bradley, 2023; Modiri, 2018). Colonial unknowing is not concerned with historical justice and the racial water access inequalities perpetuated by the *longue durée* history of European conquest in the African continent and in South Africa in particular.

It is this understanding embedded in the planning of urban water governance processes that has contributed to the undisrupted or unchallenged legacy of European colonialism in African cities (Bradley, 2023). The tendency of colonial unknowing is one of the factors that have led to the persistence of water governance policy implementation failure, marked by the lack of access to water by the majority of the urban poor in African cities. Radical community-based urban water governance and colonial unknowing stand in a dialectical relationship (Lepuru, 2023; Ordor & Michell, 2022). The former can be understood as the direct critique of the latter. The radical community-based planning of urban water governance asserts that colonial unknowing is problematic and needs to be critically challenged. Reason being that it allows for the perpetuation of the colonial injustices that continue to deprive the majority of the urban poor of the right to access to water in African cities like Cape Town (Simpson & Povinelli, 2024). This thesis suggests that the radical, community-based approach to urban water governance is promising. It assists one in unravelling and unearthing the silent continuities of European colonial rule in post-colonial African cities.

This approach argues that the planning of urban water governance and the subsequent provision of water must be context based. Put simply, it must be pro-poor through responding to the existential experiences of the people and particularly the urban poor across African urban spaces (Sandercock, 2024). At this stage, it seems that enough has been done to convince the reader of the promises and possibilities of an alternative urban water governance approach in post-colonial African states, including South Africa. As asserted, such an approach is radical community-based urban water governance. It considers crucially the central role of the urban poor in water affairs in post-colonial African cities, such as Cape Town. It would now seem

important to read the existing literature on the phenomenon of urban water governance. The intent here is to understand some of the current conceptual trends and debates on urban water governance and expose the lacuna in the literature that this research seeks to fill.

2.5 Conceptualisation of Urban Water Governance

This section reviews the existing literature on urban water governance, beginning with a global analytical framework and narrowing to the South African urban context. To discipline this curiosity, the researcher has asked the question: What are some of the existing views and debates on the concept and practice of urban water governance? This has enabled the researcher to read some of the existing perspectives and challenges associated with the concept of urban water governance. The review demonstrates that researchers have interpreted and understood water governance from various perspectives, resulting in several diverse but interrelated definitions of this concept. Due to the significance of water, governments worldwide have emphasised the right to water as one of the important human rights that must be fulfilled. The indispensable nature of water for social transformation has contributed to the involvement of different organisations in the governance and management of this resource (Di Vaio et al., 2021; Bell et al., 2022).

As a result, various approaches and policies have been developed to ensure effective water governance globally. Scholars have interpreted and understood the notion of water governance from different perspectives, resulting in diverse definitions. For instance, Sarkar (2022) maintains that the concept of water governance is broad and diverse; it covers institutional arrangements, administrative processes, and courses of action by different institutions, including government and civil society, for ensuring progressive management of water that should result in effective delivery of clean water, especially to the poor urbanites. Put differently, water governance can be seen as a broad framework that includes both formal and informal laws, procedures, and methods used by public, commercial, and social actors to express interests, make choices, and settle disputes related to water (Valdovinos, 2021). Some scholars (Di Vaio et al., 2021; Calverley & Walther, 2022; Enqvist et al., 2022) have highlighted the importance of collaboration between different actors to promote effective water governance.

However, the state driven approach characterised by the dominant role of government in water affairs turns a blind eye to the importance of community participation in water affairs. An analysis of the contemporary trends in urban water governance has been directed towards questioning the viability or existence of a 'one size fits all' urban water governance model (Pollard et al., 2023). Global literature (Pollard et al., 2023; Pringle et al., 2023; du Plessis, 2023) demonstrates that scholars accept the understanding that there is no one unique urban water governance model that can be used for all countries. This is because contexts differ from one country to another, and urban water needs are not universal. Thus, countries have been developing and implementing urban water governance models considering their own specific contexts and water demands.

2.6 Different Approaches to Urban Water Governance

In response to the ongoing demand for water, particularly safe drinking water, different approaches to water governance have emerged around the world. Such water governance approaches include experimentalist water governance, polycentric water governance and adaptive water governance (Scoones et al., 2020; Jiménez et al., 2020). While sharing some fundamental principles, these water governance approaches are different in essence. This section discusses some of these water governance approaches as they emerged in contemporary global water resource management. The aim is to demonstrate that the persistent challenge of water shortages has weakened all these water governance approaches, especially in the African post-colonial cities like Cape Town. While these water governance approaches have partially brought about social change in urban spaces through promoting the needs of the urban masses, the challenge of poor water governance in cities seems to persist (Di Vaio et al., 2021; Graversgaard, 2024).

As the discussion below shall demonstrate, the dominant water governance approaches have mostly failed to explain the role of institutional structures (read as structural configurations) on urban water governance. Hence, this thesis is an attempt to fill this gap in urban water management literature by investigating how the decisions and actions of urban water governance actors are influenced by structural configurations embedded in urban South African councils like Cape Town. The

discussion also shows that these different water governance approaches have been impeded by various challenges based on specific contexts across the globe.

2.6.1 Experimentalist Urban Water Governance

Experimentalist governance can be understood as a consistent process aimed at revising institutional goals in relation to water (Jiménez et al., 2020). This recurrent process of goal revision is based on experimental learning. According to the experimental water governance approach, actors should learn about water challenges and develop solutions based on such social experiments. In this regard, available alternatives must be scrutinised to determine and take the most suitable course of action (Li & Jin, 2023). In an article titled '*Water Resources and Governance Approaches: Insights for Achieving Water Security*' Julio et al. (2021) contend that the experimentalist water governance approach promotes collaboration between different actors based on practical experimentation. These authors argue that this water governance approach can be viewed as promoting a form of coordination because it "systematically provokes doubt about its own assumptions and practices and treats all solutions as incomplete and corrigible" (Julio et al., 2021:134).

Experimental water governance suggests a practice of adjusting to the environment through a continuous revision of goals and means to attain the desired outcomes. In this regard, according to Li & Jin (2023), the fundamental objective of the experimental water governance is to achieve a systematic way of constant reformulation and iteration based on social learning. This approach assumes a decentralised water governance marked by the consistent collaboration between the state and different actors, including the communities. It challenges the state driven water governance that prefigures and dovetails the needs of the urban masses without their participation in the process (Jiménez et al., 2020). In experimentalist water governance, actors such as the disadvantaged urban communities are deliberately "granted enough freedom to create place-based mechanisms to achieve all-encompassing framework outcomes, and sharing their experiences enables policy learning" (Julio et al., 2021:127).

However, the problem with experimentalist governance is that it fails to provide explanations on how to deal with power dynamics in a decentralised and collaborative approach, which it advocates for in water governance. When different actors engage

to find out the best alternative to resolve water challenges, there is always a possibility that some voices and views will be suppressed while others become authoritative in the process (Ricart, 2022; Jiménez et al., 2020). Furthermore, while advocating for a decentralised urban water governance, the experimentalist approach has not been successful in giving an account of how disadvantaged urban communities should form part of the decision-making processes in water affairs, especially in 'post'-colonial societies like South Africa (Hinterleitner et al., 2024; Ricart, 2022). Thus, central to this thesis is to provide such an explanation through analysing the existing community participation mechanisms for effective urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa and particularly in Cape Town. According to Enqvist et al. (2022), one of the crucial bases for evaluating the effectiveness of any governance approach, especially in post-colonial states like South Africa, is to examine its capacity and practicality in promoting the role of the majority of the urban poor in decision-making processes. At this point, the narrative must turn to yet another dominant governance approach, namely polycentric urban water governance.

2.6.2 Polycentric Urban Water Governance

Polycentric governance is common in diverse contexts in which governance is a responsibility of different institutions and actors. These actors are expected to jointly coordinate and come up with other systems and decisions at various levels (Ricart, 2022; Julio et al., 2021). This normally takes place where several of decision-making bodies, such as national, provincial and local governments, enjoy autonomy and authority to make urban water governance legislation and policies. These decision-making bodies that exist at different levels of government are structured and directed towards collaboratively providing basic services such as water to the local communities. In this regard, Ricart (2022) argues that the central purpose of polycentric urban water governance is to practically allocate powers to make legislation and policies at different government spheres to bring about effective and continuous accessibility of basic water services to all people and the urban poor. In a polycentric urban water governance approach, the various decision-making bodies consist of people or actors that are qualified and have the right skills to promote collaboration and resolve any potential tensions (Pahl-Wostl & Knieper, 2023).

While the decision-making bodies like the different government spheres are independent and enjoy powers to make water governance legislation and policies,

they should consider the fundamental principles of collaborative water governance to achieve the common good of the communities (Julio et al., 2021). In this regard, each decision-making body must work in close collaboration with other actors to promote access to water for all people. Scholars such as Pahl-Wostl and Knieper (2023:214) insist that in a polycentric urban water governance, the various decision-making bodies consist of actors “who are capable of resolving conflicts and regard each other in competitive and cooperative relationships”. However, like the experimentalist governance discussed above, this approach to water management has its short falls.

The polycentric urban water governance fails to provide clear explanations on how to deal with power dynamics in collaborative and inclusive water management. It remains uncertain who should be accountable when the chosen water governance alternatives or policies fail (Li & Jin, 2023; Rahimi et al., 2022). Such critiques evoke doubt on the plausibility of the polycentric urban water governance approach, particularly in complex societies like South Africa, where colonial bequeath water injustices and inequalities continue to prevail. This thesis proposes an alternative approach, namely a community-grounded urban water governance approach, marked by the central role of the African colonial people or the urban poor in the formulation and implementation of water policies and strategies. But let us continue to read yet another governance approach (adaptive urban water governance), and this is the last one before we proceed to critique some of the key features of the post-colonial South African water governance model.

2.6.3 Adaptive Urban Water Governance

Adaptive urban water governance focuses on social transformation by fostering new ways and alternatives to achieve effective water access (Wilder et al., 2020). The purpose of this approach is to create alternative ways of water management when technological, economic, political, and social environments present new challenges. It is adaptive because it enables actors to develop urban water governance strategies that will remain relevant in the changing environment (Pahl-Wostl & Knieper, 2023; Wilder et al., 2020). According to proponents of this approach, such as Saikia et al. (2022) and Katusiime & Schütt (2020), the argument of adaptive urban water governance departs from the premise that, to manage a system effectively, it is necessary to know it in depth. The adaptive urban water governance challenges

conventional models that divide the production of information based on research from its implementation or application at the management level (Saikia et al., 2022).

The adaptive urban water governance has been considered necessary for ensuring sustainable development and innovation based on social experiences. In this way, the approach is considered imperative towards achieving sustainable societies characterised by equal and continuous access to necessities such as water. While the adaptive governance provides important insights for an improved water management system, some critics, including Julio et al. (2021) and Katusiime & Schütt (2020), have argued that it is mystic and challenging to implement. The reason is that it advocates for frequent changes based on social learning, and it is hard to manage in such a recurrent evolving system. In post-colonial societies like South Africa, adaptive urban water governance is fundamental to address the historical water access injustices and inequalities through promoting new ways of water management that will benefit all people, including the urban poor (Calverley & Walther, 2022; Millington & Scheba, 2021). It opens an avenue for developing new water governance models based on the existential experiences of the African people.

This section has analysed some of the existing governance models that have influenced the practice of urban water governance at the global level. The review shows that there are different perspectives on how to improve water governance and the subsequent access to water. Worth mentioning is that despite these urban water governance approaches, the challenge of poor water governance and its resultant lack of access to water services in cities persists. Scholars like Pollard et al. (2023) and Pringle et al. (2023) have associated this challenge with poor coordination between different urban water governance actors such as the state, private sector, political parties and the poor urban communities. To be sure, the lack or absence of community participation in urban water governance contributes to policy formulation and implementation failures in cities globally (Pollard et al., 2023). While this remains a case at the global level, research that focuses on the aspect of community participation and water governance the urban South Africa is scant. Considering this, the thesis focuses on examining the role of community participation in urban water governance in South Africa, particularly in Cape Town. Given the global context sketched in this section, it is now important to read some key features of the post-apartheid South African urban water governance model and its inherent challenges.

2.7 The South African Urban Water Governance Model

The South African urban water governance model is well known for its emphasis on the central role of the state in providing water services to all people. For example, the existing water governance legislation in South Africa positions the government as the primary driver of water provision (Pringle et al., 2023; du Plessis, 2023). The Constitution of South Africa provide that the government has a mandate to ensure that all people have access to safe drinking water. In line with this constitutional mandate, the government has formulated and implemented various policies and strategies to promote the practice of collaborative water governance in South African cities. However, the participation of local communities in the formulation and implementation of water policies and strategies remains one of the major impediments to effective urban water governance (Pollard et al., 2023; Tyhotyholo & Ncube, 2023). The existing community participation mechanisms, such as public meetings and ward committees, have not been effective in bringing the plights of the people to consideration in urban water governance. For example, Pollard et al. (2023) argue that in South Africa, community participation platforms like public meetings and workshops have been used for political gains, with public officials discussing their political agendas instead of addressing the community's water needs.

The failure of the state to promote effective water governance has resulted in the critical shortage of safe drinking water for all people, including the urban poor in South Africa (Millington & Scheba, 2021). Alongside the lack of government financial capacity and unstable coordination between different urban water governance actors, poor institutional arrangements have contributed to consistent backlogs of the urban poor trapped in squalid living conditions with a lack of water services. This has been considered a governance challenge characterised by internal contradictions and inconsistencies in water governance approaches and policies (Ziervogel, 2019; Millington & Scheba, 2021; Enqvist et al., 2022). Water governance research in the global and South African context has revealed that the majority of the population, especially from low-income communities, has no access to safe drinking water. Much research work has been done on water governance (Di Vaio et al., 2021; Sarkar, 2022). However, the relationship between water governance and institutional design has received rather little attention, especially in South Africa. In Cape Town, research

shows that the government has formulated and implemented various water governance policies, including Cape Town's water strategy.

However, rapid urbanisation and persistent population growth marked by the consistent expansion of informal settlements outweigh the technical and financial capacity of the City to provide urban social services like safe drinking water to all people, including the urban poor (Mokoena, 2023; Tyhotyholo & Ncube, 2023). This has been considered a governance challenge typified by contestations and tensions between the government, political parties and community-based organisations in Cape Town (Enqvist et al., 2022; Mokoena, 2023). There is much research done on the practice of water governance in Cape Town. However, there is limited information on the role of institutional properties (namely, structural configurations) on urban water governance in Cape Town. Yet, in the post-apartheid South Africa that is marked by the consistent challenge of the lack of access to safe drinking water for all people, an understanding of the influence of institutional arrangements or structural configurations on water governance is imperative to improve water supply in urban areas (Rankoana, 2020; Enqvist et al., 2022). In particular, the specific role and influence of structural configurations (the codified rules, institutional culture and tradition) on urban water governance need to be analysed, and this is the focus of the study. The study investigates the process of urban water governance and how it is influenced by structural configurations embedded in Cape Town.

2.8 Conceptualisation of Structural Configurations

Institutions have their own structural configurations designed to direct all members towards achieving institutional goals (Brutger & Li, 2022; Rosenbloom et al., 2022; Stapel, 2022). Because this study focuses on public institutions, it will be important to define public institutions from the start to aid in proper interpretation and reading. Peters (1999:120) refers to "a public institution as a system of social relationships that consists of shared values, procedures and customs that shape the way people think and act". In this regard, the specific public institutions that this study relates to are government institutions such as the South African National Department of Water and Sanitation and the Metropolitan Cape Town, particularly the Department of Water and Sanitation. These public institutions consist of structural configurations that are meant

to guide the operations of the institution and the behaviour of the employees (Brinks et al., 2019; Rosenbloom et al., 2022).

This means that public institutions have some rules and internal structures combined with their enforcement mechanisms designed to control the choices and decisions made by actors (Christensen et al., 2020; Thompson, 2016). As hitherto emphasised, public “institutions have deliberately established structural configurations that help to ensure that the behaviour and activities of their members are controlled to achieve institutional preferences” (Christensen et al., 2020:39). In the book titled ‘*The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*’ Giddens (1984) refers to such structural configurations as a structure that limits the autonomy of actors within an institution to make decisions and actions using their cognitive abilities.

Giddens (1984) argues that the way institutions are structured and organised using a set of regulations and internal measures prefigures and outlines *ab initio* what is the right course of action to achieve an institution’s vision and mission. Consonant with Giddens, scholars such as Riccucci (2021:234) contend that “most institutions have an organised system of social relationships and networks of interactions that carry and cherish common values and standards for achieving preferred ends”. In this regard, every government department or institution “comprises a special system of norms or rules with behaviour resulting in the regularity of interactions” (Poshai, 2022:124). This thesis investigates how institutional rules and norms embedded in the Metropolitan of Cape Town shape the decisions and actions of different actors involved in the formulation and implementation of urban water governance strategies. In a study titled ‘*Urban Housing Policy in Zimbabwe and its Institutional Structures: Reflecting on the Housing Challenge in Harare, 1980-2020*’ Poshai (2022) examines the impact of institutional structures (read structural configurations) on housing policy formulation and implementation.

Poshai (2022) argues that because actors are required to comply with institutional structures that determine what must be done and how it must be done. It follows that institutional structures have a direct impact on policy formulation and implementation. Poshai (2022) presents a synopsis of the various structural configurations that are typical of any public institution. So that the reader does not get sidetracked, borrowing from Poshai (2022) and Riccucci (2021), next is a diagram illustrating the main

structural configurations that can be found within public institutions. While the diagram below is not exhaustive, it presents the main structural configurations that comprise a public institution.

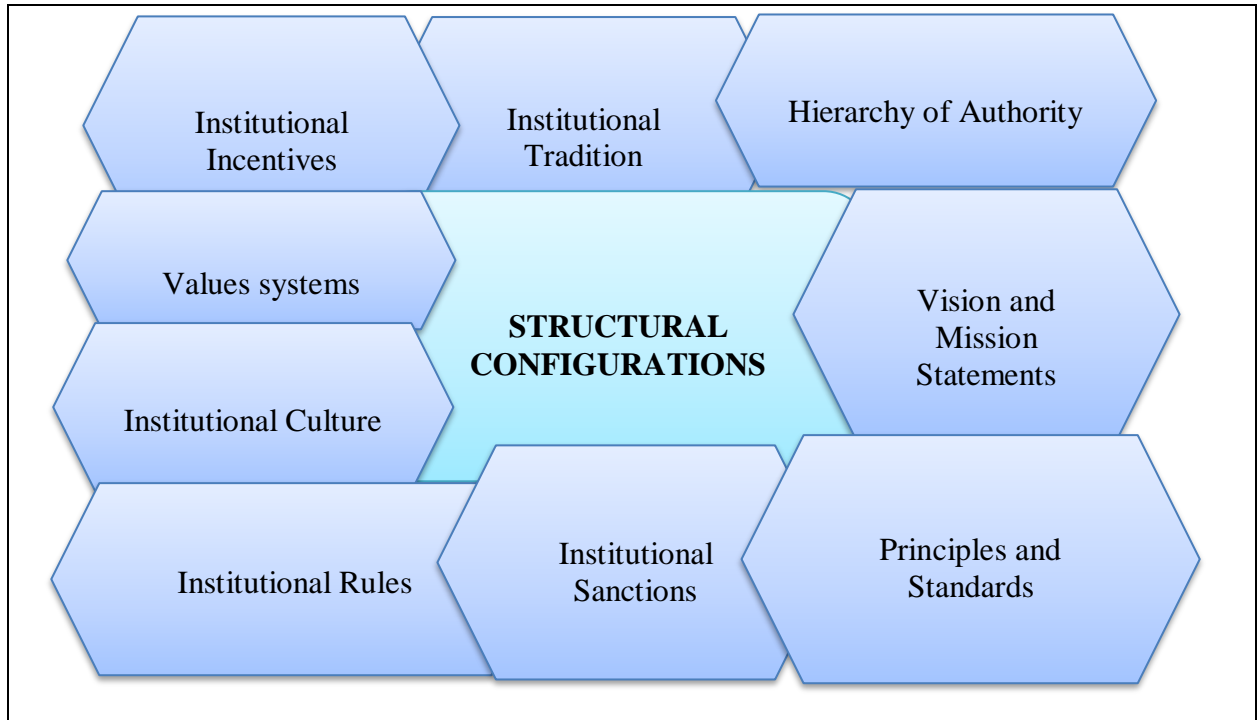


Figure 1: The main Elements of Structural Configurations (Source: Author's construct, 2023).

The structural configurations illustrated in the diagram above can be understood as internal institutional arrangements that define the uniqueness of the organisation. These institutional features determine how things should be done within the institution (Ricucci, 2021). It can be argued that a thorough analysis and understanding of these structural configurations can allow one to effectively prefigure the behaviours, decisions and actions of different actors within an institution. Reason is that the primary function of structural configurations is to guide actors on the right course of action. Thus, when these structural configurations are infringed upon or disregarded by actors, appropriate institutional sanctions can be imposed. Emphasising the same point, Poshai (2022) argues that structural configurations are intentionally created to make sure that employees and all stakeholders associated with the organisation are not promoting their own goals and wishes but the mission of the institution. This is why

organisations force all stakeholders to comply with structural configurations (Rosenbloom et al., 2022).

While there is much scholarly work done on structural configurations, literature with direct emphasis on the impact of these institutional arrangements (read structural configurations) on urban water governance is sparse. Therefore, using the case of Cape Town, this thesis investigates how the process of urban water governance is influenced by structural configurations. The thesis focuses on how structural configurations are shaping the decisions and actions of different water governance actors in urban South Africa particularly in Cape Town. At this point, let us read the current literature on how some of the main structural configurations such as the hierarchy of authority, institutional sanctions, institutional rules and institutional tradition shape the decisions of actors in public institutions in general.

2.8.1 Hierarchy of Authority

The hierarchy of authority is one of the main structural configurations that defines the hierarchal relations and powers within an institution (Davis & Rhodes, 2020). The hierarchy of authorities allows for the supervision of subordinates by their superiors based on work performance standards set out by the institution. Directors and managers in government institutions consider performance standards as one of the instruments to determine the level of performance by employees within their supervision (Davis & Rhodes, 2020; Thompson, 2016). The hierarchy of authority within organisations promote accountability as subordinates are required to account for their decisions and actions in executing their daily activities. The hierarchy of authority allows for collaboration through a chain of command and supervision. In this regard, it gives effect to the principles of accountability as subordinates become accountable to their supervisors (Shen et al., 2023). This thesis focuses on analysing how institutional non-materialistic aspects such as the hierarchy of authority influence the decisions and actions taken by urban water governance actors in South African urban councils like Cape Town.

However, some of the criticisms levelled against the hierarchy authority in organisations are that it tends to make people feel inferior to others as power relations and recognition become the basis for separation of duties (Rosenbloom et al., 2022). To be sure, the hierarchy of authority contributes to other employees feeling more

superior or important in terms of position, power and recognition within the institutional structure. Other scholars, such as Tien (2023), have pointed out that institutional hierarchies can make the decision-making process more technocratic and bureaucratic, resulting in serious delays in the implementation of projects. In such a tedious and bureaucratic process, it can be difficult to hold people accountable because there are many hands involved, and this can lead to what political philosophers have termed 'the problem of many hands' (Rosenbloom et al., 2022; Wolff, 2023). The problem of many hands recognises the difficulty of holding people accountable where many hands in the process have been involved (Wolff, 2023). The thesis analyses how institutional hierarchies shape the urban water governance process in Cape Town.

2.8.2 Institutional Sanctions

Institutional sanctions are meant to discipline and punish members of the institution (Ricucci, 2021). These may include dismissal and demotion of employees who have broken or infringed the rules and norms of the institutions. Institutions would usually make these institutional sanctions known to employees (Davis & Rhodes, 2020). This forces the employees to ensure that they stay away from breaking the rules and culture of the organisation. Institutional sanctions are disciplinary procedures that are used against employees who may defy the way things are expected to be done within an institution. This encourages employees to continually enhance the level of compliance with institutional rules when performing their duties (Shen et al., 2023; Giddens, 1984).

These institutional sanctions outline what should be done when employees are found to be in breach of the existing institutional values and standards. According to Shen et al. (2023:241), "most institutions utilise sanctions to induce their members to accept and act according to institutionally determined values". An example of an institutional sanction is the reduction or withdrawal of certain employment benefits when an employee is found to have breached institutional values or regulations. When employees are not complying with organisational principles and requirements, they are likely to be punished. Directors or supervisors in the workplace may consider suspending or demoting their subordinates when certain work requirements are not achieved. In other instances, employees may even get fired for not following the principles within their departments or organisations (Ricucci, 2021). The study is concerned with examining how structural configurations, such as institutional

sanctions, influence the urban water governance process in urban South Africa and in Cape Town in particular. To be sure, the thesis analyses how institutional sanctions shape the behaviours of actors when formulating and implementing urban water governance policies and strategies in Cape Town.

Despite their potential in promoting compliance with organisational rules and values, institutional sanctions have been criticised for inflicting fear on the employees (Christensen et al., 2020). Institutional sanctions promote compliance at the expense of productivity and effectiveness. When employees are working in constant fear of breaking institutional rules and the possibility of institutional sanctions, this contributes to a lack of productivity. “The fear of being punished for breaking rules usually generates undesirable ramifications such as diminished productivity and job satisfaction” (Ricucci, 2021:57; Christensen et al., 2020). This in turn means that innovation and creativity are discouraged, as doing so will risk punishment. Here, one may recall the argument put forward by the structuration theory as discussed above—that is, structural configurations may limit the autonomy of people working in organisations because it is the structure, not the agency (read employees), that determines *ab initio* how things must be done. However, research on the relationality between structural configurations and the water governance process in urban South Africa is flimsy. The thesis provides a contextually and empirically driven explanation of how structural configurations, such as institutional sanctions, influence the urban water governance process in Cape Town.

2.8.3 Institutional Rules and Directives

Institutions have internal rules that should be followed by all members or employees (Davis & Rhodes, 2020). These institutional rules are developed together with their enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance. When executing their duties, members of the institution are expected to adhere to the rules, and the infringement of such rules and directives is punishable (Tien, 2023). Rules are established to control and direct the behaviour of the employees within an institution. Institutional rules and directives define how members should conduct themselves in relation to performing their work. In this regard, Davis and Rhodes (2020:62) insist that “an institution is a formal collection of rules that are used to control the decisions and actions of the members. Organisations have various internal rules with the intentions to enforce the accepted behaviours from staff members. These rules and directives are crafted and

implemented in line with the vision and mission statements of the institution (Shen et al., 2023; Riccucci, 2021). In this way, the rules cultivate and promote an institutional culture that is geared towards accomplishing the interests of an institution. Therefore, the effectiveness of an institution in achieving its stated goals is dependent on the practical implementation of its internal established rules and directives.

The present study is an inquiry into the role and influence of structural configurations, such as the institutional rules and directives, on the practice of water governance in urban South Africa. The thesis investigates specifically how institutional , regulations, and directives embedded in Cape Town influence the decisions and actions of different actors partaking in the formulation and implementation of urban water governance policies and strategies. However, institutionalists like Rosenbloom et al. (2022) have criticised institutional rules as one of the ways through which the cognitive autonomy of employees can be undermined. The point is that laws and regulations can be rigid and inflexible, such that employees are unable to apply their own skills in performing institutional duties.

Furthermore, societies are in constant change, and when rules remain unchanged and static, the institutions are likely to become irrelevant to the needs of the community they serve (Enqvist et al., 2022; Riccucci, 2021). It is this feature that is characteristic of the current public institutions, such as municipalities in South Africa. While the country has officially transitioned from colonial and apartheid rule to a democratic dispensation, its institutions and rules still resemble the past (Enqvist et al., 2022). To be sure, since the dawn of democracy in South Africa, the urban water governance institutions and their internal rules and structures have not been significantly transformed to address the needs of the majority of the urban poor. The thesis examines how such institutional rules affect the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. The intent is to determine how historical water injustices and inequalities are still perpetuated through structural configurations, such as institutional rules and directives, in post-apartheid urban South Africa, particularly in Cape Town.

2.8.4 Institutional Culture and Tradition

Institutions create institutional culture and tradition (Tien, 2023). This institutional culture and tradition can be understood in terms of the customs and norms that are shared within a particular institution (Rosenbloom et al., 2022). As the interaction

between the institutional structures, employees, rules and values of the institution develops, this creates a shared philosophy and tradition on how things are done. The culture of an organisation includes the ways of communication, perspectives and beliefs promoted within an institution (Shen et al., 2023). In this regard, Tien (2023:324) suggests that an organisation's principles and values include shared "perceptions, thoughts and language used by affiliates of an institution and imparted to a new member when they join the institution".

The culture and tradition of an institution keep all the aspects of an organisation together. For Poshai (2022), the traditions and culture of an organisation are "like the glue that holds the institution's constituent elements together. Institutional culture, therefore, comprises the collective meanings and understandings created by group members as they network amongst themselves in the context of the institution" (Rosenbloom et al., 2022; Poshai, 2022:231). The thesis is concerned with understanding how structural configurations, such as the tradition and culture of public institutions, affect the process of water governance in urban South Africa. The thesis analyses how tradition and culture embedded in the Cape Town Council effects the practice of urban water governance.

The history of the institutions and internal structures mandated to ensure effective water governance in South Africa has been inherited from European colonialism (Millington & Scheba, 2021). The traditions and culture of the present water governance institutions were and continue to be informed by the philosophy of colonial conquest in South Africa. The genealogy of these water governance institutions, including urban municipalities, bends over backwards towards European enlightenment and its subsequent philosophy of colonialism imposed in the African continent and in South Africa in particular (Mokoena, 2023; Millington & Scheba, 2021). This means that institutional traditions and culture embedded in current urban water governance institutions, such as municipalities, are informed by the doctrine of European colonialism. For example, all the technocratic and bureaucratic institutional features, including the structures of municipalities and their hierarchy of authority, were introduced to South Africa through European colonialism. It is this culture and tradition that informs the practice of planning and governance in urban South Africa.

The critiques of institutionalism, such as Riccucci (2021), argue that culture and tradition can impede innovation and the possibility of developing and adopting new governance models that can be more relevant in the contemporary world. Institutional culture and traditions can be too conservative and anti-change, making it difficult for employees to apply their creativity and cognitive skills. This thesis analyses how institutional culture and traditions shape the practice of urban water governance in Cape Town. So far, the thesis has demonstrated the relationality between structural configurations and institutional processes like urban water governance. The preceding review of the existing literature has shown that urban water governance can be influenced by structural configurations such as institutional culture and tradition in various ways.

Review of the existing literature has shown that urban water governance can be affected by structural configurations, such as institutional culture and tradition. A review of the existing literature has demonstrated that urban water governance can be influenced by structural factors, including institutional culture and tradition, in various ways. A review of the existing literature has demonstrated that urban water governance can be influenced by structural factors, such as institutional culture and tradition, in various ways. A review of the existing literature has shown that urban water governance can be influenced by structural factors, such as institutional culture and tradition, in various ways. For this thesis, the attention must now be turned to yet another fundamental aspect of urban water governance, namely community participation.

2.9 Community Participation and Urban Water Governance

One of the fundamental bases for evaluating the effectiveness of any governance model is its ability to promote community participation (Pollard et al., 2023). Urban water governance without community participation usually leads to a cul-de-sac marked by policy implementation failure. The reason for such governance failure is that the role of communities in policy formulation and implementation is undermined. Scholars du Plessis (2023) argue that community participation is crucial for challenging the state-driven, exploitative top-down urban water governance approach.

The central premise of community participation is that urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water must be a result of continuous interaction between the

state and the communities. Such interaction between local communities and government should aim to incorporate the plights of the people, especially the urban poor, into water governance policies and strategies (Pollard et al., 2023; Di Vaio et al., 2021). This means that the government must formulate laws, policies and strategies to encourage community participation in urban water governance. Such legislation and policies should explicitly outline the need to create structures for community participation in urban water governance. This can enhance the possibility of an effective urban water governance model marked by the continuous accessibility of water services to all people, including the urban poor. Structures and platforms for community participation in urban water governance should also be a direct outcome of constant engagements between the state and local communities (Enqvist et al., 2022; Rankoana, 2020).

However, most often, the structures for community participation are created for the community without the people. Put differently, the structures of community participation in urban water governance are primarily formulated mainly by the state and superimposed on communities without the input of the people. This often leads to a cul-de-sac typified by the failure of such community participation structures to dovetail the needs of the urban poor with water governance legislation and policies (Pollard et al., 2023; Tyhotyholo & Ncube, 2023). This mismatch between urban water governance legislation and the needs of the local communities has contributed to the persistent water shortages in urban peripheral areas across the globe. To formulate effective urban water governance strategies, understanding the daily needs of the communities is an imperative. However, as stated previously, the eradication of the plights of the urban poor concerning water services is not a central aspect of the formation of the state in post-colonial societies like South Africa.

The state is an agent of colonial rule in post-colonial societies (Lepuru, 2023; Lushaba, 2015). Thus, it is incapable of eradicating the needs of the people through promoting community participation in urban water governance. To recall the previous claim of this thesis, the state in post-colonial countries preserves the exploitative role of the colonial government. This creates a challenging difficult, problematic environment for communities to join in state-driven urban water governance processes (Zibima et al., 2023). However, through the formation of different community-based organisations and social movements, the urban poor are entangled in the struggle for access to basic

services such as housing and water (Pollard et al., 2023; Millington & Scheba, 2021). The following narration demonstrates that through social movements, the urban poor continue to engage in the struggle for effective water governance marked by equal access to water services. Social movements support grassroots-informed urban water governance by promoting the direct participation of the urban poor in the formulation and implementation of water policies and strategies.

2.10 The Resurgence of Social Movements in African Water Governance

The review of the extant literature shows that in African cities, social movements (SMs) have been triggered by the challenge of the shortage of housing and other basic services such as water and sanitation. According to Kamuzhanje (2021), “the new millennium has ushered in unprecedented levels of urbanisation in most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Between 1990 and 2015, the rate of urbanisation increased from 33.9% to 57.1% and is projected to continue rising as rural poverty persists”. Due to rapid urbanisation in African cities, the government is struggling to provide basic services such as clean water to the urban poor, and SMs have been on the rise (Lebek et al., 2021; Murray et al., 2023). . In simple terms, poor service delivery has contributed to the increase of urban SMs, which pressurise the state and promote alternative solutions for effective water governance.

The resurgence of SMs in urban transformation has been a result of poor government planning and ineffective water governance policies in African cities (Lebek et al., 2021; Martinez, 2022). SMs have been fundamental in the struggle for access to safe drinking water in cities. As grass-roots advocates for effective water governance, SMs in African countries have played a crucial role. For example, through promoting the role of citizens in water governance, SMs are agents of pro-poor urban transformation. SMs are premised on the view that community-based water governance is one of the key methods for resolving the challenge of water insecurity in African cities (Murray et al., 2023). However, for this to become a reality, a proactive and committed government is necessary. It is from this context that SMs have been mobilising at the grassroots level for effective water access.

The reality is that in African countries, including South Africa, the majority of people, particularly poor urbanites, do not have access to water and sanitation services (Murray et al., 2023). Commenting on the glaring challenge of urbanisation and poor

service delivery in sub-Saharan Africa, Bell et al. (2022) maintains that many towns and cities in this region are dealing with crises compounded by rapid population growth, particularly in peripheral urban areas; lack of access to shelter, infrastructure and services by predominantly poor populations; weak local governments; and serious environmental issues. In many African cities, there has been “an insurgent citizenship movement defined as an insurgency that began with the struggle for rights to have a daily life in the city worthy of a citizen’s dignity” (Storey, 2021:120). Urban movements in Africa have emerged to fight against the problem of neoliberal water governance policies that have condemned the lives of the indigenous people of the land. The power of the state to formulate and implement water governance policies in Africa has been challenged by the urban poor through the formation of SMs. This has resulted in the reconfiguration of power with the predominantly poor population redefining and shaping the scope of water governance in African cities (Shackleton & Njwaxu, 2021; Omotayo et al., 2021).

However, in many African countries, including South Africa, the majority of the urban poor was still trapped in squalid living conditions typified by a lack of basic services like safe drinking water. In African cities, such as Harare in Zimbabwe, the struggle for better service delivery remains a reality, with most of the indigenous people suffering in townships (Harry & Malepane, 2021). The rise of SMs has intensified the struggle with particular emphasis on the role of communities in the formulation and implementation of water governance policies and strategies. It is important to point out that the government has started to recognise the influential role of SMs in the provision of basic services to the urban poor. In some countries, such as Zimbabwe, the state has collaborated with SMs in the quest for effective water governance and housing. The focus of this paper is on the interaction of SMs and municipalities in urban water governance in South Africa. There has been an axiomatic resurgence of SMs in urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa (Millington & Scheba, 2021). However, before delving into this point, it is equally important to provide a brief background on the nature and role of SMs in urban water governance prior to the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994.

2.11 Social Movements in Urban South African Water Governance prior to 1994

The history of SMs in water governance in South Africa prior to 1994 is inevitably a story of racial segregation characterised by unequal access to basic services such as housing and water. This is precisely because under the colonial and apartheid government in South Africa, water governance policies and projects were developed based on the premise that the white population is qualitatively superior as compared to the indigenous people of South Africa (Omotayo et al., 2021; Shackleton & Njwaxu, 2021). Thus, the majority of black people in South Africa were denied the right to clean water. Due to these injustices regarding water services, the preponderance of the black population at the grassroots level had to organise and mobilise for equal access to clean water.

Under the colonial and apartheid regimes in South Africa, residential areas designed and preserved only for black people were typified by squalid living conditions and limited access to essential services, including clean water (Shackleton & Njwaxu, 2021; Kalina et al., 2024). This resulted in the formation of SMs in opposition to the unjustified racial water governance laws and policies. Worth mentioning is the fact that in South Africa during the colonial and apartheid period, black people were not allowed to form and participate in SMs (Omotayo et al., 2021). However, the persistence of social injustices marked by the exclusion of black population in water governance compelled the indigenous people to organise themselves and mobilise against the government of the time. SMs become an instrumental tool in the struggle for better services, including clean water for all people in South Africa (Lebek et al., 2021; Harry & Malepane, 2021). There is no doubt that SMs played a crucial role in the struggle against colonialism and apartheid prior to 1994 in South Africa. That the struggle for freedom in South Africa was directly a fight for basic services like clean water and housing for all the people is precisely not in doubt.

According to Harry and Malepane (2021), an analysis of SMs in water governance in South Africa before 1994 cannot neglect some of the key events that occurred during the struggle for freedom. Such events include the bus boycotts of the 1950s, the school boycotts in the fight against the introduction of Bantu education in 1953, the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 and the 1976 Soweto uprising. Furthermore, the theatre of SMs in the 1980s centred on rents, rates, and boycotts of tricameral parliament

elections, as well as demands for better wages and improved service delivery (Lebek et al., 2021; Harry & Malepane, 2021). These incidents were a result of the influence of SMs in South Africa before the dawn of democracy in 1994. Part of the reasons for SMs to revolt against the government was the demand for inclusive water governance, typified by effective delivery of water services to the majority of black people. Next, the discussion turns to the challenge of water governance and the resurgence of SMs in the struggle for water services in the post-colonial South Africa.

2.12 Social Movements in Water Governance in the Post-apartheid South Africa

The official end of the colonial and apartheid regimes, marked by the dawn of democracy in 1994, ushered in a new government in South Africa (Enqvist et al., 2022). This era in South African history marked the end of racial water governance laws, policies and strategies that were developed and designed to exclude the majority of black people under the colonial and apartheid government (Shunglu, 2022; Tyhotyholo & Ncube, 2025). This was symbolised by the promulgation of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1996. The Right to clean water is provided for in the Constitution of South Africa. In Chapter Two, the Bill of Rights, the Constitution of South Africa stipulates that “everyone has the Right to clean water”. This means that the government of South Africa carries the constitutional mandate to provide clean water to all people (Kubanza, 2021; Enqvist et al., 2022). To fulfil this mandate, the government has also developed various legislation and policies for effective water governance in South Africa. The White Paper on Water Supply and Sanitation Services of 1994 and the Water Services Act, No. 108 of 1997, are a few examples (Ncube, 2022). The former provides a framework for national, provincial and local governments to effectively deliver water to South African communities. The latter emphasises the indispensable need for various water governance stakeholders, including the community, to collaborate in ensuring progressive water delivery to all people in South Africa (Matikinca et al., 2020; Enqvist et al., 2022).

However, the failure of the government to provide water to communities has resulted in the rapid increase of SMs, particularly in urban South Africa. The shortage of basic services in urban South Africa has triggered collective action and mobilisation towards alternative urban futures, and water services in particular (Shunglu, 2022; Matikinca et al., 2020). In this regard, Enqvist et al (2022) contend that the transformative

function of SMs and ordinary people is crucial for urban change. In urban South Africa since the dawn of democracy in 1994, the resurgence of SMs around the issues of water governance and housing is evident. Water Homeless People's Federation (WHPF), Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign (WCAEC) and Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC) are a few examples of urban SMs that have emerged in South Africa in the struggle for better services, including clean water (Kiss et al., 2022; Matikinca et al., 2020).

A detailed discussion of some of the different SMs that have emerged water issues in South Africa will be presented at a later stage of this section. The problem of water governance in post-colonial South Africa has been characterised by the weak financial and technical capacity of local authorities to provide urban services. SMs have been challenging conventional water governance approaches through promoting alternatives (Kiss et al., 2022; Tyhotyholo & Ncube, 2025). Putting it differently, there is another form of governance that has been increasing in post-colonial South Africa. Due to the failure of the state to provide water equitably, ordinary people, through grassroots movements, pool resources and skills to install infrastructure, including water, roads, and sanitation, particularly to the urban poor in South Africa. In the post-independence urban South Africa, such SMs have been common and active in the struggle for better service delivery (Shunglu, 2022; Matikinca et al., 2020).

In South Africa, one of the key factors that has resulted in the rise of SMs in water governance is urbanisation. In post-apartheid South Africa, urbanisation has intensified. This was partly a result of the removal of the colonial and apartheid legislation and policies that preserved the urban spaces of South Africa for the white race only (Omotayo et al., 2021). The advent of democracy meant that the majority of the black population, that was previously deprived of the right to the city was free to move to the urban spaces of South Africa (Harry & Malepane, 2021; Tyhotyholo et al., 2022). This has contributed to various urban challenges, like the shortage of clean water. It is against this background that we have seen the rise of SMs in areas such as water governance, pressuring the government to deliver water to the disadvantaged population in the post-independence urban South Africa (Shunglu, 2022). It is now important to turn the focus to some of the different SMs that have emerged around the challenge of urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa.

2.12.1 Water Homeless People's Federation

The Water Homeless People's Federation (WHPF) has been formed to cultivate and promote another alternative for effective water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa (Kiss et al., 2022). SMs, including the WHPF, have been established because of the failure of the state to provide basic services like water to the poor population across South Africa. Against this backlog, according to Bell et al. (2022), the WHPF aims to advocate for the rights of the poor people, particularly regarding water services. Through its interactions with government institutions, including urban municipalities, the WHPF has played a crucial role in providing clean water, especially to the poor and marginalised groups in South Africa.

The WHPF is entangled with the urban poor in the struggle for effective water governance marked by equal access to clean water in the post-independence South Africa (Kiss et al., 2022). As one of the prominent SMs in the fight for effective water governance, the WHPF has emphasised the importance of fostering local democracy through promoting principles such as community participation in the provision of water services (Finkeldey, 2022). Suffice to assert that the role of the WHPF in water governance has somehow produced significant outcomes, with some of the urban poor gaining access to housing and water services. However, the lack of equity and policy coherence in water governance in urban South Africa remains one of the major hindrances that continue to deter the provision of water (Storey, 2021).

2.12.2 Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign

The Western Cape anti-eviction campaign (WCAEC) emerged during the year 2001 (Storey, 2021). The movement was formed to fight water cut-offs and evictions around Cape Town's poor communities. This social movement is made up of diverse organisations grounded in grassroots struggles from Cape Town's poor and marginalised areas (Matikinca et al., 2020). WCAEC struggles must be understood in the context of a shift in local government's provision of water and electricity to a cost recovery policy, which is backed by threats of disconnection to defaulters (Finkeldey, 2022). The WCAEC, as "an important oppositional voice in local politics in Cape Town, has joined together to intervene and often disrupt citywide policy and public discourse on equity and socio-economic rights by challenging post-apartheid service delivery and the cost recovery stance" (Bell et al., 2022:22). Since its establishment, the WCAEC has been a voice of the poor and marginalised urban residents in Cape Town,

especially in water delivery. The interaction between the government, the City of Cape Town, and the WCAEC in water governance is typified by contestations and alliances. However, through the works of the WCAEC in collaboration with the City of Cape Town council, some of the poor areas have received basic services like water (Storey, 2021). Despite such work, effective water governance remains a major challenge, manifesting in the shortage of water, especially in Cape Town's peripheral areas.

2.12.3 The Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee

The Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC) is one of the SMs that have managed to play a role in challenging the state power and promoting community-based governance approaches. The SECC is composed of mostly urban poor, unemployed individuals especially the youth and pensioners united in the struggle for better service delivery (Storey, 2021; Bell et al., 2022). While the original objective was to fight for the provision of affordable, and in some cases free, electricity to poor Soweto residents, the SECC has extended its scope to cover basic services such as water and housing. In urban water governance, the SECC has challenged the government to promote the role of the community in the formulation and implementation of policies in urban South Africa (Bell et al., 2022). Through grassroots mobilisation, the SECC has assisted some of the poor residents around Soweto to gain access to clean water and electricity.

2.12.4 The Anti-Privatisation Forum

The anti-privatisation forum (APF) is one of the SMs that have influenced the processes of water governance in the post-independence South Africa (Finkeldey, 2022). The APF was established in 2000 with "the aim of searching for answers from the working class who had limited access to basic goods and services and whose livelihoods had been threatened by retrenchment and cost recovery" (Kiss et al., 2022:141). The APF was formed to fight against the privatisation of public services in South Africa. These SMs have played an important role in the provision of basic services such as water, particularly to the urban poor in South Africa. Through challenging the existing government approaches to water governance, APF has provided some viable water delivery alternatives (Finkeldey, 2022).

As opposed to the top-down approach to water governance normally associated with the government, APF has managed to promote a community driven water governance

characterised by the role of the urban poor in the provision of water in the post-independence South Africa. Despite some challenges, including a lack of funds and political interferences, APF has contributed to urban transformation typified by the shift of power from the state to the urban poor, especially in water governance (Millington & Scheba, 2021; Kiss et al., 2022). As articulated in the ensuing section, the interaction between SMs and the government in water governance in urban South Africa has been mainly marked by contestations and alliances. Through social movements, ordinary citizens have challenged the existing government approaches to water governance and promoted the role of communities in the provision of water.

2.13 Contestations, Contradictions and Alliances in Water Governance

As already asserted in the preceding sections, providing water to urban communities is a constitutional responsibility of government institutions, including municipalities in South Africa. However, the dominance of urban SMs has contributed to the reconfiguration of power, with poor urbanites playing an important role in water governance (Millington & Scheba, 2021). “The delivery of basic services, such as water in urban South Africa, resembles a struggle. It is a struggle waged by the urban poor on many fronts: political, economic, internal and external” (Shunglu et al., 2022:25). SMs are entangled in deeper political contestations in which water governance has largely become a political process characterised by tensions and alliances between the state and the poor masses across urban South Africa (Enqvist et al., 2022). Water governance challenges in post-independence South Africa are evidenced by the exponentially growing number of the urban population living in poor conditions. The reality is that the life of the majority of the urban population, especially the disadvantaged, is hard and challenging. Many residents in urban spaces have opted to participate in violent protests and illegal land invasions as a response to the serious problem of poor service delivery in South Africa (Kasker, 2024; Murray et al., 2023). Despite the economic challenges facing the post-apartheid South Africa, urban SMs have been mobilising and pooling resources for water provision to local communities.

Despite the strength of SMs in challenging existing water governance approaches in urban South Africa, it is the internal struggles that have been presenting some major hindrances (Enqvist et al., 2022; Murray et al., 2023). Putting it the other way, poor

leadership and corruption are the key challenges to the effectiveness of SMs in water governance in urban South Africa. To be precise, most of the existing urban SMs have been weakened or constrained by weak and corrupt leadership (Finkeldey, 2022). It is important to emphasise the fact that these challenges within SMs are detrimental to the urban poor entangled in the struggle for basic services such as clean water. Furthermore, in the quest for effective water governance, SMs have formed alliances with existing political parties in South Africa (Millington & Scheba, 2021). The challenge regarding such a relation is that SMs usually become vulnerable to political manipulation. In some cases, this normally changes the identity and mission of SMs as politics becomes the focal point of such co-operatives.

The existing literature shows that SMs face significant challenges in their pursuit of effective water governance in urban South Africa (Storey, 2021; Finkeldey, 2022). Such challenges include poor leadership and the weak financial capacity of SMs to work with the state and provide basic urban services to all people. However, the review demonstrates that these co-operatives have been largely effective in water governance in South Africa. Besides their influential role in water governance, SMs have pooled resources and provided clean water to some of the predominantly poor urban populations in South Africa (Murray et al., 2023; Kiss et al., 2022). The resurgence of SMs in water governance in urban South Africa has been marked by contestations and alliances between the state and the urban poor in the struggle for better service delivery, including water. For instance, the urban poor through SMs have challenged the existing government approaches and promoted community-based water governance.

The foregoing literature demonstrates that the phenomenon of urban water governance has been studied based on different perspectives. The literature shows that countries at the global level have developed and implemented various urban water governance models based on their context specific circumstances. However, the challenge of water shortages in urban spaces persists despite existing water governance models and strategies. The marginalisation of the urban poor in water governance policy formulation and implementation remains a major challenge that contributes to limited access to water services in urban low-income communities. This is compounded by the government's weak financial and technical capacity to implement water policies and strategies. In the global south and in African cities in

particular, the problem of European colonialism has left a devastating legacy of water access inequalities.

The state driven water governance paradigm seems to be incapable of reversing the aftermath of European colonialism through fostering access to water by the majority of the urban poor in cities like Cape Town. This is justified by the preponderance of the African people, who, despite the official end of the colonial rule, remain in peripheral urban areas characterised by squalid living conditions with limited access to basic services like housing and water. While the foregoing literature helps one understand the phenomenon of urban water governance from a global perspective, it fails to capture the role of structural configurations in urban water governance. To be sure, there is limited information on how structural configurations influence the process of urban water governance in South African urban spaces like Cape Town. This thesis seeks to fill gap in urban water management literature by investigating the influence of structural configurations on the governance of urban water supply in South Africa, particularly in Cape Town.

2.14 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the discourse on various theories that inform the study. This has been done through discussing the relevance of key insights drawn from different theories, such as structuration and co-design. The chapter also discusses some pertinent existing literature on the phenomenon of urban water governance. The review of the literature in this chapter has demonstrated that urban water governance without proper coordination between different actors, such as the state and communities, can lead to a cul-de-sac marked by the urban water policy implementation failure at the grassroots level. The chapter has revealed that despite the official end of European colonialism in most African countries, including South Africa, inequalities in water access remain a major challenge particularly for the urban poor across cities. It has been argued that there is an indispensable need to challenge and reverse the aftermaths of European colonialism through radical community centred urban water governance in African cities such as Cape Town. The ensuing chapter discusses the salient methodological arrangements employed to examine the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: EXPLICATING THE SALIENT METHODOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE STUDY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has analysed some of the key theories and concepts germane to urban water governance research in the post-apartheid South Africa. This third chapter explicates the salient methodological conformations that informed the process of sampling, data collection and data analysis to understand the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in South Africa, particularly in Cape Town. To facilitate an unencumbered reading, the chapter begins by presenting the research onion diagram depicting some of the central elements of the research process (Saunders et al., 2019). The research onion provides a logical flow of the main components of the research design process. The study adopted a qualitative research approach in which in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, life histories, documents analysis, archival research and purposive observations were used to collect data. This research approach was adopted based on data needs informed by the objectives of the study.

The chapter discusses the target population and sample universe from which the unit of analysis was drawn. Content and thematic data analysis techniques were used to interpret qualitative data. The former emphasises drawing meanings from texts that comprise the thematic issues being investigated. Content analysis was useful to determine the practicality of the thesis's main theoretical framework (structuration and co-design theories) in understanding the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water services in Cape Town. The latter was crucial to search for recurring ideas or topics in textual data, such as interview transcripts conducted with various urban water governance actors in Cape Town. The chapter further explains how the findings of the study have been presented. It also discusses ethical considerations by dissecting how the researcher has preserved data integrity and handled fieldwork.

3.2 A Model for Research Design

The diagram below demonstrates a research design framework that can be used for any study. According to Saunders et al. (2019), the diagram below, which is known as the research onion, is important to guide researchers in carrying out their studies, especially in the fields of social sciences. The research onion presents a logical flow of the research process, starting from the research philosophy to data collection instruments and data analysis techniques.

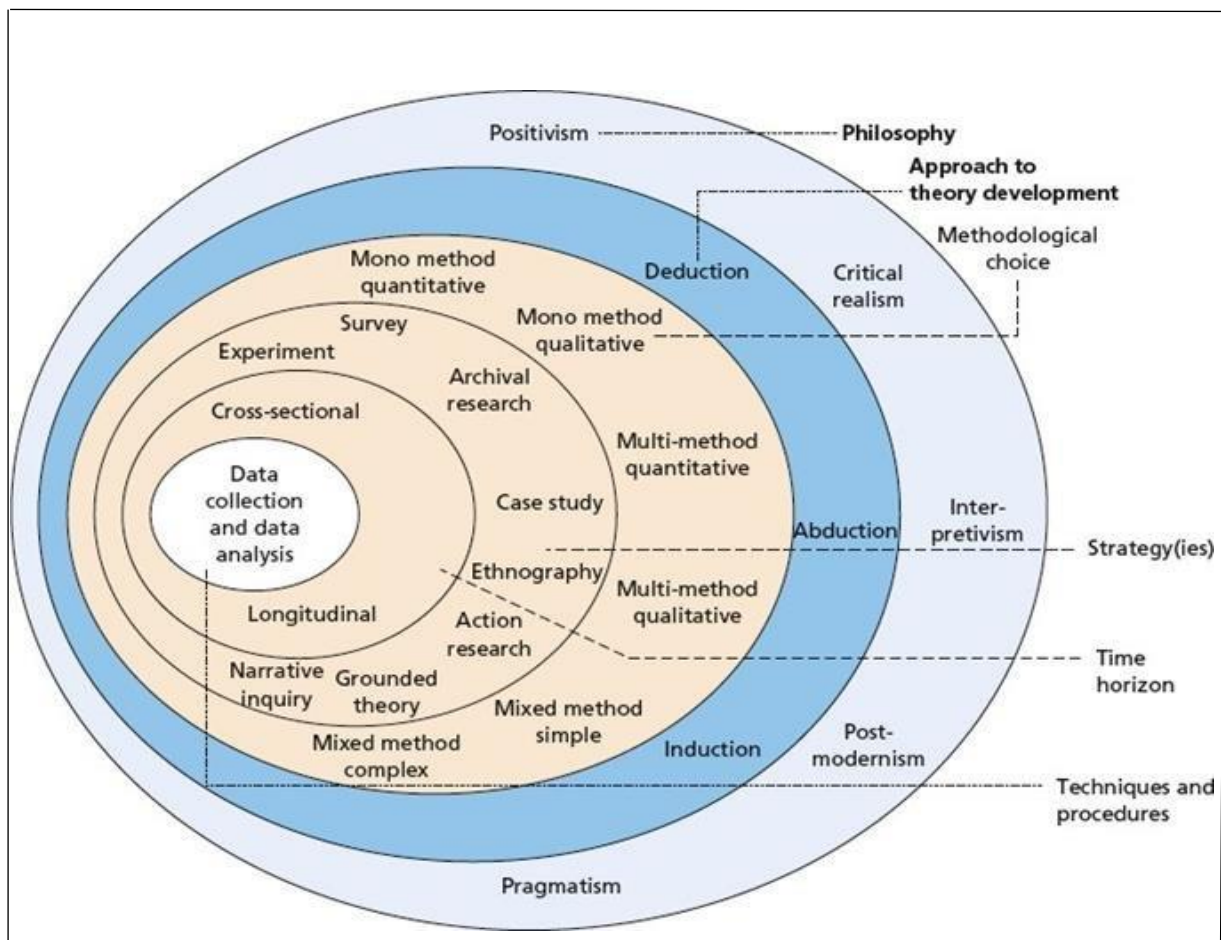


Figure 2: The Research Onion (Source: Saunders et al., 2019).

As shown in the above diagram, the research onion consists of six layers that depict the research process. The layers of any research according to Saunders et al. (2019) can be encapsulated as (a) 'Philosophy of the research which could be positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, post modernism or pragmatism'; (b) 'Approaches to theory development which may be induction, deduction or abduction'; (c) 'Methodological choices such as the mono-quantitative method, mono-qualitative method, multi-qualitative method, multi-quantitative method, mixed method-simple

and mixed method-complex'; (d) 'Strategies such as an experiment, a survey, archival research, a case study, an ethnography, action research, grounded theory and narrative inquiry'; (e) 'Time horizon capturing the timeframe of the research such as a cross-sectional study or a longitudinal study'; (f) 'Techniques and procedures for collecting and analysing data'.

However, according to Poshai (2022), the research process can be different depending on various factors, and these can include the aim, objectives of the study and the phenomenon to be investigated. Because of such different factors, researchers usually implement the framework of the research onion in various ways. It suffices to mention that the nature and central questions of the study determine the manner in which the researcher can apply the framework of the research onion (Saunders et al., 2019; Poshai, 2022). Based on the framework of the research onion, these are the layers that follow.

3.3 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is a combination of guiding congruent principles and concords regarding how knowledge can be generated in research. It describes a system of ethos about social reality and how the external world can be viewed and understood (Saunders et al., 2019; Neuman, 2014). This study adopted interpretivism as the research philosophy. Interpretivism suggests that a phenomenon can be better understood by considering the context from which it arises (Roestenburg et al., 2021). Interpretivism, also known as constructivism, postulates that every interpretation is context-bound, and researchers should promote an interactive approach in understanding a social phenomenon (Neuman, 2014). Interpretivism suggests that meaning is subjective, and researchers should promote an interactive process with participants to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. This research philosophy has guided the researcher in selecting key informants, data collection techniques, and in the analysis of the views and opinions of the research participants regarding the influence of structural configurations on water governance in urban South Africa, specifically in Cape Town. As part of the research philosophy, the researcher should explain the ontological and epistemological standpoints of the study (Roestenburg et al., 2021).

Ontology can be understood as a concept that refers to reality or the science of existentialism. In research, ontology is concerned with that which constitutes reality in the worldview of the researcher (Neuman, 2014). Thus, the ontological stance of this study is nominalism; this is the conjecture that the truth about social reality is embedded in the experiences of different stakeholders partaking in South African urban water governance, particularly in Cape Town. Therefore, the study dismisses the claim to universality of social experiences and the plausibility of a Platonist's thought that abstract forms are more fundamental than material conditions. This thesis argues that there is a dialectical relation between abstract forms and material conditions of the urban poor in Cape Town.

The thesis critiques theory through material conditions of the urban poor entangled with elite authorities in the struggle for water access in Cape Town. As a result, an interpretive study has been undertaken to investigate how the decisions and actions of urban water governance actors are influenced by structural configurations in Cape Town. In line with this, the thesis adopted an anti-positivist epistemological stance. Epistemology entails "assumptions on what creates adequate, binding and genuine knowledge, and how social researchers can transfer this knowledge to others" (Burrell & Morgan, 2016:241). Epistemology in this study refers to the methods employed to generate knowledge about the process of water governance and how it is influenced by structural configurations in urban South Africa, using an interpretive case study of Cape Town.

This thesis follows an epistemological approach using participatory data collection procedures, such as in-depth interviews with government officials in Cape Town and focus group discussions with various urban water governance actors, such as communities. Interpretivism promotes an interactive study in which research participants, together with the researcher, become entangled in social inquiry to get a deeper understanding of a particular phenomenon (Neuman, 2014). It is precisely these elements of the interpretive research paradigm that have enabled the researcher to inquire together with various urban water governance actors about the phenomenon under study. To be sure, interpretivism has offered the possibility of the researcher and research participants investigating together the influence of structural configurations on water governance processes in urban South Africa generally and in Cape Town in particular.

One of the central premises of the interpretive research paradigm is that context is imperative to understanding any social phenomenon. This means that interpretation should consider the context from which a particular social phenomenon arises. Interpretivism suggests that any interpretation and understanding without anthropological and historical grounding is bound to fail (Neuman, 2014). Thus, guided by such propositions, in interacting with key informants and making sense of the collected data, the researcher has considered the context of urban water governance in Cape Town. Historical developments in South Africa were deemed fundamental to understanding the influence of structural configurations on water governance in Cape Town.

As a result, this research was conducted with considerations of anthropological-historical groundings. This enabled the researcher to gain a deeper, context-based understanding of the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in South Africa, particularly in Cape Town. According to some proponents of the interpretive research paradigm, such as Creswell (2014) and Gadamer (2013), ahistorical interpretation and understanding of social phenomena is both hermeneutically vacuous and ethically untenable. Hence, this thesis appreciates the context in which the dynamics characteristic of the urban water governance processes arises in the post-apartheid South African cities like Cape Town.

Despite its fundamental strengths in analysing the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town, the interpretive research paradigm has its own inherent limitations. In this regard, because of its emphasis on subjective human creation of meaning, interpretivism can lead to bias conclusions drawn from research findings (Neuman, 2014). Furthermore, researchers usually face some difficulties in analysing data generated based on interpretivism. The reason being that such data turn to be out vast and highly influenced by the subjective standpoints and beliefs of the research participants. Research findings achieved through interpretivism cannot be generalised to other contexts as each case is unique (Roestenburg et al., 2021). In the process of interpretation, the notion of prejudices normally comes into play. "Prejudices in part consist of the fore-understanding concerning the subject matter of interpretation and the fore-conception and meaning derived from the language used concerning the content of understanding" (Gadamer, 2013:112).

Prejudices also cover “the purpose and the interest under whose influence the interpreter conducts research in the human sciences” (Gadamer, 2013:112). This means that interpretivism can lead to the susceptibility of social research to injecting presumptions and fore understanding during the data analysis process. These are some of the shortfalls of the interpretive research paradigm. However, the complex nature of urban water governance and the subsequent provision of water to all people in post-apartheid South Africa have necessitated an interpretive research paradigm. Interpretivism was considered imperative for this study because it created the possibility of understanding how the process of urban water governance is influenced by the structural configurations embedded in South African urban councils such as Cape Town. The study is inductive in nature and thus employed a mono-qualitative research approach as explained below.

3.4 Research Approach

In the research onion depicted and discussed above, Saunders et al. (2019) show that there are three different research approaches, namely deduction, induction and abduction. The deductive research approach involves using a top-down method, in which researchers begin with a general idea and then test it through empirical observations. An inductive research approach is a bottom-up method, in which researchers start with empirical observations to develop or refine concepts or models (Creswell, 2014). On the other side, the abductive research method combines the strengths of both deductive and inductive approaches to investigate a particular phenomenon of interest. This study has adopted an inductive research approach as the focus is on understanding social experiences and views about the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town. Inductive research approach “entails the collection and analysis of data to either develop a new theory or a new way of understanding social reality” (Saunders et al., 2019:141). However, worth mentioning is the point that this study is not concerned with formulating or developing a new theory. The study is concerned with analysing how the decisions and actions of different urban water governance actors are influenced by structural configurations embedded in South African urban councils like Cape Town.

The study adopted a mono-qualitative approach to analyse the influence of structural configurations on South African urban water governance, particularly in Cape Town. The study has focused on the nature and context of the water governance process

and how it is shaped by structural configurations embedded in urban South African councils like Cape Town. The thesis is mainly concerned with an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon under investigation, rather than producing a representative sample. Creswell (2014) asserts that, contrary to quantitative research, which focuses on ensuring a representative sample, inductive qualitative research emphasises the extensive analysis of the research problem in a natural setting. Understanding the dynamics that characterise the influence of structural configurations on water governance in urban South Africa, particularly in Cape Town, requires a qualitative approach. This is because the dynamics and characteristics of urban water governance are mainly associated with historical developments (Millington & Scheba, 2021). Therefore, this narrative form of research has provided an in-depth understanding of the water governance process and how it is influenced by structural configurations in Cape Town, considering the South African socio-political context.

Qualitative studies allow research participants to respond to questions in the form of words and narratives that subjectively and non-numerically explain the phenomenon under study. Researchers can gather vast amount of information in such interactions with their key informants (Saunders et al., 2019). Qualitative studies provide an opportunity for researchers to study their topics of interest in a natural setting. The qualitative research approach was adopted in this study because it allowed the researcher to study the process of urban water governance and how it is influenced by structural configurations embedded in the Cape Town council in a natural setting through interacting with various key informants, including communities. It is through a qualitative research approach that the researcher managed to gather extensive and diverse views regarding the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town. This research approach has permitted key informants for this study to express their opinions and concerns in relation to water access processes in a detailed manner. In this study, the qualitative method has allowed the researcher to analyse and understand how the decisions and actions taken by urban water governance officials are predetermined *ab initio* through rules and regulations embedded in urban councils like Cape Town.

Despite its strength and cogent approach in social inquiries, the qualitative research method has been indicted for a lack of objectivity. For instance, Roestenburg et al. (2021) argue that because of its emphasis on context-bound interpretation, the

qualitative research approach can lead to bias in research findings. This objection further points out that the centrality of the researcher in the process of data collection and analysis can greatly influence the results. The main concern here is that the researcher’s presuppositions and fore understandings can affect the validity of the research findings and conclusions drawn from a qualitative study.

However, to deal with such objections and shortfalls of the qualitative inquiry, the researcher has used various strategies to ensure credibility of the research findings. Such strategies included verification of research participant’s responses to the interview questions through asking questions like; is this what you mean? Can you elaborate on your answer? This was done to ensure that the researcher clearly understands the responds of the key informant during an interview. In general, the qualitative research approach has enabled the researcher to address all of the research objectives. It has allowed for an understanding of the role and influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in urban South Africa generally and particularly in Cape Town. Before delving into the research design of the study, the table below encapsulates some of the key elements of a qualitative research approach as applied in this thesis. The table demonstrates the way in which such features of a qualitative research approach formed the basis for this thesis.

Table 1: Characteristics of a Qualitative Research Approach

Focus	Qualitative Research	Relevance to this thesis
Philosophy	Interpretivism, a context-bound approach to interpreting and understanding social phenomena.	Interpretivism has guided the researcher in selecting key informants, data collection techniques, and in the analysis of the views and opinions of the research participants regarding the influence of structural configurations on water governance in the urban South Africa, specifically in Cape Town.

Objective	To gain a detailed understanding of the underlying reasons, beliefs and motivations.	The primary objective of this research was to analyse the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in urban South Africa, particularly in Cape Town.
Purpose	To understand the why, how, the process and the influences or contexts. It unpacks the key mechanisms explaining/affecting the outcomes of the process.	Structural configurations, such as codes of conduct and hierarchical authority structures embedded in South African urban councils, particularly in Cape Town, have a direct influence on the processes of urban water governance. Institutional features, such as the hierarchy of authority, have contributed to serious delays in the implementation of urban water policies —a situation that This situation has led to poor water access in low-income communities of Cape Town.
Data	Data are words (called textual data).	The researcher used data that was collected from key informants. This was data was in a form of words, views and expressions regarding the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town.
Target Population	Small number of participants or interviewees selected purposively and referred to as participants.	An interpretive case study was used to understand the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town. The study site was Cape Town's low-income communities, and the research participants included government officials,

		policy analysts, water experts and community residents.
Data collection Methods	Qualitative using in-depth interviews, observation, group discussions	The data collection methods for this study entailed in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, life histories, archival research, documents analysis and observations
Data analysis	Analysis is interpretative.	This study used content and thematic methods to analyse qualitative data concerning the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town.
Outcome	To develop an initial understanding, to identify and explain behaviour, beliefs or actions.	To provide a contextual and empirical knowledge of the influence of structural configurations on urban South African water governance, using Cape Town as a case study.

Source: Hennink et al. (2011: 16) as cited in Williams (2020:107).

As demonstrated in the above table, the qualitative research approach comprises various data collection instruments, which were vital in investigating the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town. Researchers “who are guided by the interpretive paradigm predominantly use qualitative methods to explore the experiences and perceptions of sampled key informants, enabling them to uncover the realities of their research interests” (Roestenburg et al., 2021:121). The main purpose of qualitative research is to gain a rich and complex understanding of people’s experience. While the “qualitative research approach leads to the formation of a new theory, it also provides flexibility in terms of the chance to change the researcher’s previous viewpoints and understandings” (Neuman,2014:101). The preconceived understanding of the researcher regarding the process of urban water

governance and the role of structural configurations in urban transformation in general was changed. This was due to the comprehensive and flexible nature of the qualitative research approach applied in this study. The research design of this study is discussed in the following section.

3.5 Research Design

As explained in the previous section, this study employs a mono-qualitative research approach. In line with this, the research design for the study is an interpretive case study analysed through qualitative methods. The case study research design focuses on examining either an individual case or multiple cases chosen by the researcher to study in detail the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2014; Roestenburg et al., 2021). In case study research design, the case to be explored can either be a country, province, city or an organisation that is considered to have attributes of the phenomenon to be investigated (Saunders et al., 2019). In this study, the researcher has adopted a case study research design to explore the process of water governance and its influence by structural configurations in urban South Africa, with a specific reference to Cape Town in the Western Cape Province. In this regard, the study has used the case of Cape Town because it is one of the largest cities in South Africa with a consistently growing population, contributing to the shortage of urban social services, such as housing and safe drinking water (Enqvist et al., 2022). Cape Town is a cosmopolitan town attracting people from different provinces in South Africa and beyond in search of employment opportunities (du Plessis, 2023).

The government has a constitutional responsibility to plan and configure the city to meet the demands of its people, especially regarding urban social services such as safe drinking water. However, the weak technical and financial capacity of the city to provide social services has compelled most of the urban poor population to live in informal settlements typified by severe water shortages that contribute to the spread of diseases associated with drinking polluted water (Millington & Scheba, 2021; du Plessis, 2023). This makes Cape Town one of the best social laboratories to be used in analysing sociological and political factors such as urban water governance. Furthermore, during the period from 2015 to 2018, this city experienced a prolonged drought that nearly resulted in what was known as day zero (Williams & Zacheous, 2022). During this period, the urbanites were under pressure and stress as the city ran out of water almost daily. While this was largely considered a climate related

phenomenon, it has reawakened the necessity for the government to devise effective water governance strategies in Cape Town (Ordor & Michell, 2022:15). It was thus important to examine the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town, and this was the focus of the thesis.

3.6 Target Population

The sample universe of this study is the urban councils as urban water governance institutions in South Africa, and the target population is Cape Town. This target population consists of policy actors, water administrators, non-governmental and community-based organisations, funding agencies and donor organisations, private sector and business community representatives and political officials like the Ward councillors. Engaging these actors created the possibility of capturing vertical and horizontal coordination, inter-institutional relationships, and conflict-resolution mechanisms that shape water governance outcomes in Cape Town. According to Silver (2004), there are no fixed rules regarding the number of research participants to be recruited for a particular qualitative study, as this typically depends on the research timeframe and the availability of resources to undertake the study. Creswell (2014) argues that, given the complexity and unpredictable nature of qualitative studies, it would not be useful to provide a fixed number of research participants from the start, and researchers should rather consider investigating until the point of saturation is reached. Considering the timeframe of the study, key informants were selected for in-depth interviews from the water and sanitation department in Cape Town. The interviews were conducted until the point of saturation, i.e., where the key informants give no new information. The focus was on gathering the views of people involved in the formulation and implementation of water governance policies and strategies in Cape Town. These are relevant key informants who possess important information regarding the role and influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town.

Furthermore, key informants for focus group discussions were also drawn from residents in Cape Town's poor townships. These townships have been marked by increasing community protests with central themes on inadequate access to basic services like housing and water. The intensifying process of urbanisation, coupled with the government's limited financial and technical capacity in Cape Town, has led to the swelling of informal settlements, including shacks and backyard dwellers, in these

impoverished townships (Williams & Zacheous, 2022). Violent community protests contributing to the damage of public facilities like public libraries and clinics by residents have become one of the serious challenges in Cape Town's poor townships (Enqvist et al., 2022). Commenting on this challenge, Millington and Scheba (2021) argue that one of the reasons for continuous community protests in Cape Town's low-income communities is the lack of communication and engagement between the government and residents.

Thus, it was important to analyse the process of urban water governance and how the Cape Town council engages with residents in urban water governance in these poor townships. The focus was on getting both the views of the residents who depend on public taps and those who have water taps inside their houses. This was done to ensure that diverse information regarding the phenomenon under study is obtained. Because communities may have limited information on institutional processes, such as the role of structural configurations on urban water governance, this aspect was being dealt with in the interviews with officials that are responsible for public policy formulation and implementation in Cape Town. The interviews with residents were mainly focused on the aspect of community participation in urban water governance, with the intention to find out how residents participate in water governance processes and the subsequent supply of water. In this regard, a cross-section of different socio-economic representation was explored from low to high income was in Cape Town until the point of saturation was reached.

3.7 Sampling Strategy

The study employed two non-probability sampling techniques, namely purposive and snowball sampling, to recruit key informants. In purposive sampling, "groups participate according to pre-selected criteria relevant to a particular research question" (Creswell, 2014:21). The researcher has purposively selected key informants to participate in this study, as stated in the previous section. These key informants were recruited from the Department of Water and Sanitation in Cape Town, specifically from the Reticulation Branch. The focus was on interviewing the city officials who are involved in urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water to Cape Town residents. These are the people who have vast information regarding the urban water governance process in Cape Town. The researcher has also recruited residents within Cape Town's low-income townships for focus group discussions to get their views on

urban water governance, particularly regarding the element of community participation. In snowball sampling, research participants select one another. In this regard, Saunders et al. (2019) maintain that in snowball sampling, “participants with whom contact has already been made use their social networks to refer the researcher to other people who could potentially participate in or contribute to the study”. Similarly, in this study, the researcher has asked participants to recruit other potential key informants to partake in the study based on the predetermined criteria as discussed above. The study has used both purposive and snowball samplings because they turn to be time effective and allows the researcher to reach the target participants based on the predetermined criteria (Creswell, 2014).

3.8 Data Collection Techniques

The ontological and epistemological stances of this thesis, as explained under the research philosophy section, require an interactive and dialectical process of knowledge production. Therefore, this study has made use of various qualitative data collection instruments, and these include in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, life histories, document analysis, archival research and purposive observation. These data collection instruments have been considered important for this study because they enable the researcher to gather vast and in-depth information regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Saunders et al., 2019). Urban water governance is a complex phenomenon that cannot be understood without its historical groundings (Enqvist et al., 2022).

Therefore, the combination of these data collection instruments has assisted the researcher in collecting qualitative data that provided a deeper understanding of the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in South Africa, particularly in Cape Town. Secondary data has been collected from the review of the literature, including books and academic articles on the area of urban water governance. To gather further insights on the phenomenon under study, the researcher has also reviewed documents such as government reports, policies and strategies on urban water governance, especially in Cape Town. The data collection techniques used in this study are discussed in detail in the next section.

3.8.1 In-depth Interviews

This study has made use of in-depth interviews to collect data regarding the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town. These are types of interviews in which the researcher meets one-on-one or face-to-face with research participants to discuss a prepared list of in-depth interview questions on a particular topic. Scholars such as Roestenburg et al. (2021) define an interview guide as consisting of “a listing of areas to be covered in the interview along with, for each area, a list of topics or questions that together might suggest lines of inquiring”. In this study, in-depth interviews were conducted to draw ‘expert’ and ‘non-expert’ views on the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in South African urban councils, like Cape Town. Water governance is a complex process involving various actors, including communities and political leaders.

Thus, in-depth interviews were vital to get the diverse views of these different urban water governance actors in South Africa and in Cape Town in particular. In-depth interviews were considered imperative in this study because they provide “researchers with insight into the individual and collective visions, imaginings, hopes, expectations, critiques of the present, and projections of the future” (Kruger et al., 2019:120). In this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with government officials, policy analysts, former and current mayors and councillors and other key informants such as community residents in Cape Town. These are various key informants who have provided crucial insights on how the process of urban water governance is influenced by structural configurations embedded in post-apartheid South African urban councils, like Cape Town. The following table depicts the research participates for this study by their category.

Table 2: Research Participates by Category

Category	Gender representation Female= F Male=M	Number of Research Participates
<i>Water and sanitation employees</i>	F= 8 M= 4	12

<i>Ward councillors and former ward councillors</i>	F= 1 M= 3	4
<i>Community leaders</i>	F= 3 M=7	10
<i>Community residents</i>	F=12 M=8	20
<i>Public policy analysts</i>	F= 2 M=2	4
<i>Total number of research participants</i>	F=26 M=24	50

Source: Author's construction (2024).

In-depth interviews for this study were conducted in five months starting from July to November 2024. During this period, about 30 interviews with different urban water governance actors such as former and current government officials, policy commentators and community leaders in Cape Town were conducted. The focus on these interviews was on the urban water governance process and how such a process is influenced by structural configurations embedded in South African urban councils like Cape Town. According to Kruger et al. (2019) and Neuman (2014:121), in-depth interviewing is a “reflective process that provides microscopic details of the phenomena under investigation, helping to expose what the researcher wants to know about the unfolding perspectives, opinions, suggestions, experiences and views of those involved in the investigated social interactions”. In this study, this has enabled an informative and participatory interaction between the researcher and various key informants to understand the process of urban water governance and how it is influenced by structural configurations in Cape Town. It was through in-depth interviews that key informants were able to articulate discursively the role of structural configurations such as institutional rules, performance sanctions, disciplinary measures and hierarchy of authority in Cape Town's urban water governance.

An interview guide consisting of questions that are directly linked to the research objectives of this study was developed. This was done to ensure that the interaction between the researcher and various key informants remained focused and responded directly to the objectives of the study. The design of the interview guide was done to

promote flexibility and allow research participants to express their responses in a logical way as determined by the themes of investigation. This was important to ensure that the interview focused only on relevant thematic issues. This also helped the researcher to accurately document the views of the different key informants. The interview guide was useful as it ensured that research participants can be able to provide their views freely and comfortable which created an aura of comfort and trust. During the interview sessions, questions were clarified to ensure that all key informants provided relevant responses.

Using the interview guide in this study was important as it allowed the researcher to be flexibly and develop sub questions during the interview sessions when necessary. Other interview questions were rephrased during the course of the interviews based on the emergence of interesting and crucial information regarding the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. Indeed, the multifaceted nature of the urban water governance process implies the difficulty of predetermining the factors that contribute to the failure of the government to promote effective water management in Cape Town. Furthermore, the interview guide helped the researcher to confirm and clarify, during ongoing interview sessions, some responses that appeared complex or unspecific. The interview guide created an opportunity for the researcher to arrange the collected data based on the central themes of the study.

The interview guide was written in two languages, namely English and IsiXhosa. This was done to allow research participants to share their views and experiences in relation to water governance using their home language when possible. According to Kruger et al. (2019), when using their home language, key informants turn to provide detailed responses during interview sessions. This normally creates opportunities to document and record the experiences and understandings of the research participants in their own language. This gave the researcher an opportunity to understand the process of urban water governance and how such a process is influenced by structural configurations such as the hierarchy of authority, institutional culture, disciplinary measures and performance incentives embedded in South African urban councils like Cape Town. Each interview session took about one hour, and these were held at the research participants' place of choice.

Most of the research participants, especially those who are full-time government employees, preferred that interviews take place in their offices during working days. Because their line managers were aware of this research and had granted approval, the research participants were able to allocate time for the interview without fear of being disciplined or punished. Due to workload and swamped schedules, some key informants, especially senior local government managers and councillors, requested that the interviews be done at their homes during weekends. This has proven to be fruitful as these key informants were able to dedicate much time to engage in an interview through sharing their insights regarding the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town.

Creswell (2014) contends that researchers should allow their key informants the freedom to choose the place or venue of the interview. This is vital as it normally creates an atmosphere of comfort to the research participants, paving for a productive and informative interview session. Consonant with this, Roestenburg et al. (2021:101) argue that the advantage or benefit of doing in-depth interviews is that the “interviewed person is more likely to express their views spontaneously in a relatively openly designed interview situation” In this research, the interviews that were conducted in the homes of the key informants turned to last longer than those done in the workplace. This was because, at their homes, research participants were free and dedicated more time to the interview, sharing detailed insights about the phenomenon of urban water governance in Cape Town.

One of the main challenges with conducting an in-depth interview is that it is time-consuming and arranging for face-to-face sessions can be expensive. But its potential in discovering diverse and vast information about the phenomenon of study is what has led to its use in this research. The researcher wanted to find and analyse different views of water governance stakeholders to develop a better understanding of the influence of structural configurations on South African urban water governance, specifically in Cape Town. As part of the introductory remarks of the interview, the researcher asked permission to take notes during the session, and a consent to record the interview was also requested from each research participant. While most research participants agreed to the recording of the interview session, some denied, insisting that they are not comfortable with being recorded. This meant that some interview sessions would not be recorded based on the research participants’ fear of being

recorded. However, this has not limited the data gathered during interview sessions, because where it was not possible to record extensive notes were taken. The notes and recordings from the interview were then transcribed for analysis. This study also used focus group discussions to collect data.

3.8.2 Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions (FGD) are another method used to collect data for this study. Roestenburg et al. (2021:124) define FGD as “discussions within a small group, moderated by a researcher, and oriented to obtain information on a specific topic”. The role of the researcher during FGD is to facilitate and ensure that the matters being discussed are relevant to the phenomenon of the study. FGD are used to collect qualitative data from a group of research participants simultaneously. Put differently, “FGD is a qualitative data collection technique in which participants sharing certain characteristics of interest with the researcher are gathered to discuss a specific topic of interest” (Neuman, 2014:120). Four FGDs were conducted with community residents from the low-income areas in Cape Town. This was done to get views about how communities participate in the process of urban water governance based on different social and economic settings. Each FGD consisted of about ten to fifteen research participants. Community residents suggested that these discussions be done during weekends because midweek, some people who can share detailed information regarding the subject matter are working. According to Creswell (2014), researchers need to allow research participants to choose the venue and time for discussions. This helps to build trust between the researcher and research participants, with a possibility of discovering extensive data for the study.

As a result, these FGDs were mostly conducted during weekends to accommodate some of the research participants who are working. The focus of these FGDs was on understanding the element of community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town. To be sure, the researcher sought to identify and analyse some of the key mechanisms that are used by the Cape Town councils to promote effective community involvement in urban water governance. These FGDs were held in community facilities such as church buildings and early childhood development centres. The researcher managed to approach the church leaders in these communities to seek a venue for these FGDs and as a result, four sessions were held in church buildings. Furthermore, the owners of early childhood development centres

were also approached to request a space for FGD and subsequently two sessions were held in these facilities. It was not difficult to recruit residents for FGD because the researcher is known in these communities, as he has done his master's research in the same areas. But the focus then was on the distribution of low-income housing, which also gave impetus for the present study to unpack and analyse the process of urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water services in these communities.

The FGD for this study were conducted between July and November 2024. Each session lasted about one to two hours. Even though the researcher intended to keep each FGD within a timeframe of an hour, some sessions lasted longer than envisaged because research participants were very participatory and active, providing insightful views regarding the practice of community participation in South African urban water governance, particularly in Cape Town. As part of the introductory remarks, the researcher explained to all research participants that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions. It was also stated that each person has a right to view things differently based on their own understanding. This was done to create an environment that will enable every participant to share their ideas and perspectives without fear of harassment by other members of the FGD. The interesting part of the conducted FGD is that key informants were able to comment and critique each other's views and contributions. This contributed to more data generated through the FGD.

To create a possibility of collecting balanced views, the researcher also ensured that research participants are given an opportunity to express their views equally. As a result, each research participant was given enough time to contribute to the discussion. The researcher maintained the same list of questions throughout all FGDs, and this was important to retain focus to the objectives of the study. The themes of the discussions were directly drawn from the objectives of the study. One challenge faced during these FGD was that some members would come late and the researcher would have to welcome them during the proceedings of the session. This resulted in some FGDs taking longer than planned. However, this had no greater impact on the sessions because research participants were understanding and cooperated quite well. Thus, the researcher managed to collect extensive qualitative data through these FGDs. Research participants provided rich data, especially about the aspect of community participation in Cape Town's urban water governance.

3.8.3 Life Histories

Life histories are associated with an interpretivist research philosophy, which considers reality as being subjective and multifaceted (Creswell, 2014). In this regard, life histories are one of the qualitative data collection methods mostly used in social sciences. This study argues that reality and knowledge can be constructed based on personal experiences of research participants through continuous dialogue. Life Histories delves into the individual and collective experiences of people. It is suitable for getting a comprehensive understanding of the research participants' life trajectories (Saunders et al., 2019). In this study, life histories have been used to collect data about the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town. This method was fundamental in getting the personal life experiences of community residents regarding urban water governance and the challenges that communities face in relation to water access in Cape Town.

The researcher conducted ten life histories with communities to discover some of the complexities, contradictions, continuities and changes that constitute the experiences of residents in relation to urban water governance and the provision of water services in Cape Town. Some residents have been staying in urban peripheral townships of Cape Town even before the dawn of democracy in South Africa in 1994. Therefore, through life histories, these residents were able to share their personal experiences regarding water governance and the challenges of water access in Cape Town communities. Life histories were used because they allowed the researcher to collect rich data about how individuals have participated in the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. This data collection method was considered because it created a possibility of understanding water access struggles in Cape Town at an individual and personal level. Life histories were considered crucial in capturing the tensions, contestations and alliances between communities and urban councils in Cape Town. It is through life histories that the researcher was able to understand how access and non-access to basic social services, such as water, affect the lives of the urban poor in post-apartheid South African cities like Cape Town.

3.8.4 Document Review

Another method for collecting data in qualitative research is document review. In this research document review was used to supplement the primary data. The use of document review saves time, especially when required documents are readily

available, freely and easily accessible (Silverman, 2011). Published and unpublished documents that deal with the topic of urban water governance and community participation in South African cities and beyond were analysed to get further insights. Scholars like Creswell (2014) observe that document review involves a researcher collecting and reviewing documents relevant to the phenomenon under study. The documents may be management or official reports, proceedings or minutes of meetings, or private documents. The use of document analysis in this research has allowed the researcher to delve deeper into existing insights about urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa and in Cape Town in particular.

In this study, the researcher has reviewed external and internal documents such as urban water policy, relevant textbooks, council water delivery strategic plans, annual water delivery reports, newspaper and journal articles to gain a better understanding about the process of urban water governance and how such a process is being influenced by structural configurations embedded in South African urban councils like Cape Town. These documents, buttressed by empirical qualitative data collected for this study, enabled the researcher to examine some of the key factors characterising the dynamic urban water governance process in post-apartheid South African cities such as Cape Town.

3.8.5 Archival Research

Archival research method uses primary source documents, archives and special collections. Archival documents may include various materials such as manuscripts, unpublished letters, photographs, maps, rare books, illustrations and digital text (Silverman, 2011). There is vast information found in archives that provides a historical account of water governance in South Africa. An archive is an institution storing records that fulfil three conditions: they were generated within the professional (not private) activities of a juridical or natural person; they are not necessary about current affairs; and they are of permanent value (Bosi & Reiter, 2014). Considering the *longue duree* fundamental history of urban water governance in South Africa during colonial and apartheid regimes, it was necessary to review some of the historical documents found in archives.

These documents provided important information about the historical development of urban water governance and the archaic legislation that regulated water access during

the implementation of European colonialism and the apartheid system in South Africa before 1994. These documents were accessed at the Western Cape Archives and Records Services, situated in Cape Town. In this study, archival documents played a crucial role in understanding the water conflicts and contestations that took place in Cape Town under the colonial and apartheid governments. It is such a historical account that aids in a comprehensive understanding of the perpetual contemporary water access inequalities in post-apartheid South African cities, like Cape Town.

3.8.6 Purposive Observations

Purposive observation is another data collection method used in this study. This is a type of data collection that involves gathering data through observing behaviour, events or noting physical characteristics in their natural setting (Roestenburg et al., 2021). The interviews conducted in the offices of research participants also provided an opportunity for the researcher to observe some of the key water governance guiding principles, as these are normally written on the offices of local government officials. Through the face-to-face interview sessions with government officials, the researcher was able to observe the culture, norms and standards that regulate the practice of urban water governance in Cape Town.

The researcher was also fortunate to attend some public workshops that focused on urban water governance and community participation within Cape Town. During these public workshops, the researcher was able to observe how government officials interact with local communities regarding matters of water governance and public service delivery in general. Having spent almost fifteen years as a resident and student in Cape Town, the researcher has, throughout the past years, seen how resident, particularly in low-income communities, engages with government officials regarding urban transformation and water governance. Since the inception of this study, the researcher has attended community meetings within the study area to observe and listen to the concerns of these communities concerning water services. This has allowed the researcher to gather some important information about water governance and the subsequent supply of water to Cape Town's low-income communities. The next section explains how qualitative data were analysed using different methods.

3.9 Data Analysis Methods

In qualitative studies, researchers use various methods to analyse primary data. Qualitative data analysis methods are useful in assisting researchers to interpret research participants' views and opinions to create meaning in relation to the phenomenon of study (Creswell (2014). The process of qualitative data analysis is a cycle that keeps on repeating in the sense that, in the process, "the researcher will notice new things and start thinking about such things and collect information, and this includes noticing parts that require one must go back to the preceding parts" (Neuman, 2014:120). In most cases, qualitative data were analysed in the form of natural language and explicitly expressed experiences of research participants to identify patterns tied to instances of the urban water governance phenomenon that was the central focus of investigation. The difficulty in analysing and understanding qualitative data is that the values and traditions of both the researcher and the research participants usually come into play and influence the results.

Kruger et al. (2019:27) suggest that qualitative data analysis is usually "affected by the researcher or participant values and most researchers often face a dilemma in deciding whether letting these two sets of values influence your interpretation is a good thing or not". This means that qualitative data analysis is an interactive process in which the researcher becomes part of the process. Values and preconceptions "inevitably guide or dictate reasoning and human action, but it is crucially important to acknowledge them and to reflect on how they may influence the truthfulness of research findings" (Kruger et al., 2019; Creswell, 2014:211). In this study, the researcher was aware of the claim that in the process of interpretation and understanding, prejudices relate to the fore-understandings concerning structural configurations and urban water governance in urban South Africa and in Cape Town in particular. This included the challenge presented by the fore-conception and meaning derived from the language used concerning the content of understanding. Prejudices also cover the interest under whose influence the interpreter conducts research in the human sciences.

In analysing primary data for this study, the researcher ensured that his preconceptions or personal values would not taint the nature of subjective inferences derived from participants. In the actual analysis, various techniques were combined to generate information about the influence of structural configurations on South African

urban water governance, particularly in Cape Town. The data analysis techniques employed included content analysis, actor analysis, the hermeneutic data analysis method, and software analysis, as explained below.

3.9.1 Content Data Analysis Method

Content analysis is a strategy used to draw meanings from texts that comprise the thematic issues being investigated (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). In this study, the researcher used a trio of content analyses, which are deductive content analysis, inductive content analysis and narrative content analysis. The deductive content analysis helped the researcher to determine the practicality of the theoretical framework of this study (structuration and co-design theories) in explaining how the process of urban water governance is influenced by structural configurations such as the code of conduct, hierarchy of authority and disciplinary measures embedded in South African urban councils like Cape Town. Inductive content analysis was used to break down the data from different secondary sources into different codes representing different thematic patterns towards producing meaningful arguments for this thesis.

In South Africa, the genealogy of the urban water governance process bends over backwards towards European colonialism and apartheid regimes prior to the dawn of democracy in 1994. Thus, the narrative content analysis was useful to unravel the historical trends of urban water governance and the subsequent persistent challenge of water access inequalities in post-apartheid South Africa. The researcher examined the collected data based on recurrent instances. These instances were then systematically identified across the data set and grouped by means of a coding system. Content analysis involved listening to the recorded interviews carefully and repeatedly to develop contextual meanings out of them. The developed meanings were organised and articulated as themes. Every time an interview response differed in meaning from another, a theme representing the meaning was developed. This way, the interview responses were all interpreted and categorised into fewer themes. The developed themes were then combined to form broad categories, which represented the variables of the study. The theme development and categorisation process was repeated continuously until all the qualitative data was adequately analysed.

3.9.2 Actor Analysis Method

Actor analysis is another data analysis method used in this thesis. According to Kruger et al. (2019), actor analysis is one of the prevalent data analysis methods that focuses on interpreting and understanding a complex process that involves different stakeholders in governance. This data analysis method was crucial in understanding the actions and interests of various stakeholders in the urban water governance process in Cape Town. Actor analysis was used to analyse and understand the actions of various actors that participate in urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa, specifically in Cape Town. Such urban water governance actors included government institutions, social movement organisations, non-governmental organisations and low-income communities. The researcher focused on analysing data that relates to how these actors interact in the process of urban water governance in Cape Town's low-income communities. This analysis was useful in providing insights into the contradictions, tensions and alliances that characterise the interaction of different actors in the urban water governance process in Cape Town's low-income communities. Through actor analysis, the researcher was able to explain the way the Cape Town council engages with communities to promote effective urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water, especially to low-income communities.

3.9.3 The Hermeneutic Data Analysis Method

In analysing qualitative data, the researcher used various techniques and that included the hermeneutic data analysis method. The concept of hermeneutics simple implies an "art and science of interpretation especially as it applies to text" (Gadamer, 2013:24). The hermeneutic method was used to analyse and understand the diverse views and insights of various key informants that participated in this study. According to Gadamer (2013), hermeneutics implies that tradition and history are never established or accurately interpreted, but the interpreter's ever-changing vista comprehends them. In analysing primary data through the hermeneutic method, the researcher was always aware of the fact that the interpreter is thrust into a world with a historical framework, which becomes clearer as *Dasein* (being there) grows older (Huda, 2020; Croce, 2022).

This means that in the process of data analysis, the researcher as the interpreter is inevitably composed of culture and traditions, which play an important role in the

process of interpreting primary data in qualitative studies. For Gadamer (2013), it is not enough to claim that the interpreter is composed of the historical world of culture and tradition. Still, it should be noticed that the interpreter is part of this historicity. This method was useful in analysing historical texts that provided a comprehensive understanding of the development of the urban water governance phenomenon in South Africa. The hermeneutic data analysis method was considered imperative in this study because it allowed for an adequate interpretation and understanding of the conversations between the researcher and the research participants. The hermeneutic method formed the basis for document analysis and interpretation of primary data in this study.

3.9.4 Software Analysis

The analysis of data in this study, using the above discussed methods, was aided by the *Atlas.ti* software. *Atlas.ti* software assisted the researcher in the analysis of extensive qualitative data that was gathered through in-depth interviews and various other instruments, as discussed in the preceding sections of this thesis. This software played a crucial role in generating deep insights about the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town from the collected qualitative data. The next section deals with how the researcher promoted the aspect of validity and reliability of research instruments to ensure that the findings of the study are trustworthy.

3.10 Trustworthiness and Credibility of Research Findings

Trustworthiness and credibility of research instruments are crucial to enhance the dependability of research findings, especially when dealing with vast and complex data collected with in-depth interviews and focus group discussions for qualitative studies. Scholars such as Vaismoradi et al. (2016) argue that the two concepts, namely trustworthiness and credibility, are sometimes confused with one another. It is therefore imperative for researchers to distinguish the role of these two concepts in promoting credible research findings. In this study, the credibility of research findings was ensured through an application of various trustworthiness and credibility techniques as explained in the ensuing section.

3.10.1 Trustworthiness

The concept of trustworthiness can be understood as the degree to which a research instrument measures exactly what they are supposed to measure. Trustworthiness implies the ability of a research instrument to produce findings that agree with theoretical or conceptual values (Saunders et al., 2019). Several techniques can be applied by researchers to enhance the trustworthiness of research findings. Such techniques include the content validity, the face validity, the construct validity, triangulation, thick description, member checking, peer reviews, external audit and the criterion validity (Saunders et al., 2019; Creswell, 2014). Some of these methods were used to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings of this study.

The researcher employed what Vaismoradi et al. (2016) refers to as content validity which is basically the degree to which each item in a designed research instrument accurately measures the variable it is intended to measure. In this regard, the researcher requested a senior lecturer at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Department of Public Administration and Governance, to critique and comment on the list of interview questions that were designed to collect data from various key informants. The senior lecturer, who is also conducting research on the phenomenon of water governance in post-colonial societies, including Zimbabwe and South Africa, was able to comment on the relevance of items in each research instrument. This helped in revising some of the interview questions before commencing with field work.

One of the methods used to promote the trustworthiness of research findings in this study is member checks or audit trails. Audit trails include the process of taking raw data, such as transcription and fieldwork notes, back to research participants for them to confirm and comment on the integrity and accuracy of the data (Neuman, 2014; Creswell, 2014). Audit trails are one of the methods usually conducted during the post-data collection stage to verify the truthfulness of research findings. Through this method, the researcher would take time to go back to research participants and request them to authenticate whether the information represents or captures a realistic account of the data that was previously provided during field work (Neuman, 2014).

However, researchers sometimes face challenges when using the audit trail method, as key informants who were interviewed would not be available for a second time

session. This may be due to different reasons, including a change of mind to participate in the study and swamped work schedules (Kruger et al., 2019). But in this study, a significant number of key informants were available when the audit trails were conducted. The researcher was able to revisit and verify the results of the study with the previously interviewed key informants. Through this process, some minor changes regarding the findings of the study were made based on the second interaction with key informants. The audit trails were crucial in enhancing the trustworthiness of the research findings.

Another important technique used to establish the trustworthiness of research findings in this study is peer reviewing. According to Kruger et al. (2019:120), peer reviewing “entails the evaluation of the research findings and reports by a knowledgeable person on the issue being investigated”. Positive peer reviewers provide constructive feedback on research assumptions and interpretations as well as on the methodology and research techniques used (Neuman, 2014). There were different reviewers who helped in improving the credibility of this research, and all the viewers were people with vast experience in research methodologies and the phenomenon of urban water governance in post-colonial societies like South Africa.

The peer reviewers of this research included some doctoral students in the field of urban water governance and public policy studies across South Africa and beyond. Throughout the course of this research, departmental research seminars were frequently held by the Centre for Water and Sanitation Research at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology to assist students and researchers in writing up their research. Lecturers and researchers have also provided oral feedback and comments on this research. This helped in shaping the analysis, interpretations and understanding of how the process of urban water governance is influenced by structural configurations such as the code of conduct and hierarchy of authority embedded in South African urban councils like Cape Town. Critical insights and constructive feedback provided by the supervisors throughout the proposal stages of this study until the completion of this thesis were also crucial in enhancing the trustworthiness of the research findings.

3.10.2 Credibility

Credibility can be understood as the dependability of research instruments in measuring the variables of interest that the researcher seeks to understand (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). In this study, an effort was made to establish the credibility of research instruments that were used to collect primary data concerning the relationality between the urban water governance process and structural configurations embedded in South African urban councils, like Cape Town. For example, the credibility of the interview guide was established through what scholars such as Neuman (2014) refer to as the intra-rater credibility technique.

As applied in this research, the intra-rater method included the researcher establishing the reliability by ensuring that items were specific and related to the objectives of the study. The researcher also ensured that the same questions were asked to all key informants throughout the data collection process. Efforts were also made to ensure the integrity of the items by making sure that during the interview sessions, research participants and the researcher understood the interview questions the same way. In this regard, the researcher frequently asked questions like - Is this what you mean. Key informants were also asked to indicate if they did not clearly understand some of the questions during the interview session. This was done to ensure that the researcher gathered only data that was relevant to the research questions.

3.11 Field Work Challenges

This study is centred on urban water governance with particular focus on how the existing structural configurations have shaped water policy formulation and implementation in Cape Town. Bureaucratic institutional processes have prolonged the data collection process, and the researcher had to be flexibly and adjust to government legal requirements for doing interviews with public officials in Cape Town. One of the challenges encountered during field work for this study is that some of the key informants were very busy and unavailable for scheduled interviews. The researcher had to rescheduled some of the interviews to ensure that the data collection process continuous despite such challenges. Some of government officials would suggest new dates for the interviews based on their busy work schedules and the researcher had to respect such time constraints. Other key informants including community residents declined the request to participate in the study citing the political

sensitivity of the topic of study and the research had to respect such decisions without trying to persuade them. But enough data was gathered to enrich the study.

3.12 Presentation of Research Findings

In qualitative studies like this thesis, researchers normally report and present findings like narrators who retell the experiences of others intending to educate, inform and explain to readers about a specific social phenomenon in the form of a logical story with distinct themes (Vaismoradi et al., 2016; Creswell, 2014). In consideration of this claim, in this thesis, the researcher has adopted a descriptive and explanatory approach to present research findings. The researcher has reported and presented the findings in a thematic and narrative form, describing and explaining the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in urban South Africa, with particular focus on Cape Town. To support an unencumbered reading and understanding, the researcher has also used figures and tables to present the findings of this thesis. The findings of this study are presented from chapter five to seven of this thesis. The next section explains how the researcher promoted and maintained research ethics in conducting this study.

3.13 Ethical Considerations

Urban water governance is an inevitable a state driven political process that involves numerous actors with different interests. Such an urban governance process attracts political attention, which raises ethical and security concerns for both the key informants and the researcher. This means that urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water, especially to the urban poor population, is a process marked by political struggles. As a result of such urban political struggles, the researcher had to make courtesy visits to local political structures before entering the community for field work. This study was conducted in compliance with the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) research ethics guidelines. Permission to collect data was obtained from Cape Town's Department of Water and Sanitation, specifically in the Reticulation Branch. Voluntary participation was promoted, and anonymity was assured from the onset. Research participants were informed that partaking in the study is entirely voluntary, and they were given the choice to withdraw from the study at any time.

Deception and harm were avoided through clearly communicating the purpose and objectives of the study before the interviews with research participants. When possible, interviews were conducted using the language of choice of the research participants. Rapport was cultivated, and trust was built so that people would feel free to share their experiences regarding the urban water governance process and how it is influenced by structural configurations in Cape Town. This was done by using the *lingua franca* of the key informants, as the researcher is conversant with some of the local dialects of the research participants. Confidentiality was maintained by safely keeping the information that was obtained from key informants away from people who were not part of the study. To maintain the anonymity of the key informants, no identification of names or job titles was made. Key informants were assured that, for purposes of ensuring anonymity, their names would not be divulged in the final research report.

3.14 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the research methodology adopted to analyse how structural configurations influence the process of urban water governance in urban South Africa, particularly in Cape Town. The chapter has justified the use of qualitative methods to investigate how urban water governance is shaped by structural configurations embedded in South Africa urban councils like Cape Town. The chapter has discussed how the researcher collected qualitative data using different methods, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, life histories, document analysis, archival research and purposive observations. The next chapter discusses some of the key legislation and policies that regulate urban water governance in post-apartheid South Africa.

CHAPTER FOUR
POST-APARTHEID URBAN WATER GOVERNANCE LEGISLATION AND
POLICIES IN SOUTH AFRICA: REFLECTIONS ON THE PERSISTENT URBAN
WATER SUPPLY CHALLENGE IN CAPE TOWN

4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter has discussed the salient methodological arrangements of the study. Cognisant of the structuration theory, which suggests a context-based analysis of a social phenomenon, the present chapter discusses the trajectory of urban water governance legislation and policies in the post-apartheid South Africa. The chapter responds to the first sub research question, stated as: What is the legislative framework for urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa? This is done through analysing some of the key legislation and policies that regulate urban water governance since the dawn of democracy in South Africa in 1994. These legislation and policies include the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996, the White Paper on Water Supply and Sanitation Services of 1994 and the Water Services Act 108 of 1997. However, prior to such discourse, the chapter starts by tracing briefly the evolution of the urban water governance phenomenon in South Africa before the implementation of European colonialism. It is such a genealogical overview that allows one to realise that the contemporary urban water governance system and its inherent water access inequalities in the post-apartheid urban South Africa can be best understood through an appreciation of this anthropological and historical grounding.

The chapter argues that with its genealogy bending over backwards towards European colonialism, the current legal framework for urban water governance fails to ameliorate the plights of the urban poor in relation to water access. With more emphasis on the role of different actors like communities, the chapter discusses the scope of water governance in the post-apartheid urban South Africa. This is followed by an analysis of the aspect of community participation in South African urban water governance. Such a discussion shows that the existing mechanisms for community participation in South African urban water governance are cut short through various issues, including political interference with administrative functions. The chapter further suggests that despite the formulation and implementation of the different water policies and

strategies in the post-apartheid urban South Africa, water access inequalities persist, especially in Cape Town's low-income areas.

4.2 Urban Water Governance in pre-colonial South Africa

Water research in South Africa turns to disregard the *longue duree* fundamental history of water governance during the precolonial period. This is done through presenting the history of water governance, starting from the encounter between the European settlers and the African people, which marked the beginning of the colonial project in South Africa (Kaziboni, 2024; Dladla, 2018). In this section, the thesis suggests that such historiography is problematic because it suppresses the African modes of relating to water and other crucial resources like land. The argument here is that African people, before the encounter with European settlers, had their own ways of relating to water and other natural resources, such as land. However, it is important to register the point that African people considered their lives inevitably intertwined with water. This means that in the African context, water has a spiritual meaning that makes it exist at the same time and level with African people (Foster & Gathu, 2024; Kaziboni, 2024). This places water in the same world of being with African people, where the other cannot exist without the other. The value of water had no difference from that of a human being because African people relate to water not only as a resource for consumption and production but also for some crucial rituals.

As a result, in precolonial times in South Africa, there was no written legislation and policies that regulated the use of water. Communities were using water according to their needs without any documented directives. Research shows that in precolonial times, the geographical area which, through colonialism, was later named South Africa was characterised by plentiful water under the authority of traditional leadership (Kaziboni, 2024). Traditional leadership was the only system of governance in precolonial South Africa. The forms of administration and governance were based on traditional systems headed by the Chiefs. According to Van Borek and Abrams (2023), during the precolonial period, the South African population was under the authority and leadership vested in hereditary leaders known as 'Chiefs'. This means that traditional authority served as a crucial social institution responsible for the governance of natural resources such as water. Traditional leadership as community based social institutions were accountable to their communities. Illustrating the fundamental role and responsibilities of traditional authority in the precolonial South

Africa, Msibi and Dlamini (2011) argue that these institutions gave effect to traditional life and played an essential role in the day-to-day administration of their territorial areas and the lives of African people.

The relationship between the community and the traditional leader was very important. Traditional authorities were responsible for the normal functioning of traditional communities. In doing so, traditional leadership was accountable to the community based on African customary laws, norms, values and standards (Shoko & Naidu, 2022). This shows that in precolonial times, in place was the governance by the people for the people. In such a context, water was accessible to everyone. Based on African customary laws and practices, the institutions of traditional authorities carried out various duties such as allocating land, managing natural resources, such as water, and administering other resource-related functions, such as conflict mediation. However, important to register here the point that in precolonial South Africa, no greater emphasis was put on water management. Reason being that based on their modes of being in the world, African people did not consider resources like land and water as objects available for being managed and controlled (Kaziboni, 2024). Instead, land and water were considered invaluable resources existing in the same world and level with the human species (Shoko & Naidu, 2022). Hence, there were no documented directives in relation to the governance of water in precolonial South Africa. Most of the contemporary insurmountable water related challenges are a direct consequence of the implementation of the European enlightenment bequeathing colonialism in South Africa, as demonstrated in the ensuing section.

4.3 Urban Water Governance in Colonial South Africa

The year 1652 in South African history marked the beginning of European colonialism and all the various forms of water inequalities and injustices. Tracing the genealogical development of the urban water governance phenomenon in South Africa, Enqvist and Ziervogel (2019:3), in an article titled *Water governance and justice in Cape Town: An overview* argue that the unlimited availability of water was the main “reason why the Dutch East India Company chose to settle by Table Mountain in 1652, despite better natural harbours further north”. The same authors continue to insist that “reliable streams were needed to replenish Company ships' drinking water, and to produce food to sustain ship crews”. This was the reason for the violent removal of African people from their own land- the initial stage of European colonialism in South Africa. This

moment of the encounter between European settlers and African people signified the start of the processes of land dispossession and water control. European colonialism and its Western enlightenment bequeathed reasoning and rationality contributed to the privatisation of water resources in South Africa (Kaziboni, 2024). Worth mentioning is the central premise of European colonialism which emphasises that African people lack all the qualities that makes one a complete human being. According to European colonialism and its sensibilities, African people are objects existing below the level of humanity. For Fanon (2001), European colonialism categorised African people as less human, existing at the “zone of non-being”.

Based on these premises, European colonialism denied African people the right to water access. This resulted in water conflicts with African people fighting for access to water in their own land. As history teaches us, such racial conflicts and tensions over water resources were marked by continuous annihilations of African people by European settlers (Shoko & Naidu, 2022). The result of this conquest was the formulation and implementation of European legislation and policies to control water against the African people in South Africa. This is supported by scholars like Van Borek and Abrams (2023), who argue that the European settlers established control by instituting laws to keep water sources from being polluted by their own settlers, and by driving away Khoikhoi cattle herders and other indigenous groups from the area by force. As discussed in the previous section, African people, before their encounter with European settlers, had never considered water as a resource that needed to be controlled to ensure its accessibility. However, such perspectives on water were overturned through European colonialism. Subsequently, the first reservoir was established on the mountain slopes above the city of Cape Town to secure a steady water supply in 1850 (Tewari, 2005; Enqvist & Ziervogel, 2019). This strengthened the European project of water control and privatisation in colonial South Africa.

Dissecting the problem of European colonialism and its aftermaths in colonial societies, including South Africa, the Nigerian scholar Ake (2019) argues that colonialism must be properly understood not as a historical event that took place and ended. On the contrary, colonialism needs to be considered as one of the epochal social movements like the French Revolution. Such epochal social movements are characterised by their capabilities to renew themselves throughout space and time. The effects of these epochal social movements are at the same time the cause of them

(Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009; Arowosegbe, 2008). Put differently, these epochal social movements can transcend the common understanding of the cause and effects where the latter is only considered a result of the former. On the contrary, the effects of the epochal social movements like European colonialism are also a condition or cause of the continuing colonial project in South Africa and elsewhere in the global South.

According to Ake (1991), such an understanding helps one to realise that, as a social epochal movement, European colonialism has a totalising framework. In other words, once implemented, European colonialism spreads and transforms everything, including people and social institutions, into its own image and sensibilities (Arowosegbe, 2008). Following this line of reasoning, it is not hard for one to realise that the implementation of European colonialism in South Africa transformed into its own enlightenment, bequeathing sensibilities to everything, including African people and their ways of relating to water. As a result of its totalising framework, European colonialism diminished and swept away almost all the African modes of relating to water that were explained above. Ake (2019) argue that after the implementation of the European colonialism in most parts of the African continent nothing traditional or original remained.

The central intent of European colonialism and its latter doctrine of apartheid was to exclude, *intoto* most African people (read urban poor) from all forms of governance in South Africa. During the apartheid period, which was nothing but the higher stage of European colonialism in South Africa, most of the urban poor population was excluded from the formulation and implementation of water governance legislation and policies. But as hitherto mentioned, this exclusion of African people in water governance was not considered a denial of a people to self-determination and right to water access (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009). European colonialism and its higher stage of apartheid in South Africa precluded *ab initio* the possibility of the urban poor population being capable of contributing meaningfully to any administrative processes, including water governance. Apartheid legislation, such as the Group Areas Act of 1950, was formulated and implemented to perpetuate racial water inequalities and injustices.

The history of South Africa since the arrival of the colonial settlers is the story of racial inequalities, land dispossession and water privatisation (Dladla, 2017a). Colonialism and the apartheid regime in South Africa were premised on one of the most deceptive

and unethical dogmas in the world, that is, white people are qualitatively superior to the indigenous people of Africa (Dladla, 2017a; Storey, 2021). Based on this problematic moral transgression, under the colonial and apartheid regime in South Africa, public institutions were designed to promote exclusively the needs of the white population. As most of the black population was deprived of the right to basic services, including access to safe drinking water, government institutions were structured in a way that advanced racial injustices (Mhlanga et al., 2022).

Commenting on the disturbing effect of colonial and apartheid regimes in South Africa, Hara et al. (2021) maintain that “the apartheid regime was based on policies that dispossessed the rights and resources of blacks for accumulation by whites. This was on a grander and more brazen scale than the colonial project”. The canon of colonialism and apartheid was institutionalised to maintain its perennial or permanent existence (Ramose, 2012; Mamdani, 1996). This means that the racial partialities and social-spatial ideas of the colonial and apartheid systems were embedded in water governance institutions like urban municipalities. The result of such an unjust governance system driven by the colonial ideology was an unequal standard of living in South Africa (Terreblanche, 2012).

Under the colonial and apartheid state, for instance, the white minority lived in better residential areas marked by the accessibility of safe drinking water. These areas were, by law and spatial planning, preserved only for the white population. On the other side, most of the indigenous people of South Africa were forced to live in low standard communities typified by poor service delivery and the shortage of safe drinking water (Ramose, 2012). This situation contributed to the proliferation of diseases associated with drinking contaminated water in black residential areas. It suffices to point out that water governance institutions under the colonial and apartheid state in South Africa were purposefully design and structured to deprive the majority of black South Africans of the right to water (Shunglu et al., 2022). This was precisely meant to maintain the racial motivated planning and water governance system, through, amongst other things, a systematic impoverishing of the indigenous people of South Africa. For example, this was made clear and straightforward by the then Minister of Native Affairs (Hendrick F Verw) under the previous white government in 1952 when he explicitly stated that:

“Black townships should be separated from white areas by an area of industrial sites where industries exist or are being planned. Townships must be large and must be situated to allow for expansion without spilling over into another racial group area. There should be suitable open buffer spaces around the black township, the breadth of which should depend on whether the border touches on densely or sparsely populated white areas” (Durban City Council, 1952:2).

The above excerpt demonstrates the racist planning system that prevailed under the colonial and apartheid governments in South Africa prior to 1994. This tyrannical urban planning framework was entrenched or institutionalised in government institutions such as municipalities. As a result, water governance was informed by such racial prejudices and oppressive government practices. According to Williams (2000), “it is the cumulative impact of these racially contrived planning frameworks that has resulted in islands of spatial affluence in a sea of geographical misery at the end of 20th century South Africa”. Colonialism and apartheid have contributed to uneven development characterised by a lack of access to urban services, including safe drinking water, particularly for most of the indigenous people of South Africa (Bond 1999a; Harry & Malepane, 2021). It is in consideration of these features of the racialised water governance institutions under the colonial and apartheid regimes that the present paper seeks to analyse the extent to which these institutions have been the subject of transformation in the post-apartheid South Africa.

Presented in this section is the trajectory of the racialised water governance institutions and the subsequent problem of the shortage of safe drinking water for most black people under the colonial government in South Africa. In the next section, we analyse the challenge of water governance and the water access inequalities under the apartheid South African government before the dawn of democracy in 1994. The review shows that most of the water governance institutions, including urban municipalities, were regulated through the colonial philosophy in South Africa. This situation contributed to the perpetual water access inequalities, especially in urban low-income communities where most of the African people and the urban poor in particular lived.

4.4 Urban Water Governance in the post-apartheid South Africa

In South African history, 1994 is widely considered a year symbolising the official ending of the colonial and apartheid epoch, together with its central affliction of white supremacy. This was a period during which most of the indigenous people celebrated the end of the colonial and apartheid regimes, marked by the birth of democracy in South Africa (Finkeldey, 2022). It was during the year 1994 that the nascent democratic government of the African National Congress (ANC) under the internationally celebrated leadership of the late President Nelson Mandela came into power. Amongst other things, the ANC government promised to transform public institutions such as municipalities to cater for the needs of all people, especially the disadvantaged urban population (Shackleton & Njwaxu, 2021; Tyhotyholo & Ncube, 2025).

This means that the post-apartheid South African government has committed itself in dismantling the legacy or culture of the colonial and apartheid regimes embedded in water governance institutions like municipalities. This was based on the understanding that water governance institutions under the colonial and apartheid regimes were design to cater for the plights of the white minority (Mhlanga et al., 2022). Hence, the government needed to develop new strategies to eradicate racial water inequalities in the post-apartheid South Africa. In addition, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996, particularly the Bill of Rights, provides for the water right. This means that the government has a constitutional responsibility to ensure the delivery of safe drinking water to all people, especially the urban poor (Shunglu et al., 2022; Tyhotyholo & Ncube, 2025). Therefore, institutional transformation for effective water governance was indispensably to achieve progressive provision of safe drinking water to all people in South Africa.

However, the task of transforming South African water governance institutions seems to be a multifaceted one. While the government has committed itself to changing the landscape and structural formation of all water governance institutions, there appears to be little progress, as most municipalities and departments are stuck in the past colonial and apartheid culture (Shackleton & Njwaxu, 2021). For example, despite the existing legislation and policies regulating water governance in post-apartheid South Africa, the administrative bureaucracies inherited from the colonial and apartheid ethos embedded in municipalities have constrained effective water provision to all

people. In post-apartheid South Africa, water governance has been hindered by various factors, including the institutionalised colonial and apartheid tradition (Landman, 2016; Harry & Malepane, 2021).

There seems to be a continuity of the previous colonial and apartheid systems entrenched in water governance institutions like urban municipalities. As a result of this problematic character of urban municipalities in post-apartheid South Africa, most of the population has no access to basic services such as safe drinking water. The struggle for service delivery, like safe drinking water in South Africa, has been marked by contestations and tensions between the urban poor and local authorities (Olley et al., 2024; Tyhotyholo & Ncube, 2023). The authoritarian nature of water governance institutions has deteriorated the sluggish provision of water to the South African urban poor population. Subsequently, the gap between the rich and poor in the post-apartheid South Africa seems to be consistently widening (Mhlanga et al., 2022). This thesis contends that there is a continuity of racial water inequalities that were professed by the white colonial and apartheid governments in South Africa prior to 1994. Such racial water inequalities are entrenched in South African water governance institutions like urban municipalities to advance the mission of the previous colonial and apartheid governments.

According to Scheba (2022), the South African government is facing some serious challenges in the quest towards the transformation of water governance institutions. One of the major obstacles limiting the technical capacity of the government to transform the water sector is the South African Constitution Act 108 of 1996, hereinafter referred to as the Constitution of South Africa (Ramose, 2002; Dladla, 2017a). As the supreme law of the country, the constitution of South Africa is one of the key orchestrated instruments used by the colonial and apartheid architects to keep alive their inveterate social order of racial water inequalities. Even though our purpose here is not to present a detailed critique of the South African constitution, it is nonetheless important to underscore some of the key points that are germane to the phenomenon of urban water governance and institutional transformation. The constitution of South Africa did not arise from the existential situations of the indigenous people of Africa. Contrary, the South African constitution has been founded based on Western jurisprudence and its contents are literally Eurocentric (Dladla, 2017a).

It is also imperative to assert here that the legitimacy of the South African Constitution is questionable even in Western legal and moral philosophy. For example, the Latin legal principle “*commodum ex injuria sua nemo habere debet*” which can be translated as “a wrongdoer or perpetrator should not be enabled by law to take any advantage from his or her actions,” implicates the South African Constitution. The South African Constitution stands in direct infringement of such legal principles through its provisions regarding the property right. Thinking about the unjust land dispossessions that occurred in South Africa since the arrival of the colonial settlers, one can ask the question: who had property to protect in 1994? Answers to such questions can somewhat nullify the assertion that the South African Constitution was developed based on African jurisprudence and non-racialism. The idea that the South African Constitution has been drafted to promote equality and justice is rather dubious (Terreblanche, 2012; Dladla, 2017a).

Nonetheless, in post-apartheid South Africa, the Constitution has been considered as an overarching model that provides the guidelines and standards for equality and justice. Hence, all water governance institutions, including urban municipalities, in performing their duties and responsibilities are bound to comply with the provisions of the South African Constitution (Shunglu et al., 2022). In this regard, the transformation of the water governance institutions must be constitutional and conform to Western standards. Put simple, the Constitution of South Africa functions as the all-encompassing framework for all government processes, including urban water governance. This is exactly how the colonial and apartheid cultures are preserved in South African water governance institutions (Arndt, 2018).

As a result of this problematic situation, in the post-apartheid South Africa, urban municipalities and various government departments are structurally designed to promote white supremacy and what Ramose (2002) has termed the “rights of the conquests”. It is from this context that the provision of basic services such as safe drinking water has remained a major challenge in the post-apartheid South Africa. The struggle for better service delivery has manifested in consistent tensions between municipalities and the urban poor at the grassroots level (Shunglu et al., 2022; Tyhotyholo et al., 2022). The static nature of water governance institutions has contributed to the shortage of safe drinking water for all people, especially the urban poor across South African cities (Matikinca et al., 2020). This is a challenge that

resembles the struggle for safe drinking water under the colonial and apartheid regimes before 1994 in South Africa. At this point, it is important to unpack some of the key legislation and policies that governs urban water governance in contemporary South Africa.

4.5 Legislative Framework for Urban Water Governance in South Africa

The official end of the apartheid system in South Africa in 1994 has provided an opportunity for the government to formulate various water governance legislations, policies and strategies. This period in South African history presented the possibility for restructuring and transformation of the urban water governance system under the democratic government. Key legislation, including the Constitution of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 and the National Water Act 36 of 1998, was formulated and implemented. This was an attempt to redress the legacy of the colonial and apartheid regime, particularly in relation to urban water governance (Kaziboni, 2024). However, the implementation of these water laws and policies has been characterised by various challenges, such as poor institutional design and a lack of technical capacity in municipalities.

4.5.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996

As the supreme law of the country, the Constitution of South Africa provide for the right to safe drinking water for all people. This means that the three spheres of government, namely national, provincial and local government should ensure a progressive provision of safe drinking water to all people, including low-income communities. Considering the huge water access inequalities left by the colonial and apartheid regimes the Constitution of South Africa is regarded to be the crucial tools for urban water governance (Adom & Simatele, 2024). For example, the current constitution of South Africa, specifically Chapter Two, the Bill of Rights, makes provisions for the right to access to water by all communities, including the urban poor (Rodina et al., 2024). The practice of urban water governance is centred on the South African constitution. In this regard, the constitution gives powers to the government to formulate and implement other key water governance legislation and policies.

However, for most of the urban poor population, the right to safe drinking water has not yield any benefits. This is because most the urban poor communities in South Africa have no access to safe drinking water and other basic social services like

sanitation (du Plessis et al., 2024). This has been attributed to lack of coordination between different urban water governance stakeholders such as the government and community-based organisations. But this thesis argues that the provisions of the South African constitution, especially concerning water access and the existential living conditions of the urban poor, stand in a dialectical relation. For most of the urban poor the right to water access in South Africa remains a rhetoric. Reason being that despite more than twenty-five years since the adoption of the South African constitution, poor water access continues to be a serious challenge for most of the African colonial people, especially the urban poor (Rodina et al., 2024). This is compounded by excessive water access inequalities and continuous marginalisation of the African colonial people in urban water governance decision-making.

To recall the argument made above, these challenges are partially a consequence of the South African constitution, which was formulated based on Western jurisprudence instead of the African existential experiences. Its spirits emanate directly from European bourgeoisie nationalist thought and sensibilities. This makes the South African Constitution one of the principal instruments of colonialism, protecting the rights of the European settlers or the rights of the conquest to use Ramose's wording (Ramose, 2001:21; Modiri, 2018:15; Dladla, 2017:5). In a nutshell, the Constitution stands in a dialectical relation with the promotion of the rights of African colonial people. Hence, its presence has not produced any tangible benefits for the previous disadvantaged population (read urban poor) in South Africa.

To be sure, before the adoption of the South African constitution in 1996, most of the African people and especially the urban poor had no access to formal housing and safe drinking water- a situation that forced them to live in informal settlements in the peripheral urban areas. More than twenty-five years after the adoption of the constitution, most of the urban poor population still has no access to safe drinking water and housing in urban South Africa. It is in the current constitutional democracy in South Africa that urban peripheral communities where most of the African colonised people lives are characterised by squalid living conditions with poor access to basic services like water and sanitation. It is such situations that make the sovereignty and non-racial character of the South African constitution rather dubious.

4.5.2 The Water Services Act 108 of 1997

The Water Services Act 108 of 1997 was crafted and promulgated by the South African government to give effect to the provisions of the Constitution. The primary objective of the Water Services Act was to set national standards for the provision of safe drinking water and sanitation services to South African communities (Rodina et al., 2024). It serves as a guiding legal document to the government, particularly municipalities, to deliver water and sanitation services to all people, including the low-income urban communities. Since its implementation, the Water Service Act has contributed significantly to changing the lives of the urban poor regarding water access. Despite this crucial progress, most urban townships in South Africa are characterised by inadequate access to safe drinking water and sanitation services. Urban municipalities are faced with immense water governance challenges that have contributed to water shortages in low-income communities (du Plessis et al., 2024). Notwithstanding the implementation of the Water Services Act in South Africa, the poor financial capacity of municipalities, compounded by a lack of public administration skills, has contributed to the deterioration of service delivery in urban low-income communities.

4.5.3 The National Water Act 36 of 1998

The National Water Act 36 of 1998 is one of the key legislations formulated by the South African government since the dawn of democracy in 1994. The central objective of the National Water Act is to provide for fundamental reform of the law relating to water resources; to repeal certain laws; and to provide for matters connected therewith (Oyelana et al., 2024). This Act was crafted to promote the right to water as provided for in the South African Constitution, specifically in Chapter Two (the Bill of Rights). The National Water Act places municipalities at the centre of water governance and subsequent water provision to all people especially from previous disadvantaged South African communities. While the Act considers the government as the main actor in urban water governance, it also articulates the need for municipalities to promote community participation (Mbana & Sinthumule, 2024). This means that communities should become key actors in urban water governance through participating in the formulation and implementation of water policies and projects. But the reality is that at the grassroots level there is lack of community participation in urban water

governance. This has contributed to the continuous public policy implementation failure marked by the persistent water shortages in low-income communities.

4.5.4 Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999

The Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) was promulgated by the South African government in 1999. The central purpose of the PFMA is to provide a comprehensive legal framework for the proper usage of public funds. PFMA has been regarded as one of the fundamental legislation to enforce local democracy marked by effective management of public funds for the benefit of all people, including the urban poor (Scheba, 2022; Shackleton & Njwaxu, 2021). The Act is premised on the assertion that to redress the colonial and apartheid legacy in South Africa, proper financial management is fundamental for effective service delivery, including housing and water. PFMA gives guidance to all government institutions, such as the National Department of Water and Sanitation and local government, on how to spend public funds to support the continuous provision of basic services (Scheba, 2022). The Act requires the South African government to promote transparency and community participation in processes that involves the usage of public funds.

The above implies that the PFMA promote active participation of local communities in water governance processes and the subsequent supply of urban water. This is done to ensure accountability and social trust in urban water governance. However, continuous incidences of corruption, irregular expenditures, fruitless and wasteful expenditures in the public sector demonstrate that the implementation of the PFMA in South Africa remains a serious challenge. The effects of such irregularities are devastating, especially in post-colonial countries like South Africa, where most of the urban poor remain entangled with elite authorities in the struggle for access to basic services, including water (Scheba, 2022; Mbana & Sinthumule, 2024). To give effect to the provisions of the South African Constitution and PFMA regarding the need for effective financial management in the public sector, the Municipal Finance Management Act was promulgated in 2003.

4.5.5 Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003

Promulgated in 2003 by the South African government, the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) provides a legal framework that regulates the management and usage of municipal finances. This is done to ensure that municipal finances are

managed and used in a manner that contributes to the effective provision of basic services like water to all people (South Africa, 2021). With its specific focus on local government financial management, the MFMA gives effect to the provisions made in the South African Constitution and PFMA regarding the need to promote proper usage of public funds. The MFMA emphasises democratic principles of effective governance such as accountability, transparency and community participation. The Act compels municipalities to embrace these principles in financial matters to ensure progressive distribution of basic services, including water (Oyelana et al., 2024).

The principle of accountability implies that government officials in general and the municipal level in particular should always be held accountable for their decisions and actions in relation to the usage of public funds. Transparency, on the other hand, remains crucial as one of the apparatuses to avert corruption and financial mismanagement at the municipal level (South Africa, 2022). These principles are important for any administrative process, such as urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water to all people, including the urban poor across cities. MFMA stipulate the necessity for municipalities to continuously engage with communities regarding financial planning and budget expenditures. This empowers communities to play a central role in financial planning and decision-making for effective urban water governance (Zondi, 2024; South Africa, 2022). But it must be asserted that the implementation of these provisions of the MFMA, especially in urban water governance, remains a major challenge. Continuous reports of municipal financial mismanagement and the absence of community participation in policy formulation and implementation are amongst the key factors that keep on impeding effective urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water to all people in the post-colonial South Africa.

4.5.6 Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998

Following the official end of the colonial and apartheid regime marked by the dawn of democracy in South Africa in 1994, the Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 was promulgated. The main purpose of this Act is to restructure and organise local government to support local democracy characterised by accessibility of basic services like water and electricity to all communities, including the previous disadvantaged (Van der Waldt, 2022). The Municipal Structures Act provides for the establishment of various categories of municipalities with their functions, which,

among others, are to ensure effective urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water to all people. The Act further prescribes the composition and functioning of municipal councils (South Africa, 2022). It gives powers to municipal councils to formulate and implement legislation and policies to facilitate urban water governance and the provision of water services. The Municipal Structures Act stipulates that municipalities are expected to advance social and economic development through fostering an integrated development approach.

This means that continuous interaction between different stakeholders in administrative processes, such as water governance, is considered crucial. The Act provide for the establishment of Ward committees with a primary objective to enhance community participation in local government affairs (Van der Waldt, 2022). Ward committees work closely with ward councillors to ensure that the needs of the communities in relation to water access and other social issues are included in municipal development policies and strategies. However, the lack of coordination between ward committees, ward councillors and local communities emerges as one of the serious hindrances towards effective water governance in the post-colonial South Africa. The Municipal Systems Act is another important legislation that regulates the urban water governance process and the resultant supply of water to communities in post-apartheid South Africa.

4.5.7 Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000

In the year 2000, the South African government enacted the Municipal Systems Act as one of the legislation that provides a comprehensive framework for the functions of local government. The primary objective of the Municipal Systems Act is to provide directives on how municipal functions and powers must be implemented. In this regard, the Act emphasises the fundamental principles of public administration such as transparency and community participation to promote effective provision of basic urban services like water and sanitation (Van der Waldt, 2022; South Africa, 2022). The Municipal Systems Act requires municipalities to embrace transparency through ensuring that information regarding developmental processes, including urban water governance, is shared amongst different stakeholders. The Act also stipulates the need for municipalities to align their planning activities and policies with both the national and provincial governments. This needs to be done to ensure that the long-term objectives of the National Development Plan (NDP) and the Integrated

Development Plan (IDP) are achieved through a smooth coordination between the three spheres of government in South Africa.

The practice of urban water governance is also regulated by this framework. Urban water governance in this context becomes an instrument to achieve government objectives as articulated in the NDP (Zondi, 2024). The Act stipulates the importance of cooperative governance to support local democracy marked by progressive distribution of basic services like water and sanitation to all people, including the urban poor. This means that municipal developmental processes like urban water governance should be inclusive through allowing every stakeholder, such as community-based organisations and social movements to submit their views and concerns. The Municipal Systems Act further outlines the indispensable need for community participation in municipal processes, including urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water to all people (Van der Waldt, 2022). This compels municipalities to create conditions and mechanisms to enable community participation in urban water governance and other municipal processes. This thesis is concerned with investigating the effectiveness of community participation mechanisms such as public meetings and ward committees, specifically in the process of urban water governance and water supply in South African cities like Cape Town.

4.5.8 The White Paper on Water Supply and Sanitation Services (1994)

The White Paper on Water Supply and Sanitation was enacted in 1994 during the year which symbolised the fall of the colonial and apartheid system in South Africa. This policy document was considered significant for accelerating the provision of water and sanitation services under the democratic government led by the African National Congress (ANC). The core objective of the White Paper on Water Supply and Sanitation Services (WPWSSS) is to foster local democracy through effective delivery of basic urban services such as safe drinking water and sanitation services (Tyhotyholo & Ncube, 2023). This is one of the policies that was considered imperative to redress the colonial and apartheid water inequalities and injustices that continue to undermine the lives of the African indigenous people (read urban poor) in South African cities like Cape Town. The implementation of WPWSSS contributed to social change marked by the accessibility of water and sanitation services to the predominantly low-income population. However, rapid urbanisation has outweighed the financial and technical capacity of the government to provide safe drinking and

sanitation services to South African urban townships (Ordor & Michell, 2022; Pollard et al., 2023). As a result, despite the official end of the colonial and apartheid regime in 1994, most of the low-income urbanites have no access to water and sanitation services. To redress social inequalities left by the colonial and apartheid regime in South Africa, the government formulated and implemented the Reconstruction and Development Programme.

4.5.9 Reconstruction and Development Programme (1994)

The first South African democratic government under the leadership of the late President Nelson Mandela formulated and implemented the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) in 1994. The broad objective of the RDP is to enact urban transformation through the provision of basic services such as housing and water to all people, including the historically disadvantaged communities (read urban poor). The RDP seeks to accelerate social change by ensuring that in post-apartheid South Africa, every community has access to water services (Tyhotyholo et al., 2022). The South African ruling political party, the African National Congress (ANC), maintained that it is through the RDP that most of the urban poor population will gain access to basic services like water. The RDP is one of the government documents that emphasises the need for integrated and inclusive urban water management in South Africa (Ordor & Michell, 2022).

While positioning the government at the centre of water governance and the subsequent supply of water services to all people, the RDP accentuates the importance of stakeholder engagement. It stipulates the need for community participation in urban water governance in post-apartheid South Africa. RDP was considered a fundamental instrument or strategy to redress the spatial injustices and water access inequalities enacted and proliferated by the colonial and apartheid regimes in South Africa prior to the dawn of democracy in 1994 (Tyhotyholo et al., 2022). While the RDP has relatively contributed to the provision of basic services including housing and water, most of the historically disadvantaged communities (read urban poor) are still entangled in the struggle for water access. The implementation of the RDP in post-apartheid South Africa has proven to be ineffective (Pringle et al., 2023). Despite its implementation in 1994, the RDP has failed to reverse the legacy of the colonial and apartheid water access inequalities in South African cities, including Cape Town.

To be sure, the RDP has not led to effective urban water governance as the majority of the urban poor have no access to water services across South African cities like Cape Town (Tyhotyholo, 2021). Reasons for its failure have been associated with the lack of financial and technical capacity of both the national and local governments to implement water projects. This is compounded by the inability of the government and municipalities, in particular to engage with different water governance stakeholders including communities continuously. This poor coordination between the government and other urban water governance actors has contributed to the rhetoric of community participation in urban South African water governance (Pringle et al., 2023; Ordor & Michell, 2022). The implementation of the RDP in South Africa has been characterised by a constellation of contradiction such as poor communication between the three spheres of government namely the national, provincial and local government. This has contributed to the RDP failure manifested in the mismatch between demand and supply of basic social services like housing and water at the grassroots level.

4.5.10 White Paper on Local Government (1998)

The White Paper on Local Government was promulgated by the South African government in 1998. Taking into consideration the legacy of the long history of colonialism and its phase of the apartheid system in South Africa before 1994, this policy document intends to redress social and economic inequalities (South Africa, 2022). The White Paper on Local Government (WPLG) identifies the need to restructure and redirect municipalities in a way that can contribute to the sustainable provision of basic services such as water and sanitation. The WPLG provides crucial guidelines for ensuring that municipalities can respond effectively to the needs of local communities in relation to water services and other amenities like electricity and sanitation (Van der Waldt, 2022). Cooperative governance in developmental processes like urban water governance is emphasised. The WPLG stipulates the importance of coordination and working together between the three spheres of government, namely the national, provincial and local government. It provides that the national government should formulate policies that will empower local government to effectively execute its roles and responsibilities, which include, amongst others, urban water governance (Van der Waldt, 2022).

In the same way, the WPLG specifies that provincial governments should create a conducive environment for local governments to carry out their roles and

responsibilities of providing urban services manner. In this regard, provincial governments are endorsed with a mandate of supporting local government through formulating policies and strategies that empower municipalities to function well. The WPLG in South Africa outlines community participation in urban water governance as one of the fundamental instruments to ensure coherence between the needs of the community and municipal water policies (Pollard et al., 2023). This policy document views some of the key principles of public administration, like community participation and transparency in urban water governance, as a prerequisite towards effective urban water supply in the post-colonial South Africa. The need for effective urban water governance and the subsequent provision of water services to communities is also discussed in various government documents, including the National Development Plan.

4.5.11 National Development Plan (2012)

The National Development Plan was passed by the South African government in 2012. The National Development Plan (NDP) sets out long-term developmental goals for the present South African government. NDP is a comprehensive framework that guides the three spheres of government (national, provincial and local government) in executing their roles and responsibilities (Van der Waldt, 2022). NDP provides that urban water governance should be carried out inclusively. This means that the three spheres of government are expected to work together to enforce local democracy marked by effective accessibility of urban services like water and sanitation to all people, particularly the previous disadvantaged (read urban poor). Municipalities are required to develop their water governance plans and strategies in line with the NDP (Cinnamon & Noth, 2023). One of the main objectives of the NDP is to promote social justice and equality in South Africa. In this regard, the NDP seeks to transform the water sector in the post-apartheid South Africa by promoting equal access to water services.

However, for this to be possible, the NDP outlines that all stakeholders like communities, the private sector, interest's groups and social movements must work together to bring about social transformation. Social transformation in this regard is not possible without the sustainable provision of water services to the urban poor (Williams, 2006). NDP further emphasises the need for municipalities to create a conducive environment for community participation in urban water governance and

the subsequent provision of water services to all people in South Africa. NDP acknowledges the fact that urban water governance without the active participation of the people usually contributes to public policy implementation failure (South Africa, 2024). Thus, community participation is vital to ensure that the needs of the communities in relation to water services form the basis upon which urban water policies and strategies are formulated and implemented in South Africa. The National Water Resource Strategy is another key document that guides the process of urban water governance in South Africa.

4.5.12 National Water Resource Strategy

To support the previous discussed legislative framework for urban water governance, the National Water Resource Strategy was formulated in 2004. The National Water Resource Strategy has provided a broad approach to urban water governance and the subsequent provision of water services. It views the provision of urban services such as safe drinking water as a means to address other social challenges, including poverty and unemployment. The strategy was considered one of the key tools that embraces IDP in South Africa (Tyhotyholo & Ncube, 2023). Through the formulation of the National Water Resource Strategy, the government maintains that different stakeholders, including communities, must play an important role in urban water governance.

Thus, the strategy emphasises the need for effective community participation in water resource management. This means that urban municipalities are expected to develop mechanisms for community engagement in water delivery. The National Water Resource Strategy has contributed to some significant changes in urban water governance in post-apartheid South Africa. However, most of the low-income urban population is still living under squalid conditions with severe shortages of safe drinking water and sanitation services (Enqvist et al., 2023). The above legislation and policies promote inclusive and integrated urban water governance. This approach implies that there should be a continuous interaction and coordination between various actors to promote effective urban water governance. It is now important to dissect some of the roles and responsibilities of different urban water governance actors in the present South Africa.

4.6 Urban Water Governance Protagonists in post-apartheid South Africa

In this section, the intention is to determine and discuss some of the central actors and their roles in urban water governance in post-colonial South Africa. As demonstrated by the ensuing discussion, since the official end of the colonial and apartheid regimes in South Africa marked by the dawn of democracy in 1994, urban water governance has become an inclusive process involving different actors (Millington & Scheba, 2021). Such urban water governance actors include the state, different political parties, the private sector, community-based organisations, social movements and communities. These actors play an important role in the urban water governance process and the subsequent provision of water services to local communities in post-apartheid South Africa. As hitherto articulated, the constitution of South Africa and other water governance legislation and policies require the National Department of Water and Sanitation to promote an integrated and inclusive urban water governance process (Van der Waldt, 2022).

This means that the provision of water services to local communities should be an outcome of a deliberate and continuous interaction between the government and all urban water governance stakeholders. But as demonstrated by the ensuing discussion, the weak coordination between urban municipalities and other role players, such as communities, has contributed to the persistent challenge of poor water governance and the resultant lack of access to water services across South African cities. Prior to the discussion on the roles and responsibilities of the different urban water governance actors, below is a diagram showing these key stakeholders. While the following diagram is not exhaustive, it depicts the main urban water governance stakeholders crucial for this study.

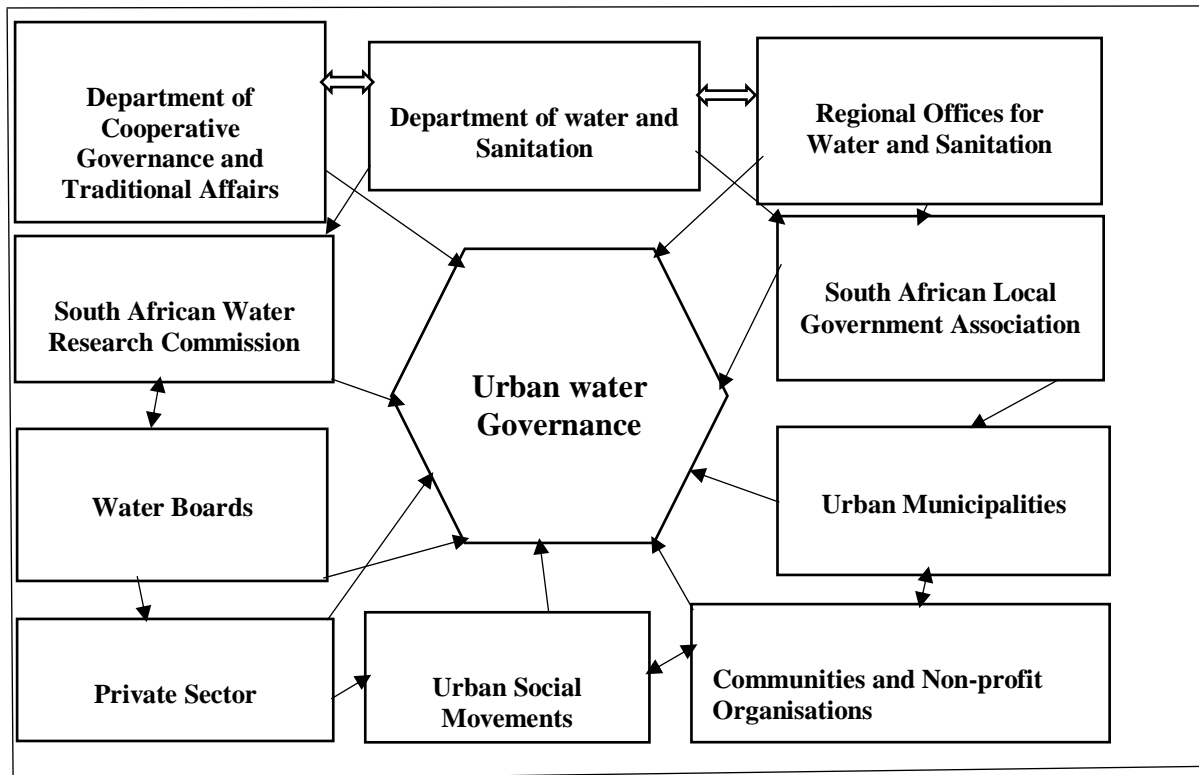


Figure 3: Urban Water Governance Actors in South Africa (Source: Author's construct, 2024).

The above figure demonstrates different urban water governance actors in post-apartheid South Africa. Emanating from the legal framework and policies discussed in the preceding section, these urban water governance actors are expected to coordinate to ensure effective urban water supply to all people, including the urban poor. The government and municipalities carry the responsibility to promote and encourage continuous engagement between these actors to facilitate effective urban water governance (Cinnamon & Noth, 2023). Starting with the National Department of Water and Sanitation, below we discuss the roles and responsibilities of these water governance actors in the post-apartheid South Africa. The intent here is to demonstrate that the roles and responsibilities of the different urban water governance actors are cut short through various factors, including lack of technical capacity and rigid colonial structural arrangements in the post-apartheid urban South Africa.

The National Department of Water and Sanitation in South Africa carries a constitutional mandate of being a custodian of the water resources. This, among others, means that the National Department of Water and Sanitation (NDWS) is responsible for managing water for the benefit of all people living in South Africa

(Enqvist & Ziervogel, 2021). As a result, it is the mandate of this department to formulate and implement legislation and policies to ensure that water is accessible to all communities in South Africa, including the urban poor. Through close collaboration with other stakeholders and government institutions like urban municipalities, the NDWS must formulate and implement water legislation and policies to redress the legacy of the colonial and apartheid system in South Africa (Enqvist & Ziervogel, 2021).

The NDWS, under the leadership of the Minister of Water and Sanitation, has a legal mandate to ensure effective water governance marked by the continuous access to water to all South African communities, especially the previous disadvantaged population (read urban poor). As articulated hitherto, various water governance legislation and policies, including the South African Constitution and the White Paper on Water Supply and Sanitation Services, emphasise the need for the NDWS to promote stakeholder engagement in water affairs (South Africa, 2024). This includes encouraging community participation in South African urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water to local communities. Despite its efforts in ensuring effective water governance in South Africa, the NDWS faces many challenges like limited technical and financial capacity (Rankoana, 2020). Poor communication between the NDWS and local municipalities remains one of the challenges that encumbers the process of urban water governance in South Africa.

Established by the Minister in the NDWS, the role of South African Water Boards is to sanitise raw water supplied by the Water Trading Entity. One of the main aims of Water Boards in South Africa is to distribute sanitised or clean water to municipalities, also known as water service authorities (Rankoana, 2020). Urban municipalities “purchase the water in bulk from the Water Boards and then take responsibility for the infrastructure and processes necessary to ultimately supply water to their end-users, including residents, industries and farmers” (South Africa, 2024). The areas that water boards serve are determined by the minister in the NDWS. The minister has the authority to dissolve Water Boards when deemed necessary (South Africa, 2023).

Water Boards work directly with urban municipalities to ensure that the right to access to water is realised as provided for in the South African Constitution. According to Enqvist & Ziervogel (2021), the effectiveness of urban water governance and the

subsequent provision of water to low-income communities requires a stable coordination between the existing Water Boards and urban municipalities. However, this interaction between Water Boards and urban municipalities has been hindered by various challenges, including poor communication and political interference with administrative functions. Such challenges contribute to the persistent lack of access to water services, especially for most of the urban poor across South African cities like Cape Town.

The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) is one of the main role players in urban water governance in post-colonial South Africa (City of Cape Town, 2023). SALGA is responsible for local government oversight and ensuring that municipalities are empowered to bring about effective urban water governance and the provision of water services to all people, including the urban poor across, South African cities. According to Enqvist et al (2022), SALGA plays an important role in urban water governance through constructively disrupting all obstacles that may obstruct municipalities in executing their constitutional mandate, which, among others, include the provision of basic services like water and sanitation.

SALGA serve as the voice of local government at the national level by engaging the central government regarding municipal needs and possible ways of improving service delivery. SALGA is responsible for supporting municipalities to foster urban transformation marked by the continuous provision of social services like water and sanitation to all communities (Enqvist et al., 2022). However, SALGA has faced many challenges, such as a lack of technical capacity to support local government in social transformation and urban water governance. The failure of the local government to promote effective urban water governance and the subsequent provision of water services to local communities has been associated with poor coordination between SALGA and local authorities, like urban municipalities.

The National Water Research Commission is one of the key stakeholders of urban water governance in South Africa. Working closely with the NDWS, the National Water Research Commission aims to buttress the urban water governance process through evidence-based research (Pollard et al., 2023). This means the central aim of the National Water Research Commission (NWRC) in South Africa is to conduct scientific research on the dynamics of water issues and provide recommendations on how to

improve the process of urban water governance. In this regard, the NWRC seeks to support the work of the NDWS in South Africa by ensuring that policies and strategies to govern water are research based. NWRC serves as the fundamental arm of the national government to ensure a sustainable water supply to all people, including most of the urban poor, mostly living in the urban peripheral communities of South Africa (Martinez, 2022).

However, worth mentioning here is that despite the formation of different water commissions like the NWRC discussed here, urban water governance continues to be characterised by various challenges. Such challenges range from the consistent marginalisation of the low-income communities in decision-making processes to water policy implementation failures and the prevalent of water access inequalities in the post-apartheid urban South Africa (Martinez, 2022). The NWRC and its European enlightenment bequeath research approaches fail to understand the needs of the urban poor, particularly in relation to water. Reason for its failure is that in its quest to understand the existential experiences of the African colonial people relation to water, it employs European enlightenment bequeathed research approaches that are centred around reason and rationality. Following scholars such as Lushaba (2015), this thesis argues that African experiences in general and particularly in relation to water are structured differently than Western and emanate from non-European modes of being in the world. Reason and rationality, which are central in European experiences, do not enjoy such superiority in African ways of relating to water. Hence, the failure of the NWRC to provide concrete solutions to the ongoing challenge of urban water governance in the post-colonial South Africa.

The private sector has a fundamental role to play in urban water governance in South Africa. The role of the private sector in urban transformation in general and water governance in particular is considered important to drive effective urban water supply to all communities (Lebek et al., 2021). The water governance legal framework, including the National Water Act discussed above, considers the private sector as one of the most important water governance actors in the post-colonial South Africa. In this regard, the three spheres of government, namely national, provincial and local government, are expected to promote what is known as Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) in all developmental processes, including urban water governance (Western Cape government, 2024). PPPs in urban water governance are vital to allow the

private sector to engage and shape the processes of water supply in the post-colonial South Africa. Considering the limited financial capacity of the government and municipalities to drive urban water governance, the financial support of the private sector remains fundamental. However, the problem with PPPs in urban water governance is that this kind of a relation usually contributes to the privatisation of urban water services.

The private sector normally renders its financial support to the government and municipalities based on certain conditions and agreements. Such conditions carry the potential for water privatisation (Tamuka et al., 2021). In this regard, the private sector ceases to be one of the role players in urban water governance and eventually transfigures itself into becoming a main actor through replacing the state and its role in water supply. This means that while PPPs remain key to drive the process of urban water governance, it also carries within itself the problem of water privatisation. One of the consequences of water privatisation is the continuous marginalisation of the African colonised people (read urban poor) in water governance and decision-making processes regarding the subsequent urban water supply to all communities (Sarkar, 2022). It is through the dominance and compelling authority of the private sector in urban water governance that municipalities are now treating the urban poor as clients rather than people. Emphasis on models of full cost-recovery and pay-as-you-use mechanisms by municipalities in urban water supply can be understood as the direct influence of the PPPs.

Local government and urban municipalities are at the centre of the water governance process and the subsequent supply of water. Local government is placed as the sphere of government that is closest to the people (Van der Waldt, 2022; Patrick, 2021). As a result of this, municipalities have a constitutional mandate to plan and deliver basic urban social services such as water and electricity to all communities in South Africa. This gives municipalities the power to formulate and implement urban water governance legislation and policies to drive effective water supply to communities (Van der Waldt, 2022). But important to point out here that municipalities are legally compelled not to formulate and implement policies that are in contrasts or not aligned with the South African Constitution. This points to our earlier argument about the problematic of the constitution and its claim to sovereignty in the post-colonial South Africa. Let us recall that, while emanating from the European

jurisprudence instead of African philosophy and the existential experiences of the urban poor, the constitution claims supremacy over water governance matters in the post-apartheid South Africa.

It is such a constellation of contradictions that keeps on shaping the contemporary practice of urban water governance in post-colonial African countries, including South Africa. As a result, since the official end of European colonialism and its later phase of the apartheid system marked by the dawn of Western-inherited democracy in 1994, municipalities have been struggling to provide water to most of the urban poor across South African urban spaces (Hara et al., 2021; Lebek et al., 2021). In his work published in 2012 with the title: *Lost in transformation: South Africa's search for a new Future since 1986*, Terreblanche suggest that despite the prevailing democratic governance system in South Africa, most of the previous disadvantaged communities (read urban poor) remain entangled with elite authorities in the struggle for better services like water and sanitation. In its efforts of transformation, the South African government and municipalities are facing numerous challenges, which include the persistent marginalisation or exclusion of the majority of the urban poor population in urban water governance decision-making processes (Bell et al., 2022). It is such contradictions that contribute to the continuous water access inequalities and injustices, especially in post-colonial South African peripheral urban areas. Inclined with challenging the conventional water governance approaches and the promotion of justice and equality in water access, urban social movements have gained the attention of the government in South Africa (Williams & Zacheous, 2022).

While social movements have been at the centre of urban transformation even during the colonial and apartheid periods, under the democratic state, their role in urban water governance has intensified. Poor service delivery has contributed to the rise of urban social movements (SMs) to pressurise the state and promote other alternatives towards effective water governance. The resurgence of SMs in urban transformation has been a result of poor government planning and ineffective water governance policies in South African cities (Lebek et al., 2021; Martinez, 2022). SMs have been fundamental in the struggle for access to safe drinking water in cities. As grass-roots advocates for effective water governance, SMs in African countries have played a crucial role. For example, through promoting the role of citizens in water governance, SMs are agents of pro-poor urban transformation. SMs are premised on the view that

community-based water governance is one of the key methods for resolving the challenge of water insecurity in South African cities, including Cape Town (Murray et al., 2023). However, for this to become a reality, a proactive and committed government is necessary. It is from this context that SMs have been mobilising at the grass-roots level for effective water delivery in the post-colonial South African cities.

The reality is that in African countries, including South Africa, most people, particularly poor urbanites, do not have access to clean water and sanitation services. Commenting on the glaring challenge of urbanisation and poor service delivery in sub-Saharan Africa, Bell et al. (2022:120) maintains that African cities including Cape Town are facing the challenge of rapid processes of urbanisation “compounded by rapid population growth, particularly in peripheral urban areas; lack of access to shelter, infrastructure and services by predominantly poor populations; weak local governments; and serious environmental issues”. In many South African cities like Cape Town there has been an insurgent citizenship movement defined as an “insurgency that begin with the struggle for rights to have a daily life in the city worthy of a citizen’s dignity” (Storey, 2021:151). Urban movements in South Africa have emerged to fight against the problem of neoliberal water governance policies that have condemned the lives of the indigenous people of the land.

The power of the state to formulate and implement water governance policies in South Africa has been challenged by the urban poor through the formation of SMs. This has resulted in the reconfiguration of power with the predominantly poor population redefining and shaping the scope of water governance in South African cities (Juta, 2023; Calverley & Walther, 2022). However, in many African countries, including South Africa, most of the urban poor are still trapped in squalid living conditions typified by a lack of basic services like water. In South African cities, the struggle for better service delivery remains a reality with most of the indigenous people suffering in townships (Juta, 2023). The rise of SMs has intensified the struggle for equal water access, with particular emphasis on the role of communities in the formulation and implementation of water governance policies and strategies. Important to point out is the fact that the government has started to recognise the influential role of SMs in the provision of basic services to the urban poor.

4.7 Community Participation in South African Urban Water Governance

Community participation has been considered a fundamental aspect of any democratic system that values the needs of the people. At a conceptual level, community participation is not a straightforward or clear explicated concept. The concept poses some challenges and implications, as there exists no consensus about the exact meaning of this notion amongst scholars (Rut et al., 2021). While various attempts have been made to clarify the concept of community participation and its practical application, there seems to be no definitive definition of community participation. Akerboom and Craig (2022) insist that due to the complexity and dynamic nature of this concept, a straightforward definition seems not possible.

Luisi and Hämel (2021:202) argue that “a generally applicable definition of community participation for theory, policy and practice development, though, remains both elusive and contentious”. The notion of community participation can be defined as the “active, direct involvement of citizens in government decision-making” (Chess & Purcell, 1999:120). Scholars such as Akerboom and Craig (2022) contend that the concept of community participation can be understood as the “devolution of power from government to citizens to promote the ability of citizens to influence public policy formulation and implementation”. This alludes to the central role of communities in decision-making, particularly in the process of urban water governance.

The notion of community participation can be viewed as a means to empower local communities to shape the decisions and actions of public institutions, including urban municipalities. In this regard, Rut et al. (2021) contend that community participation “refers to activities from formal participation in policymaking to the diverse actions that people take in their everyday lives”. Community participation encourages working together between government institutions and the local communities. The concept emphasises the need to promote the voice of the urban poor population through enabling a continuous interaction and communication between the government and the people. This means that people should be given opportunities to contribute to urban governance and the provision of water services across the globe (Akerboom & Craig, 2022).

One of the central premises of the notion of community participation is that when communities are part of the decision-making process, this creates a possibility of

effective water governance and the provision of water services to all people, including the urban poor. The intention is to reduce the gap between the rich and the urban poor through equal participation in urban water governance and the provision of water services. The concept of community participation is meant to empower communities and to make them believe that even though they are poor and feel disempowered, they have rights. It is ostensibly about social justice, though some question whether it is rather a form of government devolution of responsibility onto poor communities (Akerboom & Craig, 2022).

The preceding exposition of the concept of community participation reveals that while there are various perspectives, the most fundamental aspect of this notion is the role of the people, particularly the urban poor, in the urban water governance process. Community participation implies that “citizens should be at the centre of government developmental processes and exercise the right to participate directly in the delivery of basic services such as clean water” (Kiss et al., 2022:214). In a democratic system of governance premised on inclusive governance, the government must establish viable mechanisms to promote the practice of community participation in urban water governance. This means that people should continuously engage and question the decisions and actions of their government.

According to Shunglu et al. (2022:121), people’s “direct involvement in the decision-making process and the development mechanism as stakeholders or shareholders”. This thesis draws from Kiss et al. (2022:133), who define community participation “as the involvement of individuals or communities in the planning, design, implementation and maintenance of projects and policies to bring about the effective delivery of basic services such as water and sanitation”. Considering this proposition, this thesis defines community participation as the continuous participation of local communities in the processes of urban water governance and the provision of water services to all people. This implies a consistent process of government interaction with local communities, especially the urban poor, to promote effective and inclusive urban water governance.

The concept of community participation should be understood as one of the crucial mechanisms towards social change marked by the accessibility of water services to most of the urban poor population across the globe. Inclusive governance emphasises the significance of continuous participation of different stakeholders in the

development and implementation of urban water governance legislation and policies (Juta, 2023). Given the *longue durre* history of the exclusion of most of the urban poor for decision-making processes under European colonialism and apartheid, community participation in urban water governance becomes vital in the current South Africa. Different post-apartheid legislation and policies, including the constitution of South Africa and the White Paper on Water Supply and Sanitation Services, stipulate the need for the government and municipalities to promote community participation in urban water governance. Community participation in government processes is vital as it provides opportunities to all people, especially from disadvantaged communities, to be part of the decision-making processes (Ordor & Michell, 2022). One of the benefits of community participation in government processes is that it carries the potential for social trust. When residents are allowed to participate in urban water governance, this normally generates trust between communities and the government and municipalities (Omotayo et al., 2021). This usually contributes to successful processes of policy formulation and implementation, marked by effective provision of urban services such as water.

Despite its articulation in various legislation and policies, including the White Paper on Water Supply and Sanitation Services, community participation in urban water governance remains a challenge. There is a continuing culture of community exclusion in urban water governance in the current South Africa (Omotayo et al., 2021). However, it is important to point out that the exclusion of local communities, especially the urban poor, in water governance processes is nothing new in South Africa. It is a practice characteristic of the colonial and apartheid governance systems that prevailed in South Africa prior to the dawn of democracy in 1994. As one of the central principles of modern Western democracy, community participation in the post-apartheid South Africa remains a rhetoric as most of the urban poor continued to be marginalised in urban water governance decision-making processes (Tyhotyholo & Ncube, 2023).

To illustrate the point made concerning the failure of the government to promote an inclusive governance, it is important to analyse some of the existing structures for community participation in water governance in post-apartheid South Africa. Thus, attention is given below to examining the literature on the effectiveness of the platforms or structures for community participation in South African urban water governance. These structures include Non-governmental Organisations, Area Co-

ordinating Teams, Community Development workers, Ward committees and Imbizos and Kgotlas. As demonstrated in the following discussion, despite the formation of these mechanisms, urban water governance continues to be marked by a lack of community participation- a situation contributing to the persistence of water governance policy implementation failure in post-apartheid South African cities like Cape Town.

4.7.1 Non-governmental Organisations

Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) play an important role in societies, especially where democracy experiences turbulence and is in a state of flux, like in South Africa (Shunglu et al., 2022). NGOs working closely with the government promote community participation through communicating the needs of the people to urban municipalities. Through continuous engagements with government authorities like municipalities, NGOs can shape urban water governance policies and strategies to cater for the needs of communities and the urban poor. In this way, NGOs are considered as one of the key community participation mechanisms to enforce grassroots democracy in the post-apartheid South Africa (Rut et al., 2021). For example, just after the official ending of the colonial and apartheid regime in 1994, emerged the South African National NGO Coalition (SANGOCO). Its fundamental aim is to facilitate or coordinate the various inputs of NGOs into government policy.

SANGOCO, as a body working with different NGOs, challenges the government driven urban transformation through promoting the role of communities in urban water governance and other developmental processes. This creates a possibility of community driven urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa (Bishoge, 2021). While NGOs have played a crucial role in influencing public policy formulation and implementation, urban water governance continues to be a process that is marked by poor community participation. Urban water governance is mostly a process for the community without the people. The point is that despite the resurgence of different NGOs in the post-apartheid South Africa, community participation remains a major challenge contributing to public policy implementation failure at the grassroots level (Vala & Malazaa, 2024). The consequence of this challenge is the persistent lack of access to water services by most of the urban poor across South African cities, including Cape Town.

4.7.2 Area Coordinating Teams

Area coordinating teams are one of the mechanisms used to facilitate community participation in local government affairs, including urban water governance. In the post-apartheid South Africa, area co-ordinating teams (ACTs) have been considered fundamental to provide an opportunity for all local government stakeholders, such as communities and community-based organisations, to deliberately engage in urban water governance dialogues (Bishoge, 2021). The primary aim of the ACTs is to improve community participation in municipal governance and the provision of basic services like water and sanitation. According to Williams (2009:22), in principle, “ACTs should be an ideal meeting place to discuss development plans prior to their implementation”. ACTs play a fundamental role in promoting inclusive urban water governance through enforcing collaboration between various government institutions or departments. Vala and Malazaa (2024:10) argue that ACTs “offer officials a chance to interact with each other as well as giving members of the community to provide their perspectives on development planning issues facing a municipality”.

Public policies that promote “transparency, constructively engage and involve communities in the functions of a local government” can be considered a good government strategy. Urban water governance policies and strategies that embrace the continuous deliberations and dialogues between the government and its people are vital for development. In principle, ACTs can be regarded as a commendable and good action of the post-apartheid South African government to promote community involvement in urban municipal affairs, including water governance. ACTs seek to challenge the prevailing top-down state driven water management approaches through promoting the rights of the urban, poor undergirding a community-based urban water governance paradigm (Shunglu et al., 2022; Williams, 2006). ACTs are also fundamental in constraining the chasm between urban municipalities and the communities, particularly in, process of urban water governance and the subsequent supply of urban water to all people, including the urban poor, across South African post-apartheid cities like Cape Town.

However, there are serious shortcomings that are characteristic of the implementation and functioning of ACTs in South African post-apartheid cities like Cape Town. ACTs remain mostly a consultative institutional procedure with no clear laws and policies to enforce their effectiveness (Western Cape Government, 2022). As a result, municipal

officials and ward councillors do not consider ACTs meetings as a constitutional mandate. The lack of clear laws and policies that regulate ACTs in the post-apartheid South Africa has contributed to the diminishing role of these structures in promoting effective urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water services, especially in the historically disadvantaged communities (read urban poor) in cities.

Another shortfall of ACTs in promoting effective community participation in urban water governance has to do with power dynamics that shape the functioning of these structures. In this regard, while the purpose of ACTs remains fundamental in buttressing local democracy through community participation in water governance, the voices and demands of the urban poor do not necessarily translate into water policies (Shunglu et al., 2022). The reason is that the state and municipalities consider the process of public policy formulation and implementation as the government's constitutional responsibility. Thus, despite the consultative processes through ACTs, it is urban municipalities that decide what constitutes a right course of action. In other words, municipalities remain the main decision-makers in the affairs of urban development and water governance.

4.7.3 Community Development Workers

In 2003, the South African government introduced community development workers (CDWs) to act as a bridge between municipalities and communities in the provision of basic services like water and sanitation (South Africa, 2022). The establishment of community structures such as CDWs in South Africa was considered by the government as one of the important strategies to enforce local democracy through enabling citizens to take part in the processes of public policy formulation and implementation (Shunglu et al., 2022). In South Africa, CDWs are at the centre of community participation because these are the structures that were created by the government to take community plights and report them to the relevant departments to influencing government decision-making and service delivery. The fundamental purpose of CDWs in South Africa, according to the Department of Public Service and Administration (South Africa, 2021), is to:

“Improve the dissemination of information to the poor about benefits and services to which all citizens are entitled; assist the poor to access and benefit from the services that could materially improve their lives; provide an interface or bridge

between municipalities and communities to enhance the existing local government structures so as to improve the level of participation between communities and the Integrated Development Plans” (South Africa, 2021).

The above extract demonstrates that the CDWs are another mechanism to promote the involvement of the local communities in urban water governance processes in the post-apartheid South Africa. CDWs are fundamental in facilitating the continuous communication between the government and the people at the grassroots level. According to Patrick (202:164), CDWs are considered as government plans to bring about social change marked by the participation of low-income communities in the development and implementation of water policies and strategies in South Africa. Worth mentioning, though, is that despite the establishment of these communities’ participation platforms, the urban water governance process in South Africa is characterised by a lack of community involvement in the development and implementation of water policies and strategies.

Rut et al. (2021) argue that the failure of the CDWs in promoting community participation in the provision of water services has been associated with various challenges, such as the lack of proper coordination between municipalities and CDWs. Political interference with the work of CDWs at the local level is also another impediment contributing to poor public participation in the delivery of water and sanitation services (Shunglu et al., 2022). The effectiveness of the community participation mechanism, including CDWs, requires a good working relation between the government and all stakeholders, such as local communities. Lack of social trust, characterised by unwillingness of certain communities to work with the government, is one of the key factors contributing to poor implementation of CDWs in water governance in urban South Africa.

4.7.4 Ward Committees

Ward committees are one of the crucial community-based structures that work closely with the ward councillor. The main function of ward committees is to enhance community participation in urban water governance in post-apartheid South Africa (South Africa, 2024). Through constant engagement with communities, ward committees are expected to inform the ward councillor or municipal authorities about the needs of the people in relation to water access. In this regard, ward committees

are required to act as the voice of local communities in government administrative processes, including urban water governance. As a result, urban municipalities should promote an effective system of communication with ward committees (Patrick, 2021). Research shows that an effective system of urban water governance requires close collaboration between community-based structures like ward committees and government institutions such as municipalities (Rut et al., 2021). However, poor communication and political interference with the work of ward committees contribute to the lack of community participation in water affairs.

Despite the existence of community-based structures for community participation, like ward committees, access to basic services such as water and sanitation remains a major challenge in post-apartheid South Africa. Lack of social trust between communities and ward committees is one of the key impediments to effective community participation in South African urban water governance (Van der Waldt, 2022). Due to the persistent shortages of urban services like water, residents have lost hope and trust in the current system of governance. According to Rut et al. (2021), urban residents are increasingly losing interest in participating in urban transformation processes, including water governance. This is because the views and needs of the communities are mostly disregarded during the processes of public policy formulation and implementation. Van der Waldt (2022) argues that unstable relations between ward committees and ward councillors hinder the process of community participation in urban water governance. The result of this is the perpetual water policy implementation failure, manifesting in the distension of urban townships with no access to water and sanitation services across South African cities, including Cape Town.

4.7.5 Imbizos and Kgotlas

Community participation in urban water governance can be carried out through imbizos and kgotlas. These are public meetings initiated by the government to engage with communities in developmental processes, including urban water governance. The government is expected to host imbizos and kgotlas regularly with communities to discuss service delivery plans and challenges (South Africa, 2023). Through imbizos and kgotlas, municipal officials like the ward councillors and mayors should promote community participation in urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa. According to Van der Waldt (2022), imbizos and kgotlas are one of the community

participation mechanisms that are considered fundamental to advance grassroots democracy through giving people opportunities to influence the process of urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa. Since the adoption of imbizos and kgotlas by the South Africa government in 2001, communities have played their part in shaping the formulation and implementation of urban water policies and projects.

Public meetings have been held with central themes on urban water governance and the subsequent provision of water services to communities. According to the South African government, imbizos and kgotlas are meant to empower communities and support people driven urban water governance processes (Van der Waldt, 2022). This is done to address the continuous water access inequalities that characterise the prevailing Western democratic system in South Africa. However, imbizos and kgotlas face various serious challenges, including manipulation of public meetings for political gains. This has contributed to empty political promises that are often made by government officials during imbizos and kgotlas in South Africa (South Africa, 2023). Despite the existing mechanisms like imbizos and kgotlas discussed in this section, the lack of coordination between the local government and communities and the urban poor in water governance remains a major challenge, manifesting in water policy implementation failure. This challenge is marked by the persistent shortages of urban services like water and sanitation in post-apartheid South African cities such as Cape Town.

4.8 The Persistent Challenge of Urban Water Supply in Cape Town

Emanating from the Constitution of South Africa discussed above, the City of Cape Town is responsible for ensuring the accessibility of water services to all people, including the urban poor. In line with the Constitution of South Africa, the City of Cape Town has formulated and implemented various water strategies, such as the Cape Town water strategy (Ordor & Michell, 2022). Through the implementation of such strategies, the City of Cape Town aims to improve the lives of urbanites by ensuring a sustainable supply of water services to all communities. However, the implementation of water policies and strategies in Cape Town has been marked by various challenges, including a lack of coordination between the provincial government and the municipality. This is compounded by a weak financial and technical capacity of the City of Cape Town to implement water governance policies and strategies (Rankoana, 2020; Enqvist et al., 2022). Rapid processes of urbanisation resulting in ever growing

demand for basic services like housing and water are another challenge facing the City of Cape Town in post-apartheid South Africa. The challenge of urban water supply in Cape Town is characterised by the swelling of informal settlements with a lack of access to social services like water and sanitation (Enqvist et al., 2022).

Cape Town's deeply unequal waterscape and acutely divisive politics are among the most important factors that continue to shape urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water to all people (Rodina, 2019). Water challenges in Cape Town have been associated with the failure of the government to implement the existing water policies and strategies. There seems to be a disjuncture between the existing water policies and the daily experiences of the low-income communities. According to Swatuk et al. (2021), while the Western Cape government has made some progress in addressing unequal water access, most of the low-income communities are struggling to get access to water services. The challenge of urban water supply in South African cities, including Cape Town, has manifested in continuous contestations and tensions between municipal councils and the urban poor. The government has been struggling to meet the demands of low-income communities in relation to water services in Cape Town. This has led to an increase in SMs in urban transformation and water governance. In Cape Town, SMs have emerged to challenge the state driven urban water management approach through advocating for the role of low-income communities in the formulation and implementation of urban water governance policies (Ordor & Michell, 2022).

However, the conservative authority of urban water governance institutions, such as municipalities, continues to play a central role in marginalising local communities in decision-making processes. These loopholes in urban water governance in Cape Town were more evident during the 2015 to 2018 drought, which was then known as day zero, which marked the day on which the city was expected to cut off water supply to communities (Enqvist et al., 2022). Commenting on this, Rankoana (2020:29) contends that Cape Town's experience during the past droughts has exposed the “deeply divisive politics around water, contentious jurisdictions in the water domain, and lack of trust, all of which shaped how the crisis was experienced by different populations and communities”. Even after the 2015 to 2018 drought, most of the urban poor around Cape Town still have limited access to water services (Tyhotyholo, 2021).

Cape Town has nearly “one million residents in sprawling informal settlements, as well as a long history of distrust and a racially and spatially segregated water infrastructure and services landscape” (Enqvist et al., 2022:27). In most of the African cities that have undergone the processes of colonialism water supply and distribution systems have been historically shaped by colonial planning, respectively, resulting in a highly uneven waterscape, aspects of which are still lingering today (Rankoana, 2020). This means that the current urban water governance institutions in Cape Town and in South Africa were broadly designed and structured to perpetuate water access inequalities. Commenting on the problem of water governance and the persistent water access inequalities in post-colonial South African cities, including Cape Town, Enqvist and Ziervogel (2019) argue that even the strategies aimed at regulating water demand management and conservation are often developed without considering the economic and social situations of the urban poor.

In Cape Town, the infamous demand management devices were initially installed in impoverished low-income communities, including informal settlements, and have since been loudly critiqued for targeting solely impoverished households whose water access is already precarious (Enqvist et al., 2022). This thesis examines how the existing colonial bequeaths modern institutions, such as municipalities, continue to shape the practice of urban water governance in post-apartheid South African cities like Cape Town. To be sure, the thesis is concerned about examining how structural configurations embedded in South African urban councils, such as the City of Cape Town, continue to influence the process of urban water governance. Lack of access to water services, particularly in most of the previous disadvantaged communities, is attributed to the general problem of policy implementation failure in post-apartheid South Africa.

4.9 Critiquing the post-apartheid Urban Water Policy in South Africa

The post-apartheid urban water policy in South Africa is mainly driven by the state. While the current urban water policy has played an important role in promoting the right to water access, most of the urban poor population has not benefited from this approach. The post-apartheid urban water policy in South Africa has been characterised by the failure of the state to provide water services to all people, especially to the previous disadvantaged communities (Enqvist et al., 2022; Bell et al., 2022). The post-apartheid state driven urban water policy has failed to promote

integrated and inclusive water governance. Disjointed coordination between municipalities and the different urban water governance actors, such as communities, has led to policy implementation failure at the grassroots level. This is an urban water governance challenge marked by the continuous lack of access to water services by most of the urban poor across South African post-apartheid cities like Cape Town (Omotayo et al., 2021).

Poor policy coherence and lack of community participation are one of the key factors that have contributed to the perennial challenge of water shortage and the persistent unequal access to water services in post-apartheid South African cities. The omission in policy and practice has led to the suffocation of the urban water governance sector in the post-apartheid South Africa (Bell et al., 2022). Post-apartheid period in South Africa, urban water governance policy suffers from poor implementation marked by the continuous mismatch between water demand and supply by municipalities. This challenge is also compounded by the diminishing financial and technical capacity of both the national and local government to provide water services to all people, including the urban poor across South African cities (Omotayo et al., 2021). Furthermore, post-apartheid urban water policies in South Africa seem to be disjointed- there is a serious lack of policy coherence as policies and strategies do not build on each other. Policy implementation is piecemeal, with little emphasis on monitoring and evaluation, which constitute some of the fundamental aspects of a successful public policy.

It can be maintained that post-apartheid South African urban water policies have not led to meaningful urban transformation, understood as social change in which the majority of the previous disadvantaged communities (read urban poor) get access to basic services such as housing and water. Instead, there has been a continuous marginalisation of the urban poor in water governance processes and the subsequent supply of water services. This has partially contributed to the lack of social trust, in which communities have lost hope and confidence in the existing urban water governance institutions like municipalities (Ordor & Michell, 2022). Urban water governance in post-apartheid South Africa has been entangled in deep political struggles as to who controls urban areas and the subsequent processes of urban transformation.

Urban water policy in post-apartheid South Africa has been marked by the dominant role of the government as the main decision-maker in issues of water affairs. This is done through suppressing the possibility of communities becoming one of the main actors in urban water governance. While the current South African urban water policy emphasises the need for community participation, it is mainly municipalities that continue to determine the outcomes of water governance and the planning of water provision in post-apartheid South African cities like Cape Town (Enqvist et al., 2022; Bell et al., 2022). This means that community participation, as articulated in South African post-apartheid urban water policy, remains a rhetoric.

The participation of local communities in urban water governance does not necessarily translate into effective water supply to all people. This is partly because the views and demands of the urban poor are often disregarded by municipal councils in the processes of water governance and the subsequent provision of water to all communities (Millington & Scheba, 2021). This demonstrates that communities have limited powers to influence the decision-making processes in relation to urban water governance, and this explains why the practice of community participation has remained a rhetoric in the post-apartheid urban South Africa. There is a lack of clear laws and strategies to reinforce the practice of community participation in South African urban water governance. This is one of the factors that contribute to the failure of the state driven urban water policy in the post-apartheid South Africa. This failure has been considered a governance crisis marked by the perpetual increase of the urban peripheral areas with no access to basic services such as water (Enqvist et al., 2022; Cinnamon & Noth, 2023).

The foregoing literature has demonstrated that the state-driven urban water governance model is cut-short through various challenges, including the lack of financial and technical capacity of the national and local governments to provide water services to all communities in South Africa. This challenge has manifested in the exponential increase of the urban poor population trapped in dilapidated informal settlements with no access to basic social services such as housing and water (Cinnamon & Noth, 2023). While a constellation of contradictions, like the lack of policy coherence and the politicised administrative functions of municipalities, contribute to this challenge, the root cause of the problem bends over backwards towards the implementation of European colonialism in South Africa. The failure of the post-

apartheid South African government to challenge and revise the institutionalised ethos of colonialism continues to hinder the municipal driven processes of urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water to all people (Calverley & Walther, 2022). Literature has revealed that there is a comprehensive and robust legal framework that regulates urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa.

However, it appears that despite the existing legislation and policies, such as the South African Constitution and the White Paper on Water Supply and Sanitation Services, urban water governance is cut short through many challenges. Such challenges include the lack of community participation in urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water to all people, including the urban poor population across post-apartheid South African cities like Cape Town (Millington & Scheba, 2021; Calverley & Walther, 2022). However, the literature fails to cover the role of structural configurations on urban water governance in post-apartheid South Africa.

The point is that there is limited information on the impact of institutional arrangements or design on urban water governance. This thesis seeks to fill this lacuna in water management literature through developing a contextual and empirical encroached understanding of how structural configurations embedded in South African urban councils like Cape Town influence the process of urban water governance. According to Calverley and Walther (2022), there is a growing need for the government, especially municipalities, to understand the role of institutional arrangements on urban water governance. This is because the formulation and implementation of public policy in general and urban water policy in particular need to consider the fundamental role played by institutional features like the hierarchy of authority on successful policy implementation.

4.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the evolution of the main urban water governance legislation and policies, starting from the period before the implementation of European colonialism to the post-apartheid epoch in South Africa. Despite the existing legislation and policies to enforce effective urban water governance, most of the urban poor are still trapped in dilapidated informal settlements with no access to water services. The chapter has argued that factors such as a lack of policy coherence and the confusion of municipal administrative functions with politics have hindered effective urban water governance in post-apartheid South Africa. The challenge of urban water governance has been marked by the continuous marginalisation of the urban poor in decision-making processes. The chapter has emphasised that the failure of the government and municipalities to promote effective community participation in water governance bends over backwards towards the implementation of European colonialism in South Africa. The dominant role of the state in South African urban water management suppresses the essence of a community-based urban water governance approach. The chapter has argued that the lack of financial and technical capacity of both the national and local government to execute effective urban water policy implementation has contributed to the perennial water access inequalities in post-apartheid cities, including Cape Town. The next chapter presents and discusses research findings with particular focus on the relationality between structural configurations and the urban water governance process in Cape Town.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ROLE OF STRUCTURAL CONFIGURATIONS ON URBAN WATER GOVERNANCE IN CAPE TOWN

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter has discussed the legislative framework for urban water governance in post-apartheid South Africa. This fifth chapter presents and discusses the research findings with particular focus on the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town. The chapter responds to the second sub-research question, which states: How are structural configurations aiding or constraining urban water governance efficiency in Cape Town? Based on the interviews conducted with different key informants, the chapter discusses how the process of urban water governance is shaped by structural configurations such as the hierarchy of authority, code of conduct and institutional culture embedded in the Cape Town council. In doing so, the chapter also emphasises triangulation through dovetailing the literature and theoretical framework discussed in chapter two with empirical evidence concerning how the urban water governance process is influenced by structural configurations.

To be sure, the focus is on determining how the formulation and implementation of the post-apartheid urban water policy is shaped by structural configurations in Cape Town. Both in this chapter and the next chapter the themes under which findings are presented and discussed were extracted through thematic analysis. As hitherto discussed, in Cape Town, urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water services to local communities are the constitutional responsibility of the Department of Water and Sanitation. Thus, the chapter begins by delving into the structure of Cape Town's Department of Water and Sanitation. This is crucial to determine the various organisational powers that shape the process of urban water governance and the provision of water services to local communities.

5.2 Branches within the Department of Water and Sanitation

Prior to the exposition of how the process of urban water governance is shaped by structural configurations, this section probes into the structure of the Department of Water and Sanitation in Cape Town. This is done to aid a better understanding of how the structure and various internal features of the department influence the process of

urban water governance in Cape Town. In this regard, the Department of Water and Sanitation in Cape Town consists of various branches that are all established to promote effective urban water governance characterised by the continuous accessibility of water services to all communities. Figure 4 below is an illustration of the different branches that constitute the Department of Water and Sanitation in Cape Town. It is important to register the point that while the following diagram demonstrates different branches within the Department of Water and Sanitation, it is not exhaustive. The main focus is to paint a picture of some of the key branches or divisions within the department that play a significant role in urban water governance in Cape Town.

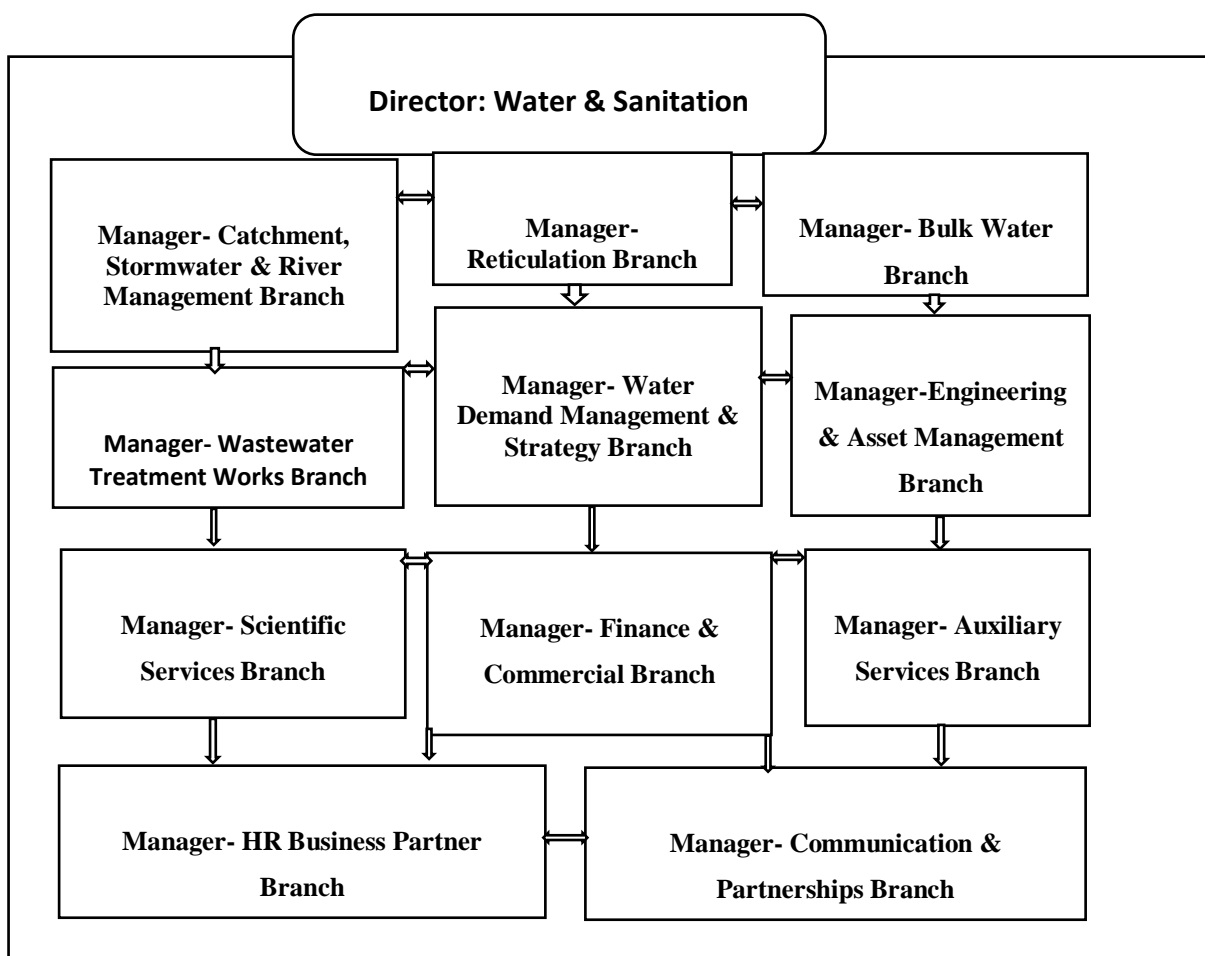


Figure 4: Branches within the Department of Water and Sanitation in Cape Town (Source: Author’s construct, 2025).

As demonstrated in the diagram above, on top of the structure, there is an office of the director that is responsible for managing all branches and their activities within the Department of Water and Sanitation. The office of the director plays an important role in directing the department and ensuring effective urban water governance and the

continuous provision of water services to all the communities within Cape Town. One of the key informants in the department insisted that:

‘The office of the director is responsible for ensuring that all the branches that make up our Department of Water and Sanitation are performing their duties in relation to water management and the implementation of water programs and projects within Cape Town. The office of the director, as the top office in this department, plans and evaluates, water policies and strategies to ensure that they are all aligned with the vision of the department, which seeks to ensure that all communities in Cape Town have access to water services.’

The above excerpt is in consonant with Millington and Scheba (2021), who argue that public institutions are designed to facilitate the provision of services to communities. Governments normally structure departments and offices to promote effective policy formulation and implementation. This study has found that when local authorities develop their own policies and strategies, they are required to ensure compliance with national and provincial laws and policies. This means that municipal managers are expected to make sure that urban water policies and strategies are informed by national and provincial laws. This study has found that the main purpose of the post-apartheid urban water policy in South Africa is to direct urban municipalities in formulating strategies, programs and projects to facilitate effective water provision to all people, especially the low-income communities.

Post-apartheid urban water policy in South Africa seeks to improve the lives of all people through ensuring the continuous accessibility of water services to communities. This finding is in line with Calverley and Walther (2022), who argue that since the official end of the apartheid marked by the dawn of democracy in South Africa 1994, the main focus of urban water governance has been to address the historical water access injustices and inequalities through promoting new ways of water management that will benefit all people, including the urban poor. All the branches, including the reticulation branch within the Department of Water and Sanitation, share a similar structure of authority responsible for ensuring effective urban water governance and the provision of water services to all people within Cape Town. Below is a diagram that demonstrates how the branches within the Department of Water and Sanitation are structured. To be sure, the diagram depicts the organogram or hierarchy of authority that constitutes each branch of the Department of Water and Sanitation in Cape Town.

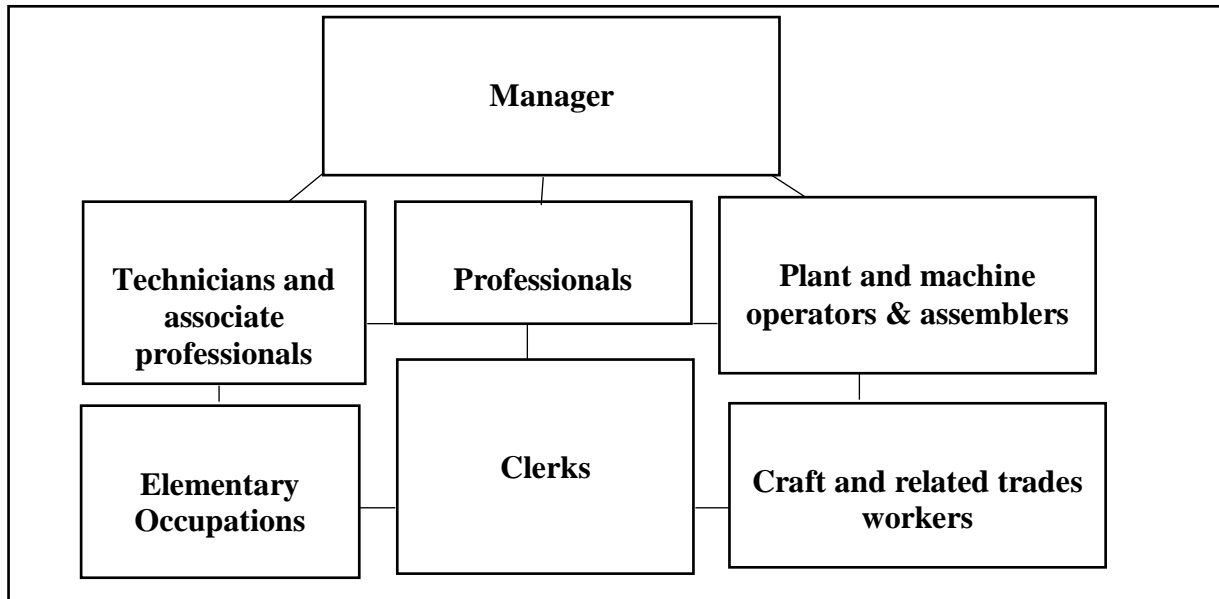


Figure 5: The organogram of the Department of Water and Sanitation (Source: Author's construct, 2025).

As shown in the preceding diagram, the branches that constitutes the Department of Water and Sanitation in Cape Town are marked by internal power relations ranging from the director down to entry level positions such as the departmental clerks. It is such a structure that is responsible for urban water governance in Cape Town. While this structure is implemented in terms of external and internal rules, it is also responsible for creating and applying institutional rules, codes of conduct, disciplinary measures and sanctions (read structural configurations). The focus in this chapter is to provide empirical evidence of how the process of urban water governance is influenced by these structural configurations in Cape Town. Put differently, the thesis is mainly concerned with understanding how the decisions and actions of urban water governance actors are shaped by structural configurations such as vision and mission statements, hierarchy of authority, code of conduct, disciplinary measures, institutional culture and tradition embedded in Cape Town. Based on interviews and focus group discussions with different key informants, the ensuing section delves into the relationality between the urban water governance process and structural configurations in Cape Town.

5.3 Structural Configurations and Urban Water Governance in Cape Town

To reiterate the point made in this thesis and in the literature review (Chapter two) in particular, public institutions have structural configurations combined with their enforcement mechanisms designed to control the choices and decisions made by actors in a certain organisation (Simonson & Rahman, 2020). This thesis has found that structural configurations are central in urban water governance. To be sure, structural configurations are written, unwritten, physical and non-material structures and rules that inform and guide all actors in the process of urban water governance. Structural configurations can be considered as institutional structures, both material and non-material, that are a condition for various actors to engage in the process of urban water governance. Such structural configurations as argued by Scholars such as Poshai (2022) and Giddens (1984) can include the vision and mission statement of an institution, the institutional hierarchy of authority, operating procedures and codified rules, institutional ideologies, sanctions and discipline systems, principles and value systems, power relations, as well as institutional culture and traditions.

This thesis has found that without structural configurations, urban water governance cannot take place. In other words, because urban water governance is the implementation of the existing policies enforced through internal rules, principles and structures, such a process would not be possible without structural configurations. Thus, urban water governance is the put into practice of the existing structural configurations to bring about urban transformation or social change through the continuous provision of water services to all communities, including the urban poor. To establish the relationality between the structural configurations and the urban water governance process, the focus below is on how each of the main structural configurations influences urban water governance in the post-urban South Africa and specifically in Cape Town. The discussion in this chapter dovetails the empirical urban water governance process experiences in Cape Town with the theoretical and literature propositions provided in chapters two and three of this thesis. The main structural configurations that shape the actions and decisions of different urban water governance actors in Cape Town are summarised in the following diagram.

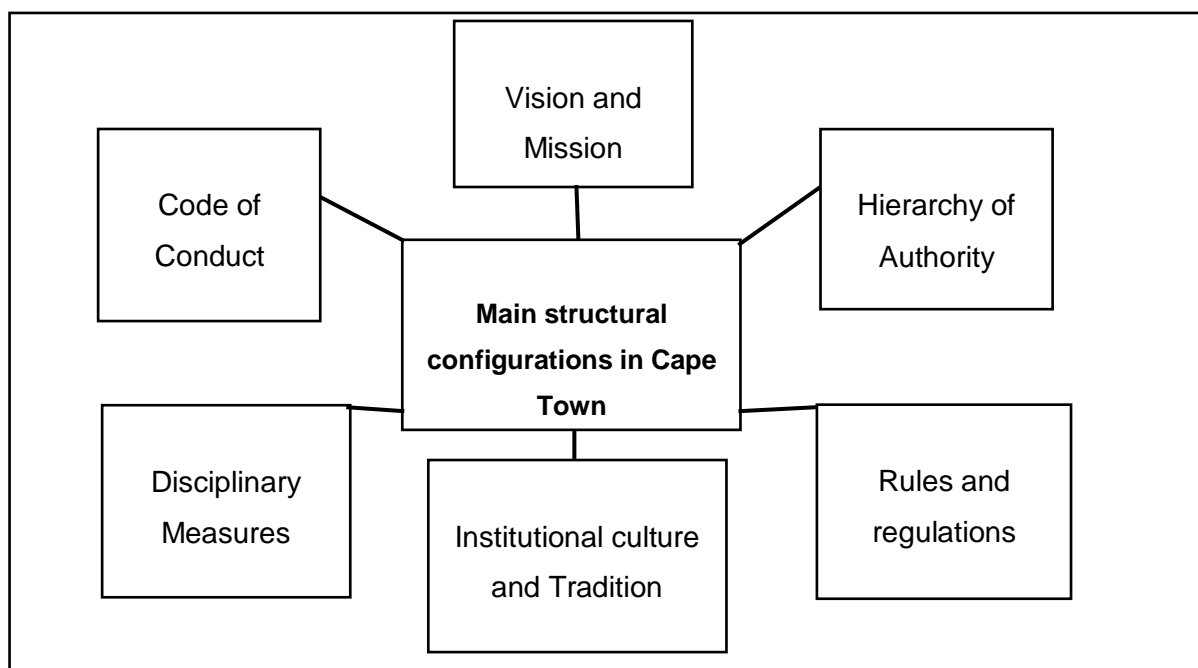


Figure 6: Structural configurations in Cape Town (Source: Author's construct, 2025).

5.3.1 Hierarchy of Authority

The hierarchy of authority in post-apartheid South African urban municipalities like Cape Town shapes how urban water policies are formulated and implemented. As illustrated in Figure 2 above, the Department of Water and Sanitation in Cape Town consist of a hierarchy of authority that requires middle and low-level officers to report to the top officers, such as the director and senior managers of the department. The hierarchies of authority in South African urban municipalities determine how the process of urban water governance should be carried out. It compels the directors of various departments, particularly the Department of Water and Sanitation, to oversee and approve all plans of action in relation to the process of urban water governance (Desai, 2024).

This thesis has found that for any water project to be implemented, there is a legal requirement for approval by the higher officers, such as the director of the department. This bureaucratic process determines the pace of the implementation of urban water policy and the provision of water services to all communities, especially the urban poor. Tien (2023) has pointed out that institutional hierarchies can make the decision-making process more technocratic and bureaucratic, resulting in serious delays in the implementation of projects. In such a tedious and bureaucratic process, it can be difficulty to hold people accountable because there are many hands involved.

Post-apartheid urban municipalities in South Africa are characterised by a hierarchy of authority with actors who constitute the supreme decision-making body when urban water legislation and policies are formulated and implemented. In this regard, Davis and Rhodes (2020) argue that the hierarchy of authority allows for the supervision of subordinates by their superiors based on work performance standards set out by the institution. Each superior uses performance standards developed by the institution to control their subordinates in carrying out their duties and, in turn, holds them responsible for the outcome. This study has found that senior officers, such as directors and top managers in Cape Town, consistently supervise how their subordinates should execute their functions to ensure effective urban water governance marked by the accessibility of water services to all communities.

In the process of urban water governance in Cape Town, the hierarchies of authority are conceived as vertical arrangements of positions showing various decision-making authority levels and organised responsibility levels, where lower positions on the hierarchy are supervised by higher ones in the formulation and implementation of the post-apartheid urban water policy in South Africa. However, it is important to register a point here, and it is that in Cape Town, the demarcation of powers and duties in the organogram at the municipal level seems to sometimes overlaps and is unclear. For instance, in South African municipalities such as Cape Town, senior professional officers and senior clerks seem to share the same mandate in relation to urban water governance and the implementation of various water projects. But urban municipalities appear to have justification for such overlaps in their hierarchy of authority. During an interview, one of the government officials insisted that:

‘In the public sector and especial at the urban municipal level, when necessary, normally due to workloads, we extend certain offices or positions through creating other offices in support of the same office. This means that based on the needs, the director of the department would approve the establishment of new positions which are designed to execute the same work, and such offices are normally titled different. For example, in our department, clerks and professional officers mainly share the same duties and responsibilities to support effective urban water governance in Cape Town’.

This study has found that in the structure of the South African post-apartheid urban municipalities such as Cape Town, the hierarchy of authority demonstrates the power of control and duty, illuminating lines of accountability in the formulation and

implementation of policies to support effective urban water governance. This finding is consistent with Shen et al. (2023), who have argued that the hierarchy of authority can specify the chains and lines of power relations and accountability within an organisation. It is this chain of power relations that determines the interaction between urban water governance actors in Cape Town.

This research has revealed that office barriers within urban municipalities, including Cape Town, are arranged and designed to promote effective urban water governance and the provision of water services to all communities. As shown in the preceding figure, post-apartheid urban municipalities in South Africa are marked by vertical positions that are meant to coordinate in the processes of urban transformation, including water governance and the provision of water services to local communities. Consonant with this finding, Tien (2023) contends that an effective hierarchy makes leaders and their subordinates accountable for results. The hierarchy of authority allows for collaboration through a chain of commands and supervision that can contribute to the successful formulation and implementation of urban water governance legislation and policies.

Despite its potential to promote accountability and effective urban water governance through collaboration, this study has found that the hierarchy of authority can contribute to serious bureaucratic delays in the formulation and implementation of the urban water policies and strategies in Cape Town. The study has found that before a certain urban water policy or project can be implemented, the approval by various offices in the hierarchy of authority within a municipality is a requirement. This process normally takes some time because senior directors and managers who approve the implementation of water policies and projects are usually occupied with many other responsibilities.

This thesis has found that low-level and middle-level officers cannot execute any water project without the approval of the directors and senior managers within their department. This normally contributes to a prolonged process of urban water governance and the provision of water services to local communities in the post-apartheid urban South Africa, including Cape Town. In the same sentiments, Poshai (2022) has also found that the hierarchical structure of urban councils causes delays in decision-making during the formulation and implementation of urban policies. The

process of approving policy drafts and suggestions takes long time because of the requirement for a step-by-step, cumbersome approval process from the bottom to the top of the hierarchy. Too many signatures are required for one letter, and this drags progress in urban water governance and the effective provision of water services to local communities in Cape Town.

This research has also found that the structure of the hierarchy of authority in the post-apartheid South African urban water governance institutions is usually infiltrated by politics. To be sure, in the post-apartheid urban South Africa, the hierarchical structures of urban water governance institutions such as municipalities provide some opportunities for the misuse or abuse of power by politically elected government officials. These elected officials would normally use power as a tool to manipulate administrative functions through advancing and promoting the agendas of their political affiliations. This then turns the structures or positions in the hierarchy of authority into political battlefields in which the plights of local communities concerning water services are no longer considered important.

These findings are congruent with Rosenbloom et al. (2022), who insist that most of the time, especially in democratic societies marked by different political parties, various interest' groups and social movements, institutional organograms or structures of the hierarchy of authorities are influenced and controlled by political interests. This research has revealed that the urban water governance process in Cape Town is executed through the interaction of various offices that constitute the hierarchy of authority. The hierarchy of authority establishes how things must be done within an urban water governance institution, such as a municipality. The process of urban water governance in Cape Town is a result of the consistent coordination between the arranged positions or office barriers within the municipality. Explaining how the hierarchy of authority shapes the process of urban water governance in Cape Town, during an interview, one of the key informants averred that:

'There are different ways in which power relations in this department shape water governance. To understand this, one can look at the position that I am occupying here (senior manager). I sometimes become very frustrated with the way things are structured here; when you want to initiate any water project, rules require us to follow a very long bureaucratic process which includes consulting the national ministry of water and provincial government. Besides the laws that require us to get approval from many individuals within the municipality and beyond, lack of

funds normally forces us to consult with the national government to request money to kick start the project. So, there is always an unnecessary bureaucratic red tape in the hierarchy that must be followed, and this delays the provision of water to our communities’.

The above extract demonstrates that the hierarchy of authority of the urban water governance institutions, like urban municipalities, has a direct influence on the way in which different actors engage in the process of urban water governance and the subsequent provision of water services to local communities. This study has found that due to the various signatures that are necessary before a certain water policy or project can be implemented, various projects have not materialised because the government would learn that by the time the project is approved, many things have changed including the fact that communities would have expanded and requires a broad and bigger water project than the one that way planed.

Commenting on the challenges associated with bureaucratic process and the hierarchy of authority within government institutions, such as urban municipalities, scholars, including Rosenbloom et al. (2022) and Riccucci (2021), argue that some of the policy proposals can be overtaken by events or time due to the long hierarchical process involved in government institutions. In most cases, when the urban water policy is implemented, it will no longer be relevant or applicable in certain quarters due to changing times and circumstances after the hierarchical delays.

Despite the inherent challenges associated with the hierarchy of authority in Cape Town, some positives can be mentioned. It is the finding of this study that the hierarchy of authority contributes to the promotion of accountability in urban water governance. In other words, the hierarchy of authority makes it possible for senior managers to ensure that decisions and actions of different urban water governance can be scrutinised against the existing institutional rules and regulations. This creates an environment where every actor or government employee involved in water governance is obliged to uphold the rules of the institution and act accordingly. This study has found that because of the existing hierarchy of authority in Cape Town, government employees and those who are working in water governance turn to comply with performance expectations. Commenting on how the

hierarchy of authority can influence the performance of employees in Cape Town, one of the key informants, a government official, during the interview averred that:

‘The good thing about the organisational structure or the hierarchy of authority in our department is that it makes people know that when you don’t do your work, there are those who are watching you. You don’t issue, so you just tell yourself, let me do my work so that others can also do their work. You see the way things are structured here, everything is connected... You do your work so that I can do my work. So, it’s like you do not have a choice but to work and work as expected because if you do not do your work, you are also impeding on others, and this can give you problems’.

Based on the above excerpt, it can be argued that the hierarchy of authority can increase performance in an urban water governance institution. In Cape Town’s water governance institutions, the hierarchy of authority compels government employees to work and deliver on expectations. In this regard, there is an element of the theory of structuration that seems to be relevant. In the structuration theory, Giddens (1984) argues that it is not the agency or employees that determine what must be done in an institution, but rather the structure foregrounds and predetermines what must be done and how it must be done.

Thus, the structure of an organisation has the potential to limit the autonomy of employees in taking decisions and actions about water affairs. In Cape Town, the hierarchy of authority obliges government official, particularly those involved in urban water governance, to report their work to their senior managers. Thus, this thesis argues that urban water governance decisions and actions of government officials in Cape Town are prefigured and inevitably determined by the structure of the institution. Another institutional aspect that seems to play a central role in shaping the decisions and actions of employees and other actors in the process of urban water governance in Cape Town is the vision and mission statement.

5.3.2 Vision and Mission Statement

One of the key features of an institution is the vision and mission statement. Literature shows that the vision of an institution can be understood as a clear statement stating that what an institution wants to achieve. Closely related to the vision of an institution is the mission, which is princely a statement of what must be done to accomplish the vision of a particular institution (Tien, 2023; Shen et al., 2023). This research has found that the vision and mission of the Cape Town Council play a central role in the process

of urban water governance. In this regard, the vision of the Cape Town Council reads as ‘a city of hope for all a prosperous, inclusive and healthy city where people can see their hopes of a better future for themselves, their children and their community become a reality’. It is from this vision that the Cape Town Department of Water and Sanitation draw its vision and principles in relation to urban water governance and the subsequent provision of water services to communities.

As a result, the vision of the Cape Town Department of Water and Sanitation read ‘By 2040, Cape Town will be a water-sensitive city that optimises and integrates the management of water resources to improve resilience, competitiveness and liveability for the prosperity of its people’. This study has found that when formulating and implementing urban water policies, the decisions and actions of government officials and different actors are guided by both the broad vision of the Cape Town Council and the vision of the water and sanitation department. This finding is in consonant with Rosenbloom et al. (2022), who argue that institutions create vision and mission statements to provide direction for all operational activities and rules are normally enacted to achieve the desired outcomes in an organisation.

This research has found that when formulating its vision and mission statements, the Cape Town Department of Water and Sanitation consider the contents and provisions of the national water legislation and policies. To be sure, the study has found that in the post-apartheid South Africa, the vision and mission statement of the local level urban water governance institutions are informed by the broader objectives of the urban water governance policy under the national Department of Water and Sanitation.

Put differently, the vision and mission statement of municipal urban water governance institutions such as the Cape Town Department of Water and Sanitation can be viewed as means to put into practice the national urban water policy in the post-apartheid South Africa. This point is supported by Murray et al. (2023), who confirm that local government is placed as the sphere of government that is close to the people. As a result of this, municipalities have a constitutional mandate to plan and deliver basic urban social services such as water to all communities in South Africa. This gives municipalities the power to formulate and implement strategies to support the implementation of national water legislation and policies to drive effective water supply

to communities. Commenting on how the vision and mission statements for water governance are formulated in Cape Town, during an interview, one of the government officials insisted that:

‘Every water policy or strategy that we formulate, and implement is framed from the vision of the Cape Town Department of Water and Sanitation. For example, our Cape Town Water strategy, which was formulated in 2019, alludes to the need for the continuous accessibility of water services to our communities. Our water strategy was formulated as a guiding document towards the realisation of the department’s vision, which is that by 2040, Cape Town will be a water-sensitive city that optimises and integrates the management of water resources to improve resilience, competitiveness and liveability for the prosperity of its people’.

The preceding excerpt demonstrates that when formulating and implementing urban water governance policies and strategies, the actions and decisions of government officials must be in line with the vision and mission statement of the department. Put simply, it is the vision and mission statement of the department that determines the way things must be done. This means that actors in the process of urban water governance are expected to direct their actions and daily activities towards the realisation of the vision and mission statement. It is the finding of this study that the vision of an institution is regarded as one of the key reference points for the decisions and actions of different urban water governance actors in the post-apartheid South African cities, such as Cape Town. This affirms the element of relationality between agency and structure in Giddens’s structuration theory. In the theory of structuration, which serves as the theoretical underpinnings of this research, Giddens (1984) argues that there is an interconnectedness between the actions of government employees and the way things are structured. Simply put, the structure of an institution can limit the creativity and thinking capabilities of its employees. This is because employees are expected to always act in accordance with the existing structural configurations, such as the vision and mission statement of an institution.

This research has also found that the mission statement of the Department of Water and Sanitation in Cape Town focuses on the provision of quality water services to all communities. The emphasis is on ensuring that communities have continuous access to water services. While the government has made progress in making this mission a reality, the implementation urban water policy is cut short through various challenges.

These include the limited financial and technical capacity of the municipality to implement urban water programs and projects. The study has found that both the vision and mission statements of the Cape Town Department of Water and Sanitation seek to direct the municipality towards improved water services to all communities. Water programs and projects are aligned with the vision and mission statement of the department. These findings support Poshai (2022), who argue that while the vision directs what the urban water policy should encapsulate theoretically, widespread consultation with stakeholders must always be done to give council officials the contextual practicalities of what needs to be in terms of the policy on the ground.

However, it is important to register a point here, and it is that the complementary relation between the vision of the Cape Town water and sanitation department and the existential lived experiences of the urban poor regarding water governance is dialectical. To be sure, the vision and mission statement of the Cape Town Council alludes to an inclusive city marked by the continuous working together between the government and its communities. But there is a constellation of contradictions that seem to quash such commitments, and these include, among others, the lack of coordination between the government and communities. As demonstrated in chapter six of this thesis, such a constellation of contradictions has contributed to poor urban water governance in the post-apartheid urban South Africa generally and in Cape Town in particular. Together with other structural configurations, such as the hierarchy of authority and the vision and mission statement embedded in urban Councils, the code of conduct also plays a fundamental role in shaping the decisions and actions of different urban water governance actors in Cape Town.

5.3.3 Code of Conduct

Institutions usually have their codes of conduct to foster the accepted behaviour and guide employees on performing their duties. Literature reveals that an institution's code of conduct is an arranged and documented set of rules and principles that are formulated to protect an institution and inform employees about what is expected from them. This study has found that the code of conduct is one of the key structural configurations that have a direct influence on urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa. In Cape Town, when engaging in the urban water governance process, all actors are expected to uphold the principles set out in the code of conduct. Cape Town's code of conduct emphasises that integrity, objectivity and public

responsibility should never be influenced or undermined by private interests while fulfilling urban water governance and the provision of water services to all communities. One of the key findings of this research is that urban water governance actors and public officials are expected to always uphold higher standards of ethics through doing what is right and of public benefit. Murray et al (2023) have also discovered that the code of conduct is fundamental in clearly pointing out the expected behaviour of employees across an institution in relation to objectivity, professionalism and integrity. Commenting on the role of the code of conduct in shaping urban water governance in Cape Town, one of the government officials during an interview has emphasised that:

‘Like in all municipalities across the country, we are required to do our work according to the existing code of conduct. Our code of conduct stipulates that all employees in our department should perform their duties in a professional way that promotes the needs of the people we serve. When formulating and implementing rules and policies for water governance, we are required to promote professionalism and honesty with an aim to provide water services to our communities. Our code of conduct is important because it provides an idea about the accepted behaviour to all employees within the department’.

The above citation demonstrates that when formulating and implementing urban water governance policies and rules in Cape Town, actors are guided by the existing code of conduct. This means that the behaviour of urban water governance actors and government officials is controlled through the existing code of conduct. This study has found that the decisions and actions of government officials participating in urban water governance in Cape Town are shaped by the principles set out in the code of conduct. Such principles include, among others, integrity and professionalism. This means that the code of conduct has a direct influence on the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. This research has found that in urban water governance, the code of conduct is one of the documents that prescribe how actors should behave and remain committed to promoting effective provision of water services to all communities.

Shen et al (2023) argue that the importance of an institution’s code of conduct lays in its potential to directly connect an organisation’s broader objectives and the fundamental values to employee behaviours and practices. This study has found that in urban water governance, the code of conduct can be viewed as a statement of

expectations from an institution to all employees participating in water affairs. During an interview, one of the key informants, a government official, averred that:

‘In our department, the code of conduct is crucial because it creates a sort of coordination and common understanding between senior officials and their subordinates. As a document accessible to all people in this department, it allows us to be able to tell when someone is acting out of order because the code of conduct stipulates what the right and accepted behaviour and service standards are. All employees in this department know that water rules and policies should aim at addressing the plights of the community. Our code of conduct is clear that urban water governance should be an inclusive and transparent process to drive effective provision of water services to our people’.

This research has found that the principles and standards that are set out in the existing code of conduct in Cape Town also include modernity. This means that one of the principles that guides actors in the process of urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water services to communities is modernity. In this regard, when formulating and implementing urban water governance legislation and policies, government officials are expected to promote the idea of modernity marked by the usage of technology and modern water infrastructure to provide water services to communities in Cape Town. As a result, modern urban governance styles also shape the decisions and actions of government officials in the process of urban water governance in Cape Town.

This study has found that the idea of modernity and the modern world influence the manner in which all actors view urban water governance and water supply. For instance, the concept towards promoting water taps inside every house demonstrates the principles and views of the modern world. Furthermore, one of the principles enshrined in the code of conduct in Cape Town is professionalism, which also covers how government officials should dress appropriately to reflect and uphold modern world standards. This also shapes the way these actors perceive their role in the urban water governance process and the supply of urban water services to local communities.

This research has found that another principle that is outlined in the code of conduct is equality. This principle also shapes the decisions and actions of actors in the process of urban water governance. For instance, in Cape Town, when formulating and implementing various urban water governance policies and strategies,

government officials are expected to foster equality through ensuring that there is equal access to water services. In other words, guided by the principle of equality provided for in the code of conduct, the decisions and actions of government officials and all the actors involved in urban water governance should seek to ameliorate the plights of the urban poor in relation to water access. In this regard, scholars such as Tien (2023) argue that public institutions align their code of conduct as a means to achieve a just and equal society. Guided by their code of conduct, government officials in Cape Town are expected to work towards a just and equal society through ensuring that water programs and projects are designed and implemented as means to close the gap between the urban poor and the privileged groups. Commenting on the role of the code of conduct in shaping the decision and actions of the actors involved in urban water governance, one of the key informants insisted that:

‘The code of conduct in our department is one of the key documents that acts as a blueprint for how officials should foster an accepted behaviour in performing their duties. Our code of conduct outlines various principles that should always inform the decisions and actions we take to ensure better provision of water services to local communities. All government officials are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the existing code of conduct so that they can do their work accordingly. As a result, an infringement of the code of conduct can lead to serious actions taken against you’.

The above citation demonstrates that the code of conduct serves as one of the fundamental documents that guide the decisions and actions of government officials in the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. This study has found that because of the serious consequences associated with infringement of the code of conduct, the decisions and actions of government officials can be limited. Put differently, the point is that government officials have a limited freedom to make decisions and choices in the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. This means that the potential and capacity of government officials are confined through the enforcement of the existing principles enshrined in the code of conduct.

This confirms Giddens’s point made in the structuration theory that the structure of an institution can be excessively rigid in such a way that it confines the creativity and potential of human agency to make decisions (Giddens, 1984). In Cape Town, the decisions and actions of government officials in relation to water governance

and the subsequent supply of urban water services are strictly restrained through the code of conduct. Another important aspect of structural configurations that has an influence on the decision-making process regarding urban water governance in Cape Town is the rules and regulations of an institution.

5.3.4 Rules and Regulations

Rules and regulations in any institution play an important role in providing a framework for all actors, including employees, to follow when performing their duties (Hinterleitner et al., 2024). This research has found that institutional rules and regulations are crucial for ensuring a harmonious and productive urban water governance institution. The implementation of clear rules and regulations serves as guidelines that help government officials to maintain order, professional conduct, and ethical practices. Urban water governance is executed through applying the existing rules and regulations. This research has revealed that urban water governance is a complex and diverse process that includes different actors, including communities.

Institutional rules and regulations are fundamental in fostering coordination and common understanding between all stakeholders involved in urban water governance and the subsequent supply of urban water services in Cape Town. This is consonant with Desai (2024), who contends that organisations create and apply rules and regulations to ensure continuous coordination and productivity within an institution. This research has found that in Cape Town, the existing rules and regulations have been designed to support effective urban water governance and the provision of water services to all communities. In this regard, one of the key informants, a government official, during an interview, indicated that:

‘The role of institutional rules and regulations is to drive the department towards achieving effective urban water governance in Cape Town. In our department, rules are designed to force compliance and encourage employees to perform their responsibilities and ensure that basic services such as water are continuously provided to our local communities. Because we all know what these rules and regulations say, we are delivering on expectations’.

Based on the above citation, one can argue that institutional rules and regulations are fundamental to creating order and working together in the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. This study has found that, in urban water governance, rules and regulations also play a significant role in promoting

accountability. Because of the existing rules and regulations, government officials and other urban water governance actors can be held accountable for their decisions and actions. Institutional rules and regulations make it possible for subordinates to hold their senior officials accountable in the urban water governance process. Furthermore, communities and other interest groups can question and demand answers in the process of urban water governance and the provision of water services by applying the existing rules and regulations. Commenting on the issue of accountability in urban water governance, one of the key informants insisted that:

‘You see, the good things about institutional rules and regulations are that they make the process of urban water governance transparent through requiring senior officials to consult and report on issues of water affairs. This helps the department in promoting accountability. Here, you cannot do whatever you feel is right; there are rules and regulations, and one must follow and apply the existing rules. Whether you are a senior manager or occupying an entry-level position, our rules are to be followed and always applied. For example, when we formulate and implement our water policies and strategies, there are rules that we must follow; otherwise, an infringement of rules and regulations can result in serious consequences for all of us’.

This research has found that when formulating and implementing urban water governance policies and strategies in Cape Town, government officials are guided by rules and regulations. Such institutional rules and regulations are created to ensure that government officials do not abuse or misuse their powers in the process of urban water governance. This means that the existing institutional rules and regulations determine the right course of action for all government officials and other urban water governance stakeholders in Cape Town. This research reveals that when participating in the process of urban water governance, the decisions and actions of all actors involved are guided by the existing institutional rules and regulations. These institutional rules are crafted based on the existing post-apartheid legislation in South Africa. These legislation, among others, includes the South African constitution, the Public Service Act, the National Water Act and the National Water Services Act. Urban water governance institutions in South Africa create rules and regulations to give effect to such national legislation. This research reveals that urban water governance is the implementation of the national water legislation and policies. In doing so, municipalities

formulate rules and regulations to enforce the implementation of the urban water policy in the post-apartheid South Africa.

This research has found that rules and regulations in Cape Town make the decisions and actions of different urban water governance actors predictable. To be sure, institutional rules and regulations regularise the decisions and actions of actors in the process of urban water governance. In literature, this is also confirmed by Poshai (2022) who argues that institutional rules and regulations normally lead to the predictability of the actions and outcomes of the public policy-making process. Furthermore, it is the finding of this study that some of the institutional rules and regulations are not crafted but practised. In such cases, there is no specific physical documentation of rules and regulations to refer to when actors engage in the process of urban water governance. But because of the regularisation of procedures, decisions and actions of government officials and other stakeholders in urban water governance, results or outcomes can be predetermined. Commenting about the role of institutional rules and regulations on the urban water governance process in Cape Town, one of the key informants during an interview emphasised that:

‘I am working in the area urban water policy formulation. My role includes the formulation of water policies and strategies in Cape Town. There are departmental rules and regulations that we must follow when formulating water policies and techniques, and one of such rules has to do with coordination and compliance. This means that when doing our work, we should always ensure that our water policies and strategies are not in conflict with the national water laws and policies. You see, this tells you that rules and regulations determine what must be done, and, in such situations, you do not enjoy much freedom to be creative and come up with new ideas; no rules that tell you what to do and how to do it. Water governance is a . . . Still, departmental. Still, departmental rules and regulations that we must follow when doing our work here are mostly static and difficult to change socially diverse process, and community needs are changing rapidly. Still, departmental rules and regulations that we must follow when doing our work here are mostly static and difficult to change’.

Based on the preceding citation, two points can be made. Firstly, it is that the national government holds an enduring authority over the issues of municipal water affairs. Put differently, the point is that post-apartheid national water laws and policies in South Africa give more powers to the central government than the local government. This research has found that municipalities have limited autonomy in urban water governance. Reason being that the existing urban water governance

legislation and policies in the post-apartheid South Africa place limited powers on municipalities, with more authority vested in the central or national government.

Municipalities are considered more as implementers of the urban water governance legislation and policies formulated at the national level. Secondly, it is that institutional rules and regulations have the potential to limit or discourage creativity in the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. This is largely because institutional rules and regulations determine what must be done and how it must be done. By doing so, institutional rules take away the autonomy of the actors in the process of urban water governance and the ability to be creative. Thus, institutional rules and regulations embedded in Cape Town have a direct influence on the process of urban water governance. Closely related to institutional rules and regulations, disciplinary measures of an organisation are another aspect of structural configurations that shape the process of urban water governance.

5.3.5 Institutional Disciplinary Measures

Institutional disciplinary measures are punishments that are imposed or invoked against government officials who do not comply with the existing institutional rules and regulations. This research has found that in Cape Town, government officials who fail to adhere to stipulated rules, procedures, and instructions in the process of urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water services to local communities are subjected to disciplinary measures or institutional sanctions. Such disciplinary measures include penalties, hearings that can lead to demotion and dismissal. The findings of this study show that urban water governance institutions have sanctions that are meant to correct the behaviour of actors in the process of urban water governance in Cape Town.

In literature, these findings are consistent with Hinterleitner et al (2024), who argue that institutional disciplinary measures specify the limit of permissible action and help to avoid a breach of institutional orders by the actors. This research has found that in Cape Town, institutional sanctions have been used to ensure that the performance of government officials who work in the area of urban water governance is according to the expected organisational standards. Because of the existing institutional disciplinary measures, when performing their duties and

responsibilities in relation to urban water governance, government officials turn to work under fear of punishment.

This study has found that when engaging in the formulation and implementation of urban water governance legislation and policies, government officials have to consider disciplinary measures. This is important as the failure to comply can lead to corrective measures imposed against the concerned actors in the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. This research has also revealed that institutional disciplinary measures are important to promote accepted behaviours among actors in urban water governance. However, it is equally important to register a point here, and it is that institutional disciplinary measures can prevent critical thinking and innovation within an urban water governance institution. This results in the urban water policy implementation failure, characterised by poor water access, particularly in the low-income communities of Cape Town. When government officials are working under the fear of being punished, they turn to limit their decisions and actions only to produce the same results all over again (Poshai, 2022).

The findings of this research show that the existing institutional disciplinary measures contribute to limited autonomy of the actors in the urban water governance process. This means that due to disciplinary measures, the decisions and actions of different urban water governance actors become predictable and inflexible to social change. This research has found that institutional disciplinary measures are created to prevent the undesired practice in the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. Such practices which are common in the post-apartheid South African public sector include, among others, maladministration, irregular expenditures, fruitless and wasteful expenditures. These bad practices in the public sector contribute to poor urban water governance marked by perpetual water access inequalities, with most of the urban poor trapped in informal settlements with a lack of or no access to water services. The findings of this research demonstrate that urban water governance institutions in Cape Town have established disciplinary measures to punish all government officials and various stakeholders who might be involved in the infringement or violation of the existing rules and regulations. During an interview, one of the government officials claimed that:

‘Disciplinary measures are important, but you see, the problem is that most of the time they are used to advance certain political interests. In these urban water governance institutions, people would use the existing institutional sanctions or disciplinary measures to demote or even dismiss government officials for political reasons. This affects the effectiveness of these institutions in delivering urban water services to communities. My point is basically that when infused with politics, disciplinary measures can lead to an urban water governance crisis in which qualified officials are demoted or dismissed to fulfil political agendas’.

The findings of this research reveal that institutional disciplinary measures are one of the key structural configurations that shape the decisions and actions of government officials in the urban water governance process in Cape Town. For example, in Cape Town, government officials and various stakeholders participating in the urban water governance process have to be familiar with the existing institutional disciplinary measures and how these can be imposed on all members who do not act accordingly. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that certain actions, which are believed to carry the potential of benefiting the communities in relation to water access, can sometimes not be executed because members are in fear of the existing politicised institutional sanctions. This research has revealed that government officials and different stakeholders who participate in urban water governance act in a manner that will protect their jobs.

This shows that in the process of urban water governance, decisions and actions are not always taken because they are right, but sometimes this is done to ensure job security. This means that in the formulation and implementation of urban water governance policies and strategies, actors are required to balance their own interests with community needs. The conundrum is that when urban water governance actors are more concerned about protecting their jobs, community water plights are sacrificed. The point is that while institutional disciplinary measures are imperative to promote the accepted behaviour within an institution, they can also contribute to poor urban water governance marked by the swelling of the urban peripheral areas, with a lack of access to water services in Cape Town. The culture and tradition of an institution are one of the fundamental aspects of structural configurations that can shape the formulation and implementation of urban water governance policies and strategies.

5.3.6 Institutional Culture and Tradition

An institutional culture and tradition encompass the norms, values and ideologies that shape and sustain an institution or organisation (Desai, 2024). The institutional culture and tradition reflect the normal way of how things are done within an institution. This study has found that one of the key structural configurations that has an impact on the decisions and actions of the actors in the process of urban water governance is the culture and tradition of the institutions. Institutions responsible for urban water governance in Cape Town have, over time, developed a culture and tradition that shape the daily activities of the different stakeholders involved in the formulation and implementation of urban water legislation and policies. For instance, in Cape Town, when formulating and implementing urban water governance legislation and policies, government officials must comply with the normal way of doing things, and this includes ensuring consistency with the existing national legislation. This has over time formed part of the culture and tradition of the institution.

This research has revealed that urban water governance in Cape Town is shaped by institutional culture and traditions that were inherited from the system of European colonialism. This is reflected in different ways of doing things, which include, among others, the mode of communicating in English. To be sure, it has become part of the culture and tradition of the urban water governance institutions in Cape Town that all official documents that deal with water be written in English. During an interview, one of the government officials insisted that:

‘You see, there are things that have become normal such that you cannot question them. It is not hard to see how the colonial system has shaped these institutions which we are working. When engaging in water issues, the official language is English, and you see sometimes people are not all good in understanding and speaking this language, but it is the culture and tradition of this institution. I can tell you that sometimes people here would sign some documents without fully understanding the contents because most of us are not good at English. That is how difficult it is, but because it is something that forms part of the way of doing things, we are expected to learn every day. So, the culture and tradition of these water governance institutions is one of the main factors that keep on impacting water governance and how we engage with one another and with different stakeholders’.

This research has found that institutional culture and tradition play a central role in shaping the outcomes or results of the urban water governance in Cape Town. For

instance, the findings of this study show that government officials can sometimes face difficulties in communicating with the colonial bequeath English language, which has become part of the culture and tradition of the urban water governance institutions in Cape Town. These findings are consistent with Pollard et al (2023), who have argued that one of the pertinent challenges in contemporary South Africa is the colonial and apartheid culture that is embedded in current government institutions. This makes things difficult for the present government and its ambitions for social transformation because colonialism and its later stage of the apartheid regime in South Africa have, over time, infused its ethos and norms into the structure and design of public institutions.

This research has found that in Cape Town, it is the culture and tradition that when the municipality has limited financial capacity to execute its urban water governance duties, which also include the provision of water services to local communities, it normally requests funds from the national and provincial government. This forms part of the institutional culture and tradition that has developed over time since the implementation of European colonialism in South Africa and its principles regulating the relation between the central, provincial and local government. This study has found that part of the institutional culture and tradition that is embedded in the Cape Town Council is the coordination or working together between the three spheres of government, namely the national, provincial and local government. Urban water governance institutions have incorporated into their norms and standards the need for effective working relations between the three spheres of government in South Africa. This institutional culture and tradition continue to influence the process of urban water governance and the provision of water services to local communities of Cape Town.

However, this research reveals for instance that the coordination between the three spheres of government is not effective especially in relation to urban water governance. The challenge, as the findings of this research reveal, is that the national government typically take a long period of time to approve some of the financial support to urban municipalities, including Cape Town. Furthermore, the findings of this study show that one of the serious challenges that is inherent in the institutional culture and tradition in Cape Town is the bureaucratic process that must be followed before any urban water project or policy can be implemented. In the extant literature, this institutional culture and tradition, according to scholars such as Ordor and Michell

(2022), has been inherited from the previous government of the colonial and apartheid system in South Africa. Commenting on the impact of institutional culture and tradition on urban water governance, one of the key informants, a government official, emphasised that:

‘I have learned that institutionalised norms and standards, which form part of the institutional culture and tradition, can be a serious barrier towards achieving the goals of an institution. In this department, there is a culture and tradition of bureaucratic institutional processes, which basically means that before any urban water governance policy or strategy can be approved, certain procedures must be followed. You see, it can take some years for the department to approve and implement a certain water strategy because a wide process of consultations involving different stakeholders, including the communities, must be followed. The benefits of such a process are obvious, but my point is that this institutionalised way of doing things contributes to serious delays and huge backlogs in water access’.

This research has found that institutional culture and tradition embedded in Cape Town Councils form the basis for the formulation and implementation of urban water governance policies and strategies. This means that when executing their duties and engaging with different urban water governance stakeholders, government officials are informed by the culture and tradition of the institution. This shapes the process of urban water governance in the sense that the institutional culture and tradition basically determine the decisions and actions of the government officials. For example, as emphasised in the above citation, institutionalised norms and standards such as bureaucratic processes contribute to the delayed implementation of water strategies and projects. Furthermore, the findings of this research demonstrate that when recently appointed government officials perform their roles and responsibilities in relation to urban water governance, they are expected to consult with other officials who have been part of the institution for a long period of time.

The supposition is that these officials have a vast understanding of the institutional culture and tradition, which means that they should know how things are done in the institution. In a similar way, Cinnamon and Noth (2023) argue that institutions maintain their culture and tradition by creating an environment where longstanding employees can be able to teach and train all those who join the institution. This study has found that in Cape Town, institutional culture and traditions are transferred from one generation to the other through the mentorship and supervision of new officials by the

longstanding employees of the urban water governance institution. This is how institutional culture and tradition are maintained in urban water governance.

This chapter has so far demonstrated the relationality between the urban water governance process and the existing structural configurations in the post-apartheid urban South Africa, with particular focus on Cape Town. The thesis argues that due to the existing structural configurations, urban water governance has become a prefigured process that confines the decisions and actions of the actors involved. This contributes to poor urban water governance marked by the perennial challenge of water access inequalities in urban peripheral areas of Cape Town. Due to such local government challenges, Cape Town has become a fractured urban space characterised by excessive water access inequalities in which the urban poor are trapped in informal settlements with a lack of or no water services.

5.4 Urban Water Governance in a Fractured Cape Town

This research has found that the existing structural configurations have contributed to a disintegrated and fractured urban space marked by poor urban water governance and the limited financial capacity of the local authorities to supply water services in Cape Town. In literature, fractured cities have been considered as “urban spaces that are marked by a basic duality of rich and poor, formal and informal, organised and disintegrated, ruled and unruled, separated and linked at the same time” (Pollard et al., 2023: 1). Such cities are also marked by social disorder, economic decline and social conflict (Tien, 2023). The findings of this study demonstrate that Cape Town can be characterised as one of the post-apartheid fractured cities in South Africa. Due to the failure of the government to provide urban social services like water and housing, Cape Town has become a basic duality of rich and poor. Commenting on this, one of the key informants (a retired municipal official) insisted that:

‘You see, Cape Town is marked by the growing problem of inequalities, especially when it comes to living areas and basic services like housing and water services. I can tell you that people who are living in suburbs and higher economic zones do not face the same water challenges encountered by other residents in poor townships in the Cape Flats, including the Delft community. When you take a close look at the struggles faced by those people who are living in poor townships, you can reasonably say that these communities are not part of Cape Town. I was working for the municipality for over 25 years, and I know that there is this growing attempt that present Cape Town as a beautiful city known for effective governance

and service delivery. But we know, this is not true people in townships are suffering, and there is limited access to water services. And most of the people who are working for the government, including our politicians, cannot live in such bad conditions in townships. So, the existing laws and policies for water governance have not yet changed the lives of most residents living in townships in Cape Town’.

Based on the above extract, one can argue that Cape Town is a fractured city marked by water access inequalities. The stringency of structural configurations, such as institutional culture and tradition, has led to poor water governance and the limited technical and financial capacity of the local government to provide water services to communities, especially the urban poor. Because of the persistent water access inequalities, Cape Town is marked by social disintegration and conflicts, especially in urban poor communities. This thesis argues that Cape Town is a fractured city due to a contested planning and urban water governance system emanating from local governance failure. Local authority in Cape Town is fraught with weak regulatory systems to facilitate the delivery of council functions such as the continuous supply of urban social services, including water and housing. The findings of this research demonstrate that without an effective urban water governance system, the local authority in Cape Town is often abused by residents, officials, government and politicians. According to scholars such as Selepe (2023), when municipal systems collapse, the practice and conduct of urban transformation, particularly urban water governance and the subsequent provision of water services to communities, become contested and haphazard. As this thesis argues, these are the signs of a fractured city in the post-apartheid South Africa. One of the senior managers during an interview suggested that:

‘I should tell you that the government, through its various planning and water governance apparatus, including laws and policies, has committed itself to changing the lives of the people for the better. I must, however, highlight the fact that the government has worked hard to redress the colonial and apartheid legacy in terms of spatial and water governance planning . Cape Town remains one of the highly unequal cities, with most of the poor population living in townships that have limited access to basic water services. It would not be prudent of me to think that everyone in Cape Town has been impacted by our post-apartheid water laws and policies... No, No, No, there is still much work that as the government we need to embark on to improve equal access to water services in Cape Town’.

This means that despite the official end of the colonial and apartheid regimes in 1994, Cape Town remains one of the highly unequal cities in South Africa. Most of the urban

poor population is still struggling to get basic services, including water. This constitutes one of the key challenges facing the people in Cape Town townships. This thesis argues that, guided by the existing structural configurations, the government has not been effective in dismantling the colonial and apartheid bequeathed water access inequalities in Cape Town. Research findings demonstrate that fragmented water laws and policies combined with inflexibly structural configurations have contributed to the persistent water access inequalities in the post-apartheid South Africa, particularly in Cape Town. Pollard et al (2023) argue that due to such inconsistencies, there has been growing discoordination and tensions between the communities and the urban authorities in Cape Town. These inconsistencies often manifest in the exponential decline of community participation and violent community protests, especially in Cape Town townships.

So far, this chapter has demonstrated that structural configurations have a direct influence on the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. In this regard, when formulating and implementing urban water policies, government officials and various actors are required to comply with the existing structural configurations embedded in the post-apartheid urban councils in South Africa, including the Cape Town urban council. For example, government officials are expected to align their decisions and actions concerning urban water governance with institutional rules and regulations. The findings of this research have revealed that an infringement of the existing structural configurations in the urban water governance process can result in serious actions like demotion and dismissal of government officials. The study has found that urban water governance institutions in Cape Town have established institutional sanctions and rules that are meant to control the behaviour and actions of government officials when participating in the process of urban water governance. In this regard, in the process of urban water governance in Cape Town, structural configurations contribute to local governance failure marked by the persistent lack of access to water services, especially in urban peripheral areas.

The thesis argues that the existing structural configurations embedded in the post-apartheid South African urban councils, like Cape Town, are in part responsible for the lack of creativity and innovation in the process of urban water governance. Put differently, structural configurations regularise and make predictable the decisions and actions of government officials and other stakeholders involved in the process of urban

water governance in Cape Town. Based on the findings of this study, the thesis argues that structural configurations partly serve as objective conditions that make possible the failure of both the national and local government to formulate and implement effective urban water policies in the post-apartheid South African cities, including Cape Town. To be sure, the rigidity and conservative nature of the existing structural configurations, such as the code of conduct and institutional rules, are incapable of fostering effective urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water services to the majority of the urban poor across Cape Town. Communities are in constant flux and change is inevitable. Thus, conservative structural configurations may not contribute to the desired urban transformation characterised by effective urban water governance in the post-apartheid urban South Africa.

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented and discussed the main research findings concerning the influence of structural configurations on the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. Based on numerous key informants' interviews conducted, the chapter has demonstrated that structural configurations partly contribute to urban water policy implementation failure, characterised by the persistent water access inequalities in Cape Town. The chapter has argued that the existing structural configurations, including the hierarchy of authority and institutional culture, limit the autonomy of government officials and various actors when participating in the formulation and implementation of urban water governance policies and strategies in Cape Town. The chapter demonstrated that in the process of urban water governance, the decisions and actions of different actors, including government officials, are confined through the existing structural configurations embedded in the post-apartheid South African urban councils, including Cape Town. This chapter has also shown that aspects of structural configurations like institutional culture and tradition partly serve as objective conditions that make possible the challenge of urban water policy failure in post-apartheid South African cities, particularly in Cape Town. The ensuing chapter seeks to respond to the third objective of this study through an empirical analysis of the aspect of community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town.

CHAPTER SIX

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS IN URBAN WATER GOVERNANCE IN CAPE TOWN

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has presented and discussed the findings of this study with particular emphasis on the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town. This sixth chapter of the thesis presents and discusses the findings of the study with particular focus on the aspect of community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town. Based on key informants' interviews conducted, the chapter responds to the third sub-research question stated as what is the role of communities in urban water governance in Cape Town? Through an analysis of the experiences of different actors, including the urban poor, the chapter critiques the extent to which local communities participate in urban water governance in Cape Town. Put differently, this chapter focuses on examining the effectiveness of the various mechanisms for community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town.

To be sure, the chapter discusses the role of the existing mechanisms, such as ward councillors, ward committees and public meetings in promoting community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town. The central argument of this chapter is that despite the existing mechanisms, community participation in urban water governance remains a key challenge, manifesting in urban water policy implementation failure at the grassroots level. The chapter suggests that this urban water policy implementation failure has contributed to excessive water access inequalities, marked by the majority of the urban poor trapped in peripheral areas with a lack of water services across Cape Town. Below are the presentation and discussion of the main findings of the study with particular focus on the extent of community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town.

6.2 Community Participation in Urban Water Governance in Cape Town

Community participation is one of the fundamental aspects of urban water governance. Post-apartheid South African urban water governance legislation, such as the Water Services Act and Municipal Systems Act, emphasises the importance of promoting community participation both in the formulation and implementation of water

policies and strategies. This study has found that the element of community participation is regarded as one of the key factors that determine effective urban water governance in Cape Town. Various government documents, including the Cape Town water strategy, have been formulated and implemented to promote the practice of community participation in urban water governance. One of the key informants during an interview explained:

‘You see, community involvement in the governance process is crucial because it gives people an opportunity to participate in matters that affect the communities. Because of that, in Cape Town, the government encourages the continuous participation of communities in the water governance process. The Cape Town water strategy is an existing example of documents that we have established to guide the government and communities on how to work together in ensuring that there is continuous provision of water services to our people. But I must say that these are just documents that guide the process, it takes commitment from us the government together with communities to ensure that we collaborate well’.

This research has found that in post-apartheid South Africa, the government and municipalities are legally compelled to promote community participation in urban water governance. In this regard, the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act No. 32 of 2000) and the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act No. 117 of 1998) are other pieces of legislation that promote community participation and regulate the functions of municipalities to bring about effective and inclusive urban water governance in Cape Town. Scholars such as Selepe (2023) argue that municipalities, in their capacity as the third and lowest sphere of government and the one that functions closest to communities, have often been described as comprising the sphere of government that is tasked mainly with the development and provision of services to communities, including water. However, the study has found that in Cape Town, the practice of community participation in urban water governance has not been effective in bringing the voices of the people to shape the formulation and implementation of the post-apartheid urban water policy. The reason is being that local government is marked by both the limited technical and financial capacity to ensure the effective inclusion of the communities in urban water governance.

The findings of this study show that in Cape Town, the model of urban water governance assumes a top-down paradigm marked by the central role of the three spheres of government in the formulation and implementation of urban water policies

and strategies. This is mostly done through the suppression of the role of communities in the decision-making process. This is the case despite the documented need for the government to promote community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town. These findings are consistent with both Finkeldey (2022) and Umoh (2022), who argue that the current state of local government in South Africa reflects many challenges related to service delivery despite good local government legislation that promotes public participation and service delivery. The findings of this research also indicate that various environmental forces, including cultural and social, political, technological and economic factors, influence the process of community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town. Commenting on the current nature of community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town, one of the government officials during an interview indicated that:

‘The good thing about our municipalities in South Africa, including our municipality here in Cape Town, is that there is a strong legal framework that guides us in executing our responsibilities like water provision. I have been working for this municipality for 22 years now, and one thing I know for sure is that we embrace community involvement in urban governance. We are not working alone here; the community also form part of our decision-making processes. But one must be honest with you, the government have the final say in relation to what must be done. We do consider the needs and views of the communities to ensure that we respond to them accordingly through the formulation and implementation of community-relevant urban water policies’.

Based on the preceding citation, this thesis argues that the participation of communities in urban water governance does not necessary imply that communities enjoy the authority to determine the urban water governance policy direction. Reason being that the government have the final decision-making powers over what must inform the formulation and implementation of urban water governance policies and strategies. To be sure, the views and inputs of communities hardly make it to the level of urban water governance policy formulation and implementation. The prevalent decision-making authority of the government silences the interests of the communities in relation to the urban water governance process.

Congruently with these research findings, Selepe (2023) contends that in post-apartheid South Africa, the centralisation of decision-making concentrates power at the top of the organisational hierarchy and forgets about the poorest of the poor

and the marginalised, such as women and people living with disability. Because of the dominant role of the government in the process of development and transformation, including urban water governance in Cape Town, the plights of the urban poor are mostly marginalised during public policy formulation and implementation. As this thesis argues, this has contributed to the urban water policy implementation failure in the post-apartheid urban South Africa and in Cape Town in particular.

This research has found that the practice of community participation in urban water governance is cut short through various challenges, including a lack of social trust. In this regard, because of the inability of the government to fulfil its promises in relation to service delivery, communities have lost trust and confidence in government institutions. The findings of this research reveal that communities are no longer interested in participating in urban water affairs. In relation to these research findings, Shunglu et al. (2022) contend that the urban water governance process in Cape Town rather demonstrates an emphasis on political interest to elected officials more than the grassroots desires.

This thesis contends that often, the policy making process for effective urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water services in Cape Town is based on the political vision, mandates, manifesto promises, and ideologies. Authorised public policies are usually targeted to deliver specific self-interested outcomes at the expense of the desired demands of the communities in relation to water access. Commenting on the issue of the lack of trust in the process of community participation for improved urban water governance in Cape Town, one of the community leaders vehemently asserted that:

‘Look, the government uses our communities as places to get political support. These communities have shown interest in working together with the local government here in Cape Town. Still, you see, when the same government does not deliver on its promises, you become discouraged. As community leaders, we have been engaging with the councillors to make sure that there is a good relationship between our communities and the government, but such efforts failed because, as I speak to you today, you can go around and ask people, they will tell you, the communities do not trust the government. You see, you report your water demands to the municipality, they say we have noted your issues, go home, we shall come, and you wait and wait, they do not come, and you must

follow up again. That's exactly what has destroyed trust between us and the government *asisabathembi tuu*- we do not trust them anymore'.

The above citation demonstrates that the relation between the communities and the government in Cape Town is not conducive to effective community participation in urban water governance. This thesis has found that when communities do not trust the government, this normally results in a lack of community participation in urban transformation processes, including urban water governance and the continuous provision of water services to all people. Despite various post-apartheid South African legislation and policies emphasising the necessity for the government to promote community participation in urban water governance, the decision-making process in urban water governance remains a top-down approach.

This thesis argues that a successful completion of the community engagement processes in accordance with the legislative standard is lacking in the policy formulation process for effective urban water governance in Cape Town. Similarly, Pollard et al (2023) argue that public views are necessary and are considered as part of that recommendation that should come before the executive mayor and council for approval. Therefore, this thesis suggests that it is a lacuna in urban water governance policy formulation and implementation processes that the council considers a draft statement devoid of community input in Cape Town.

This research has also found that effective community participation in urban water governance demands time from both the government officials and community residents. However, key informants interviews revealed that time constraints are another factor that contributes to the lack of community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town. To be sure, both the government officials and community residents have busy schedules that make it hard for them to engage in the practice of community participation in urban water governance. Such findings are also confirmed by other scholars, including Cinnamon and Noth (2023), who maintain that they view time as a constraint or obstacle to public participation because participatory techniques regularly require vast time and power, and most people are unwilling to participate.

While both the government officials and community residents recognise the significance of community participation for improved urban water governance in

Cape Town, some research participants during interviews indicated that community participation costs time and money. Because of that, community residents normally become reluctant and discouraged from attending the arranged community participation sessions. One of the community residents during an interview has indicated that community participation in urban water governance is time-consuming.

‘I do not attend community participation sessions in my area because I am busy. You know, my problem with public consultation sessions in this community is that they take a lot of time from us residents, the session will start in the morning until afternoon, and you spend the whole day listening to government officials talking about their problems as the government, justifying why they are not providing services to the communities. Unfortunately, I am running my small shop here, I do not have time to be away for almost the whole day’.

The findings of this study suggest that one of the key constraints to effective community participation in urban water governance is poor leadership. According to Baumgart (2023), good leadership qualities imply that leaders can effectively and efficiently use their skills to direct the activities of subordinates to achieve reasonable organisational goals. However, this research has found that in Cape Town, the lack of effective leadership has contributed to the failure of the government to promote community participation in urban water governance. The process of urban governance in Cape Town is characterised by a lack of effective leadership, and this has led to disjointed community participation in urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water services to all people, especially the urban poor. The success and failure of an organisation depend on the leadership’s knowledge, ability and skills (Patrick, 2021).

In principle, the practice of community participation in urban water governance should be an accessible and responsible process through which individuals and groups within a typical geographical area exchange views and influence decision-making to incorporate their needs and demands in relation to water affairs (Pollard et al., 2023). Key informants’ interviews have revealed that poor public leadership is among the main challenges that hinder effective community participation in the post-apartheid South African urban water governance, especially in Cape Town. This study has discovered that in post-apartheid South Africa, different mechanisms for community

participation, including community development workers, have been designed and implemented to improve urban water governance.

6.3 Mechanisms for Community Participation in Urban Water Governance

Since the dawn of democracy in South Africa in 1994, different mechanisms for promoting community participation in urban water governance have been implemented. Such mechanisms include ward councillors, area co-ordinating teams, ward committees, public meetings and community development workers. In this section of the thesis, the intention is to assess the effectiveness of the existing mechanisms to foster community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town. The findings of this study demonstrate that in Cape Town, the government has implemented various mechanisms to ensure effective community participation in urban water governance.

However, as discussed in the ensuing section, these community participation mechanisms, including area co-ordinating teams, have not been effective in bringing about an improved and inclusive urban water governance and the subsequent provision of water services to the communities. Despite the implementation of these community participation mechanisms, urban water governance in Cape Town is characterised by the dominant role of the government, which seeks to suppress the fundamental participation of the communities in urban water affairs. Beginning with the office of the ward councillor, the next section presents and discusses the main research findings concerning the effectiveness of the existing community participation mechanisms for improving the role of the people and the urban poor in urban water governance in Cape Town.

6.3.1 The Office of the Ward Councillor

Most urban areas are divided into wards for local government elections, with each represented by a ward councillor (Van der Waldt, 2022). In Cape Town, ward councillors are considered one of the key mechanisms to enhance community participation in urban water governance. The findings of this research reveal that part of the key functions of the office of the ward councillor is to promote community participation in urban water governance and the subsequent provision of water services to all communities, including the urban poor. Key informant interviews have revealed that ward councillors are expected to function as the link between the local

government and communities to promote an inclusive and integrated urban water governance process in Cape Town. These findings are confirmed by Van der Waldt (2022), who argues that in the post-apartheid South Africa, ward councillors are crucial government structures that are strategically designed to foster grassroots democracy through ensuring that the plights of the communities are incorporated into public policy formulation and implementation. Describing the role of the ward councillor in urban water governance, during an interview, a former ward councillor in Cape Town commented:

‘The office of the ward councillor, among other things, is responsible for ensuring that the water demands and plights of the communities are addressed through the formulation and implementation of relevant policies and strategies. During my time in the office, my responsibilities included arranging public consultation meetings with communities to understand their daily issues concerning service delivery, which also included water provision. But I must be honest with you, community residents are not interested in public consultation meetings with government officials. You will make time to go to community meetings and find very few people, and you will later learn that most of those who attend such meetings are also government employees’.

The findings of this research demonstrate that in Cape Town, ward councillors have not been effective in improving community participation in urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water service to communities. This means that despite the existing mechanisms, such as the office of the ward councillor, the lack of community participation in urban water governance remains one of the key challenges resulting in the failure of the local government to provide water services to all people, including the urban poor across Cape Town.

Similarly, Shunglu et al (2022) contend that the challenge of poor community participation in urban water governance has manifested in the swelling of informal settlements with no clean water and sanitation services in peripheral urban areas of Cape Town. The findings of this study demonstrate that despite the existing structures of community participation, such as the office of the ward councillor, the process of urban water governance in Cape Town is marked by poor communication between the government and communities. This has resulted in the resurgence of social movements to pressurise the government to respond to the demands of local communities concerning water access. In this regard, the insurgent theory suggests that the radical approach to planning is crucial in disrupting the dominating role of the

state in urban water governance, with civil societies and social movements promoting alternative community driven water access models (Sandercock, 2024).

This research has found that the relation between ward councillors and communities in Cape Town is rather unstable and inconducive for effective community participation in the process of urban water governance. In this regard, the coordination between community leaders, such as faith-based community leaders and the ward councillor, is marked by poor communication and a lack of social trust. The study has found that such unstable social relations between the office of the ward councillor and communities contribute to poor community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town. This confirms propositions of the communicative action theory that communication is a crucial aspect of any project involving more than one actor. This theory suggests that differences between actors can be resolved through open communication and interaction (Habermas, 1990). Research findings show that because of these poor social relations, communities find it hard to communicate their plights concerning water access to the office of the ward councillor.

Lack of effective social relations in urban water governance has also been confirmed by Selepe (2023), who suggests that poor social relations, especially between the office of the ward councillor and residents, severely impede meaningful participation in the processes of social development, including the process of urban water governance. This requires the government to develop good relations with the public by ensuring that the office of the ward councillor becomes accessible to the people to discuss governance issues. Commenting on the accessibility of the office of the ward councillor to the communities, one of the residents in Cape Town insisted that the ward councillor is only available during election periods for political campaigning:

‘I last saw the ward councillor in this area during the period when political parties were campaigning for the last national and provincial elections in South Africa. Just a few months after the elections, we had a community protest here demanding better service delivery in this community and requested municipal officials to attend to our demands, guess what? No one attended to us; the ward councillor was nowhere to be found. They promised us that the municipal officials would come and listen to our demands, which included housing, water and sanitation. We waited for a week. The protest turned violent as people here were very frustrated by the fact that our ward councillor and the municipality were unwilling to listen to our needs’.

The findings of this research reveal that most residents, especially the urban poor, do not know their ward councillor. This demonstrates that there is no continuous engagement between the people and the office of the ward councillor, and this contributes to poor community participation in the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. As a result of this governance failure in Cape Town, most of the urban poor population is entangled with elite authorities in the struggle for access to water services. The findings of this study demonstrate that the office of the ward councillor has not been effective in promoting the practice of community participation in Cape Town.

Despite the existence of the local structures for community involvement in urban development, the process of urban water governance in Cape Town assumes a top-down paradigm with the dominant role of both the national and local government. This research has found that in Cape Town, urban water governance is mainly a function of the government, including municipal authorities, with less emphasis on community involvement in decision-making. Other existing mechanisms for community participation in urban water governance are the area co-ordinating teams. Interviews were held with key informants and communities to determine the role of area co-ordinating teams in promoting community participation in urban water governance and the subsequent provision of water services to all people, including the urban poor trapped in peripheral areas of Cape Town.

6.3.2 Area Coordinating Teams

The findings of this research show that area co-ordinating teams constitute yet another mechanism for community participation in urban water governance. In Cape Town, area coordinating teams have been considered as a key structure to enhance the involvement of communities in decision-making concerning urban water governance. This study has found that in Cape Town, area co-ordinating teams (ACTs) were established to improve community participation in municipal governance and the provision of basic services like water and sanitation. This means that ACTs should be an ideal meeting place to discuss development plans prior to their implementation.

Through bringing together many different departments in one place, ACTs offer officials a chance to interact with each other, as well as allowing members of the community to participate in urban water governance and water provision decision-

making processes. This study has discovered that while some government officials in Cape Town recognise the importance of ACTs in fostering community involvement in decision-making processes, community residents have little knowledge about these structures. One of the government officials that were interviewed maintained that ACTs have been in existence for some time in Cape Town. Still, the government has not done enough to communicate the purpose of these structures to the communities:

‘ACTs are one of our key mechanisms for promoting community participation in urban development, including urban water governance and the provision of water services to the communities. But you see, I do not think the government has done enough to communicate the purpose and importance of ACTs in promoting an inclusive urban water governance where communities are able to voice out their views and needs regarding water affairs. ACTs give us, as government employees, an opportunity to engage with the communities to bring about effective urban water governance across Cape Town. This is very important because we need to allow people to participate and influence public policy formulation and implementation- something that was not there during the previous government under the colonial and apartheid times in South Africa’.

Based on the above citation, one can argue that the lack of communication between the government and communities has derailed the fundamental purpose of the ACTs in fostering community participation in urban water governance. This research has found that ACTs remain one of the crucial mechanisms for community participation in urban water governance. But in Cape Town, poor collaboration between the government and communities has led to the failure of the ACTs to accomplish their primary purposes, which, among other things are to promote the role of communities in urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water services to the people, including the urban poor. These findings are also confirmed by Bonell and Melendez-Torres (2023), who argue that one of the reasons for the failure of the ACTs to promote community participation in urban water governance is that these structures are often abused and turned into platforms for discussing and selling political agendas.

This study has found that in Cape Town, ACTs are infiltrated with individual and political interests which divert and impede on achievement of the initial objective of these structures. Subsequently, despite the implementation of the ACTs structures in Cape Town, the process of urban transformation and urban water governance is characterised by poor community participation. This contributes to the persistent urban water governance policy implementation failure, manifesting in the swelling of the

urban poor population with a lack of or no access to water services in Cape Town's urban peripheral areas. Commenting on the role of ACTs in urban water governance, one of the community residents during an interview insisted:

'The major problem with our government here in Cape Town is that they are doing their own thing without involving the communities. I have been staying in Cape Town for a very long time now, and I have never heard about ACTs. You see, I do attend community meetings, but I do not know anything about ACTs. I will be lying to you. As I said to you, the government does not communicate with us in our communities. Even when we participate in community protests, the government does not come to us; they only send the police to come and arrest us. If we knew that there were structures such as ACTs, I am telling you we would have reported our water and housing demands to them before we started protesting in the community. I can confirm to you that the only way to voice out our water issues to the government is through community protests, but still, that is also not working because the municipal officials do not respond'.

The findings of this study demonstrate that part of the reasons for the lack of community participation in urban water governance is that communities are not aware of the existing mechanisms, such as the ACTs in Cape Town. To be sure, there is a lack of information about community participation mechanisms in urban water governance. This means that the government has not been effective in marketing and communicating the establishment and implementation of the ACTs to promote community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town. These findings are consonant with Cinnamon and Noth (2023), who argue that the main problem that renders ACTs ineffective in Cape Town appears to be related to the fact that in the corridors of power in the council, ACTs are not being taken seriously. There appears to be very little – if any – political commitment to their continued existence as part of the infrastructure of governance at the local level.

The findings of this study show that the lack of political support has substantially emasculated ACTs, as many councillors and officials do not turn up for scheduled meetings. In fact, attendance remains optional in the absence of a Code of Conduct compelling them to be present. Some councillors feel no ownership of the process. Research findings reveal that councillors and other government officials do not want to consult difficult groups, certainly in areas where there are community power struggles, imperious traditional leaders and rival gangs in Cape Town. As a result, urban water policy formulation and implementation in Cape Town lacks the

fundamental aspect of community participation. This study has also found that another key mechanism that is used by the government to promote community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town is the community development workers.

6.3.3 Community Development Workers

In the post-apartheid South Africa, a new cadre of public servants known as community development workers (CDWs) was introduced with the primary objective to serve as agents of change within local government municipalities charged with the responsibility for social and economic development. In Cape Town, this study has found that Community development workers (CDWs) were introduced to improve the dissemination of information to the urban poor about benefits and services that the government provides in the post-apartheid South Africa. The findings of this study demonstrate that in Cape Town, CDWs also form part of the existing mechanisms to promote community participation in urban water governance and the subsequent provision of water services to all communities.

This means that the government considers CDWs as a fundamental tool to ensure that there is continuous communication between the government, particularly municipalities and local communities in Cape Town. Key informant interviews have revealed that CDWs in Cape Town were introduced to foster local democracy characterised by the active involvement of the urban poor in the urban water governance process. Commenting on the role of CDWs in urban water governance, one of the government officials justified the establishment and implementation of CDWs, especially in the context of urban water governance in Cape Town:

‘Part of the reasons why the government introduced CDWs in South Africa was to give communities a voice in the formulation and implementation of urban water legislation and policies in Cape Town. CDWs acts as the link between our municipality and the communities to share information and improve urban water governance and the provision of water services to the urban poor in Cape Town. CDWs were established to give effect to our post-apartheid local government legislation that outlines the need for municipalities to promote community participation in governance processes. For example, if you read the Municipal Systems Act, it requires municipalities to create platforms for community participation when developing their IDPs, which is the integrated development plan’.

The above excerpt shows that CDWs have a fundamental role to play in urban water governance in Cape Town. This includes ensuring that communities can participate

and shape the decisions of the government regarding urban water governance and the provision of water services in Cape Town. However, the findings of this study reveal that the implementation of CDWs for improved community participation in urban transformation and water governance has not been effective. The reason being that most of the time, the work of the CDWs remains a box-ticking process to meet the requirements. In other words, even when CDWs have engaged with communities and gathered information concerning the water needs and demands of the people, such information must be presented to the government for processing, with most of it vanishing without making it to the policy formulation and implementation level. This means that despite the establishment of the CDWs in Cape Town, there is a lack of political will for an integrated and inclusive urban water governance typified by the centrality of the urban poor in the decision-making process.

This thesis argues that the major weakness in the implementation of CDWs in Cape Town's urban water governance is that these structures have no decision-making powers. To be sure, CDWs are merely responsible for collecting information from communities and reporting it to the government. The responsibility of ensuring that the collected information concerning the needs and demands of the communities in relation to water access falls outside the scope or powers of the CDWs. In this regard, the government remains the main actor that decides on the right course of action when it comes to urban water governance and the supply of water service to local communities, including the urban poor. In the same sentiments, Omotayo et al. (2021) argue that community participation through the implementation of the CDWs in the post-apartheid South Africa can be a far cry from its sometimes-hortatory theory. This thesis argues that, considering the institutional confusion within which CDWs operate and the harsh practice realities of promoting community participation in urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa, effective implementation of this initiative remains a serious challenge in Cape Town.

This thesis argues that even though the post-apartheid South African urban water policy virtually promotes community participation, the government has failed to implement a grassroots-driven urban water governance model. The findings of this research reveal that the work of CDWs in relation to encouraging community involvement in urban water governance is cut short through various factors, including the perennial dominant authority of the government in urban water governance

decision-making in Cape Town. This has contributed to the implementation failure of the bottleneck urban water policies marked by the excessive urban water access inequalities in the post-apartheid South African cities, including Cape Town. This research has discovered that even though the government has implemented several mechanisms, such as the CDWs, to promote the role of communities in urban water governance, community participation often means the top-down government-enabled, orchestrated and engineered participation in which the government retains its command-and-control mandate. One of the key informants, a former CDW member, during an interview emphasised the rhetoric and failure of CDWs to promote community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town:

'I have spent more than five years as part of CDWs here in Cape Town. One thing I can tell you from my experience is that all that we did was to listen to community needs and report them to the municipality and inform the people about government projects. The challenge was that we did not have the authority to ensure that the needs of the people are addressed by the government. Our duty ends at reporting the issues and coming back to the community and collect as much information as possible. That is the serious problem with CDWs: they do not have decision-making powers to incorporate the water demands of the people into government policies and projects. You see, it's us who engage with the communities, and some of these areas are marked by community rival gangs. We put our lives in danger just for the government to disregard our efforts and not consider the information we provide'.

This research has found that part of the reasons for the failure of municipalities to effectively implement CDWs for improved community participation in urban water governance is the tenuous relationship between CDWs and other local government stakeholders, such as the ward committees and ward councillors in Cape Town. This has been compounded by the overwhelming lack of understanding about the CDWs' roles and responsibilities, with mounting tensions at the local level. The CDWs' brief is broad, and the urban water governance environment is politically charged. This research has found that power issues were exacerbated by confusion as to who oversaw the CDWs and to whom they are accountable. This has led to dysfunctional relationships and a lack of cooperation at the local level, resulting in poor community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town.

This study has found that, in principle, CDWs are meant to assist the poor to access and benefit from the services that could materially improve their lives; provide an

interface or bridge between municipalities and communities to enhance the existing local government structures to improve the level of participation between communities and the Integrated Development Plans. But due to various factors, including poor coordination at the local level, the practicality of this objective in Cape Town remains a major challenge, manifesting in the poor urban water governance and urban water supply. This study has found that another mechanism for community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town is the ward committees.

6.3.4 Ward Committees

Ward committees are community-based structures meant to work as the link between the government and communities. In Cape Town, this study has found that through constant engagement with communities, ward committees are expected to inform the ward councillor or municipal authorities about the needs of the people in relation to water affairs. Williams and Zacheous (2022) argue that the main function of ward committees is to enhance community participation in urban water governance in post-apartheid South Africa. Key informant's interviews have revealed that in the process of urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water services, ward committees play a crucial role by informing the government about the water demands and daily challenges.

The findings show that ward committees in Cape Town can engage with communities and discuss some of the pertinent water issues. This has partially contributed to good social relations, especially between the ward committees and the communities. These findings are also confirmed by Calverley and Walther (2022), who contend that ward committees can engage with communities effectively in urban water governance matters. Reason being that ward committees are also part of the communities and sometimes experience the same issues with the residents they are representing in urban water governance and the provision of water services in Cape Town. This study has also found that ward committees in Cape Town have somehow succeeded in building social trust through an adjacent collaboration with the communities in deliberations concerning urban water governance and the supply of water services, especially to the urban poor.

This study has found that the good social relations between the ward committees in Cape Town do not necessary mean that the views and needs of the people are

considered in the formulation and implementation of the urban water policy. Put differently, the point is that the fact that ward committees can engage with local communities does not translate to the effective participation of the people in the urban water governance process and the provision of water services in Cape Town. The reason is that ward committees do not enjoy the decision-making powers at the municipal level. As a result, the findings of this study reveal that ward committees mostly remain a mere consultation mechanism with no authority to make decisions and take actions based on the needs of the communities. This has thwarted the seemingly good relations between the ward committees and the communities to promote community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town. For instance, during an interview of the ward committees emphasised that the role of the ward committees in promoting community participation for improved urban water governance is mostly a consultation process that ends without the necessary actions being taken at the municipal policy level:

‘As members of the ward committee in this community, we are working closely with the people to bring their voices to shape urban water governance legislation and policies. But you know the problem is that as ward committees we do not have the power to make decisions at the policy formulation and implementation stages, and this has broken our relationship with the local communities. People are tired of empty promises. When engaging with these communities, we tell them that the objective is to improve service delivery, including water, based on their daily needs. But when the municipality fails to deliver these services, it breaks social trust between the structure of the ward committee and the people’.

This research has found that disjointed and unstable coordination between the ward committees, ward councillors and the local government has contributed to poor community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town. These findings are also confirmed by scholars such as Zibima et al. (2023), who argue that poor collaboration and understanding among local government structures, including the office of the ward councillor and community-based structures like the ward committees and other community leaders, have led to a fragmented process of community participation in government programs and projects in the post-apartheid urban South Africa. Key informant interviews have revealed that ward committees in Cape Town have largely failed to foster local democracy through the inclusion of the views and demands of the communities in municipal urban water governance in Cape Town. The findings demonstrate that despite the presence of community

participation platforms such as the ward committees in Cape Town, urban water governance remains a top-down process marked by the overriding authority of the government to make decisions that affect the communities without the participation of the people.

This study has also found that part of the reason for the failure of the ward committees in promoting the participation of the people in urban water governance is that these structures are politically charged. In other words, the work of the ward committees, particularly the promotion of community participation in urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water services to the communities, is infiltrated and cut-short through political agendas. This subversion of the local government administrative function by political interests has thwarted the work of the ward committees and other community participation mechanisms for improved urban water governance in Cape Town. In this regard, Ordor and Michell (2022) argue that political interference with municipal governance and urban transformation obstructs community participation. This thesis argues that political interference with local government planning and operations hinders effective community participation in the urban water governance process and the continuous supply of water services to the people in most post-apartheid South African cities including Cape Town. This research has discovered that walkabouts constitute yet another mechanism for community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town.

6.3.5 Walkabouts

Walkabouts are visits and walking around in communities done by government officials to improve community participation in urban water governance. This study has found that in Cape Town, walkabouts are one of the mechanisms that are used by the government to promote community participation in urban water governance. Government officials, through walkabouts, would visit local communities to discuss and observe the extent of service delivery, including water and housing in Cape Town. This study has found that walkabouts have enabled government officials to engage and understand the needs of the communities concerning urban water governance and the supply of water services to the people, particularly the urban poor in Cape Town. In this regard, Schwoerer et al. (2022) argue that the use of walkabouts has given an opportunity to both the government and local communities to engage in urban

transformation deliberations and propose some of the crucial steps that can be adopted to resolve social issues. One of the benefits of the walkabouts is that it provides an opportunity for government officials to physically engage with the daily lived experiences of the urban poor and see the dehumanising and disconcerting conditions that this cohorts of the urban population are compelled to subsist within.

This research has also found that walkabouts are a commendable strategy to improve the practice of community participation in urban water governance. This is true because walkabouts can help to build trust through the visibility of the officials on the ground and important grassroots engagement. However, this study has found that various challenges impede the effective implementation of the walkabouts in promoting community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town. Research findings have revealed that the main barrier in the implementation of the walkabouts in Cape Town is the lack of social trust and coordination between community leadership and the municipality. In this regard, for walkabouts to be effective, the study has found that there should be a strong and stable relation between the government officials and community leadership. During an interview, one of the key informants and a government official has highlighted the point that walkabouts without effective coordination between the government and communities cannot produce the desired outcomes:

‘I like doing walkabouts, but look, going to communities is not an easy thing to do because these communities are dangerous. You need first to develop a good relationship with the community and especially with community leaders. Community leaders, like ward committees and faith-based organisations, are an important consideration if you want to engage with communities. But unfortunately, these people are not always available and willing to assist. I do not think that the municipality has shown any practical commitment in building an effective working relation between the officials and community-based leadership, and this contributes to the failure of the walkabouts in promoting community participation in urban water governance and water provision in Cape Town’.

This study has found that due to a lack of coordination between the government and communities, walkabouts have mostly fallen short in achieving community-driven urban water governance in Cape Town. Another reason that contributes to the poor implementation of the walkabouts in urban water governance is that there are no clear schedule and detailed information that stipulate the dates and times of these community visits. Research findings have indicated that government officials can

randomly decide which communities to visit and engage with residents on water issues. This means that walkabouts partially fail due to poor planning and communication on the side of the government. Interviews with local residents have demonstrated that walkabouts are not well communicated to the community on time. One of the residents in Cape Town has emphasised that the lack of communication between the municipality officials and the community has resulted in the walkabout's implementation failure at the local level:

'The problem is that government officials do not communicate in advance the details of their visits to our communities. We sometimes see municipal officials going around here escorted by the police, and *awuyazi*- you don't know what's going on. You will learn later that these were government officials who were inspecting and checking some of the issues of the community. So that is why I am saying the government fails to communicate with us as residents'.

Research findings have also indicated that the information that government officials collect through conducting walkabouts in communities does not necessarily translate into forming a basis upon which urban water policies are formulated and implemented. To be sure, walkabouts are a consultation process that does not always translate into urban water governance policy formulation and implementation. The reason is that the information collected through walkabouts must first be submitted to the municipality for analysis and interpretation. It is in bureaucratic and institutionalised processes that the views and plights of the communities in relation to water access get lost in the way before reaching the policy formulation and implementation phases. In this process, the government retains its overriding powers to decide on the right course of action for the communities without consulting the people.

This research has found that this is one of the major factors that contribute to the continuous failure of the walkabouts in promoting community participation in urban water governance in the post-apartheid urban South Africa, particularly in Cape Town. The study has found that one of the key community participation mechanisms used to improve urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water services to the people in Cape Town is the joint public meetings.

6.3.6 Joint public meetings

Local government in the post-apartheid South Africa uses joint public meetings to facilitate community participation in urban water governance. This research has found that in Cape Town, joint meetings happen between various municipal departments and community leadership to discuss water related issues affecting the communities. Key informant interviews have revealed that the joint meetings are divided into smaller meetings where community leadership and government representatives meet to hold deliberations about some of the best ways to improve the process of urban water governance and the continuous supply of water services to all people, including the urban poor in Cape Town.

Research findings indicate that in some cases, the government can consider arranging for bigger community meetings in which the municipal officials would meet with the entire community to discuss and listen to water demands and daily challenges experienced by the people. However, as the findings of this research demonstrate, the main challenge about joint public meetings is that sometimes residents do not attend. Most of the residents interviewed raised the problem of ineffective communication and lack of social trust as one of the main challenges that contribute to poor attendance in the government scheduled joint public meetings. Consonant with these findings, Pringle et al. (2023) contend that due to the weak coordination and lack of communication between municipalities and local communities, there has been a prevalent of urban water policy implementation failure.

Such an urban water policy implementation failure has manifested in the exponential growth of the urban poor population with no access to basic water services across South African post-apartheid cities like Cape Town. This thesis argues that the implementation of the joint public meetings for improving community participation in urban water governance and water supply in Cape Town has not achieved the desired outcomes. The reason is that the local government lacks both the technical and financial capacities to conduct the joint public meetings in Cape Town. Commenting on the challenges faced by municipalities in conducting joint public meetings in Cape Town, one of the government officials indicated that the government has a weak financial capacity to run continuous public meetings with the communities:

‘Joint public meetings are one good mechanism we use to engage with communities in the urban water governance process here in Cape Town. These

meetings are important to give our people an opportunity to play a role in urban water governance. In fact, community participation is a requirement as outlined in our various local government legislation, like your Municipal Finance Management Act and Municipal Systems Act. But I must be honest with you, the main challenge is that the government does not have enough funds to support joint public meetings on a continuous basis. Due to a lack of financial muscle, the government finds it hard to run these joint public meetings rapidly. Now you will find that we conduct the joint public meetings with communities once every six months or even once per year. Now you will know how problematic that is in the context of compliance with the requirements to promote community participation in urban governance’.

This research has found that municipalities are legally required to encourage and promote community participation in urban water governance through holding joint public meetings with communities. Such meetings are considered imperative as government officials get the time to listen to the plights of the people regarding government services like water and sanitation. However, the findings of this study have revealed that, compounded by poor communication and the weak financial capacity of the local government, one of the major challenges that hinders public meetings is politicised urban water governance in Cape Town. This means that there is a prevalent of manipulative and rhetoric political discourses that turn to supersede the views and needs of the local people during joint public meetings in Cape Town.

The findings of this research have shown that the existing community participation mechanisms, such as the joint public meetings turnout to are used by government officials to engage in political discourses with less emphasis on urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water services to the communities, including the urban poor in Cape Town. These findings are also confirmed by Schwoerer et al. (2022), who argue that political restraints prevent a full and unrestricted discussion of development and governance at the local level in invited forums for public engagement. Thus, it becomes hard to foster local democracy through the promotion of community participation in the post-apartheid urban South African cities like Cape Town. This has desensitised the common commitment of the government to democratic institutions and effective provision of water and sanitation services to the communities, especially the urban poor in Cape Town.

The foregoing research findings and discussion have demonstrated that there are various mechanisms implemented by the government to promote community

participation in urban water governance. Despite such government efforts in Cape Town, the process of urban water governance is typified by poor community participation, and this has contributed to the urban water policy failure at the grassroots level. At this stage, the thesis turns to yet another key feature of the practice of urban water governance in Cape Town, and that is the bureaucratised process of community participation.

6.4 Bureaucratised Community Participation in Urban Water Governance

One of the main hindrances to effective urban water governance in South Africa is the problem of the bureaucratic process of community participation, largely driven by technocrats. Key informant interviews have revealed that in the post-apartheid urban South African cities like Cape Town, community participation has been marked by a bureaucratic process with a lack of transparency. This study has found that in Cape Town, urban water governance is an institutionalised and bureaucratised process. This means that community participation has been promoted through institutional tools such as laws and policies. These laws and policies place the government at the heart of the process of community participation in urban water governance.

Highlighting the essence of the bureaucratised community participation in the post-apartheid South Africa, Mamokhere and Meyer (2023) argue that local government legislation, such as the Municipal Systems Act 2000 (Act 32 of 2000), provide that municipalities must develop a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance. This study has found that as a result of these institutional legislations, the local government carries a legal mandate to encourage, and create conditions for, the local community to participate in urban water governance. Commenting on the institutionalised processes of community participation in urban water governance, one of the government officials highlighted that:

'You see, the challenge is that you have legislation and policies that must be followed when engaging in urban water governance here in Cape Town. Now, while these legislations and policies are crucial to comply with, they can also contribute to the bureaucratic process. For example, the government would approve a certain water project, but before the implementation of such a project, different stakeholders must be engaged as required by the existing legislation and policies. And this normally becomes a long process before the actual implementation of the project in communities. Now, because not all people are familiar with the internal

bureaucratic government processes, this creates frustrations, especially to our communities’.

This thesis argues that in urban water governance, bureaucratized and technocratic-driven community participation is problematic. Reason being that it assumes the possibility of governing through the principle of representation in which the technocrats or government officials are regarded as the representatives of the interests of the entire community. Research findings have demonstrated that this community participation model considers the government as the central decision-maker in the process of urban water governance.

This research has found that this government driven top-down approach to community participation has contributed to the continuous marginalisation of the communities and particularly the majority of the urban poor, in the formulation and implementation of urban water governance policies and strategies in Cape Town. In relation to these findings, the insurgent planning theory supported by scholars such as Sandercock (2024) insists that the determination for social justice and inclusive institutional processes like urban water governance is the ultimate impetus for communities and social movements to challenge conventional top-down approaches to urban transformation. During an interview, one of the residents highlighted the fact that bureaucratic and technocratic community participation infringes the principle of transparency:

‘Jonja Bhuti- look, my brother, our government is confused. I have worked for the government for seven years, and they talk about the need for municipalities to promote transparency. But the process of community participation is very unclear and dense; we really do not know what happens even after we have voiced out our views concerning urban water governance in this area. You see, sometimes you wake up in the morning with no water here, and these things are not communicated to us in advance, so that we can keep some water. And we don’t know why the municipality would take these decisions to do water-cuts without even informing us as the community, and this is bad’.

This research has found that one of the key features of the bureaucratic and the technocrats driven process of community participation in urban water governance is the lack of transparency. Interviews with residents have shown that communities have limited information about the process of community participation and urban water governance. In other words, there is a lack of knowledge concerning the

practice of community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town. This is another key factor that contributes to the failure of the communities to participate effectively in the urban water governance and the subsequent provision of water services in Cape Town.

However, according to community participation theorists such as Mahadevia and Bhatia (2021), informing the people about the decisions of the government is a most significant consideration towards a legitimate community participation process. However, this research has revealed that the emphasis is often placed on encouraging communities to participate in urban water governance without ensuring that the people are also informed about the decision-making processes at the municipal level. This thesis argues that in the urban water governance process, there is no channel for feedback and updates on the decisions made by the government based on the opinions and plights of the people, particularly the urban poor in Cape Town.

The findings of this research have also shown that one of the main features of the bureaucratised and technocratic-driven model of community participation in urban water governance is the lack of accountability. In Cape Town, due to the bureaucratic procedures that are characteristic of community participation and urban water governance, there have been growing concerns about the lack of accountability. People are finding it difficult to hold government officials accountable for their decisions and actions concerning community participation in urban water governance and the provision of water services to the communities. This also means that communities have no control over the decision-making process and the direction of the process of urban water governance in Cape Town.

Mamokhere and Meyer (2023) contend that communities should have control over the planning processes, specifically the IDP, to identify service priorities and successfully implement local government programs. For this to be possible, the government and especially municipalities will have to cease considering community participation in urban water governance as a box-ticking or compliance measure. On the contrary, the involvement of communities in the processes of urban water governance must be taken as a means of achieving the desired results of an

effective urban water governance process characterised by the continuous accessibility of water services to all people, including most of the urban poor.

The legitimacy of urban water governance and the provision of water services can be achieved through the participation of the local communities in the decision-making process. The findings of this research have highlighted the language barrier yet another key challenge that contributes to limited community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town. The language through which community engagement is carried out by government officials seems to limit the participation of the majority of the urban poor in urban water governance. For example, the findings show that in Cape Town, community meetings are mostly conducted using English as a language of communication. The researcher has attended various community meetings to observe how the government engages with the people, particularly in relation to urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water services to the people.

The findings have shown that most of the meetings are crippled by communication breakdown between the government officials and residents. The reason is that while the government officials are competent and proficient in speaking English, most of the residents are not. Put differently, the point is that most of the urban poor are unable to engage and clearly articulate their views to the government officials because they cannot speak and comprehend English as a language of communication. The findings of this study have revealed that this English language barrier has resulted in most of the residents withdrawing from attending the scheduled public meetings. Commenting on this challenge, during an interview, one of the residents has indicated the fact that most people have refrained from attending public meetings because they cannot comprehend and speak English well:

'I don't know why municipal officials would come and communicate to us using English. I am one of the old people in this community. I did not go to school, and I cannot speak or understand English. So, when they call us to these meetings, the first thing that comes to my mind is that I will not be able to participate well because I don't know how to speak English. And I am not the only one, most people in this community have stopped going to these meetings because they do not know how to express themselves using English. Sometimes you feel

stupid and embarrassed in front of the whole community when you are unable to talk'.

This thesis argues that in the post-apartheid urban South Africa, there exists a constellation of contradictions that makes possible the prevalent failure of the implementation of community participation mechanisms in urban water governance. This constellation of contradictions often manifests in the continuous usage of English during public meetings, even though most residents are not competent or proficient in communicating in this language. In Cape Town, this challenge has led to most people and the urban poor, withdrawing from participating in public meetings. Furthermore, this constellation of contradictions in urban water governance manifests in the limited technical and financial capacities of both the nation and local government to incorporate the water demands of the people into public policy formulation and implementation in Cape Town.

These contradictions, considered synchronously together with the structural configurations discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis, form the primary conditions for the possibility of the failure of both the national and local government to promote community participation for an inclusive and effective urban water governance process in Cape Town. At this stage, it is important to turn to yet another theme that emerged from the research findings as one of the main hindrances to the effective implementation of community participation mechanisms for improved urban water governance in Cape Town. That is the problem of the infiltration and interference of urban politics with the urban water governance process in Cape Town.

6.5 The Politicised Urban Water Governance Process in Cape Town

Urban politics and administrative functions are two distinct elements of a democratic governance system. The separation of urban politics from administrative government functions is crucial for an effective urban water governance system. However, in Cape Town, this study has found that part of the factors that contribute to the implementation failure of the various mechanisms for community participation in urban water governance is the interference of urban politics with the administrative government functions. Put differently, the point is that community participation and urban water governance have been weakened by urban politics. Key informant's interviews revealed that part of the reasons for the continuous failure of the government to

engage with communities is the lack of political will to separate urban politics from the urban water governance process. This research has found that during community engagement sessions, most of the time is wasted on discussing urban politics instead of listening to the needs of the people, especially in relation to urban water governance and water access. One of the community members during an interview asserted that:

'I am one of the many people who have stopped attending government public meetings in this community. The problem is that government officials are using these public meetings as platforms for campaigning for their political parties. The last meeting that I attended ended in conflict between the members of DA and ANC. The problem was that one member was accusing the Councillor of the failure of the municipality to deliver services to communities. So that councillor belongs to the ANC, and the DA members were very angry, saying that people must vote for the DA and remove the ANC leadership in the area. So, the meeting ended in hostility, and we did not hear anything regarding the plans of the government in terms of governance and water provision in our communities. And that was my last time attending a public meeting in this community'.

Urban politics in Cape Town are mostly associated with the various major political parties contesting in Cape Town. These political parties include the Democratic Alliance (DA), which is currently ruling in Cape Town, and the African National Congress (ANC), which is the main opposition party. This research has found that political contestations, especially between these two major parties, have affected the implementation of the existing community participation mechanisms for improved urban water governance in Cape Town. For example, the ruling political party (DA) has formulated and implemented urban water governance strategies that align with its political ideology and policies.

On the other side, the opposition parties like the ANC have been pushing for removing the DA from governance. Such political contestations hardly consider the needs of the communities, particularly regarding water access in Cape Town. These findings confirm Turesky and Crisman (2023), who argue that political interference with urban water governance processes thwarts the practice of community participation in the post-apartheid South Africa. Hence, the politicised urban water governance is incapable of responding to and addressing the needs of the urban poor regarding water access in Cape Town.

This thesis argues that in urban water governance, the practice of community participation has become a process of spectator politics. This means that residents

have mostly become endorsees of the already designed urban water governance policies and projects. This has rather made communities the objects of local governance manipulation through often inviting them to comment on the foreshadowed urban water governance programs and projects in Cape Town. As the findings of this research have demonstrated, it is thus in part the inability of the local government to promote community participation in actual decision-making processes that has contributed to the ineffective urban water governance process and a frustrated urban poor in the post-apartheid South African cities, including Cape Town. Similarly, Cinnamon and Noth (2023) also contend that the challenge regarding urban water governance is that structures like the ward committees and other community participation mechanisms have become enclaves of political party dominance, thus undermining the trust of the communities in government officials.

To encapsulate the discussion and the main points made so far, the foregoing research findings paint a rather disconcerting situation concerning the failure of community participation in urban water governance. The main findings of this study have shown that there exist some objective conditions that contribute to the inability of both the national and local governments to promote community participation in Cape Town. These, among others, include lack of transparency and accountability, defective communication, poor leadership skills, a lack of coordination between the community and government officials, political interference with administrative functions, and the weak financial and technical capacity of both the national and local government to promote community participation for an improved urban water governance process in Cape Town. The thesis argues that these objective conditions prefigure a possibility for the urban water policy implementation failure marked by the persistent growing water access inequalities in Cape Town. To be sure, the point is that unless these objective conditions are resolved, the urban water governance process and the subsequent provision of water services to most of the urban poor are inevitable bound to be a failure.

6.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented and discussed the main research findings with particular focus on the aspect of community participation for improved urban water governance in Cape Town. In this chapter, the key research findings have revealed that the government is consistently struggling to implement the existing community participation mechanisms such as joint public meetings to improve urban water governance in Cape Town. Based on the key informant's interviews, the chapter has argued that the implementation of the urban water policy in Cape Town is cut-short through various factors, including the lack of community participation. The chapter has further argued that the urban water governance process is marked by the weak financial and technical capacity of the local government to involve the urban poor in the decision-making processes in Cape Town. Subsequently, there is an urban water policy implementation failure manifesting in the growing water access inequalities in Cape Town. The ensuing chapter concludes the thesis by providing some concluding remarks, recommendations and areas for future research.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING URBAN WATER GOVERNANCE IN CAPE TOWN

7.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter has presented and discussed the main research findings with particular focus on the aspect of community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town. The present chapter provides the conclusions and recommendations of the study. Drawing from the extant literature and the key findings, the chapter emphasises the need for the government to buttress urban water governance efficacy through embracing community participation in the decision-making process. The chapter presents a participatory model as a contribution towards strengthening urban water governance efficacy in Cape Town. In coda, the chapter has proffered themes that are fundamental for future research in urban water governance, especially in post-colonial African cities.

The thesis has enquired into the mechanics of urban water governance in the post-apartheid urban South Africa, particularly in Cape Town. The central object of the thesis has been to narrate a story of urban water governance through demonstrating how most of the urban poor population remains entangled with elite authorities in the struggle for water access in the post-apartheid South Africa. The thesis argues that despite the existing urban water policies and strategies in South Africa, most of the urban poor population has limited access to water services. Urban water policy has undermined the water demands of the urban poor- those in the crevices and at the margins of urban centres. Structural configurations embedded in urban authorities have contributed to the pervasive urban water policy implementation failure in Cape Town. This thesis argues that this is an urban water governance failure manifesting in the exponential growth of the urban poor masses with limited access to water services in Cape Town.

7.2 Conclusions

As stated in the first chapter, the primary objective of this study was to investigate the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town. The focus of the thesis was on understanding how the process of urban water governance is influenced by structural configurations such as the hierarchy of authority and

institutional culture embedded in the post-apartheid South African urban councils, like Cape Town. The thesis sought to underscore the relationality between the urban water governance process and non-materialistic institutional features like internal rules and regulations. Therefore, the first objective of this study was to assess the legislative framework for urban water governance in post-apartheid South Africa. Research findings demonstrate that since the dawn of democracy in 1994, the South African government has implemented several legislation and policies to regulate urban water governance and the provision of water services to all people.

These legislation including the Constitution constitute the main legal framework for urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa. Based on the existing legal framework, the South African government has to formulate and implement policies and strategies for effective urban water governance and the provision of water services to all communities. Research findings shows that the government encounters challenges in the implementation of the existing urban water governance legislation and policies. Research findings highlight the lack of coordination between the national and local spheres of government as one of the factors contributing to urban water policy implementation failure in Cape Town. The thesis concludes that post-apartheid urban water governance legislative framework has mainly failed to ensure the accessibility of water services to all people including the urban poor population in Cape Town.

The thesis concludes that there is a continuous mismatch between the demand and supply of urban water services in Cape Town. The implementation of the post-apartheid urban water policy in South Africa is characterised by lack of technical capacity of both the national and local government to provide water to communities. This has contributed to the continuous increase of the urban poor population with limited access to water services in the post-apartheid urban South Africa particularly in Cape Town. The thesis argues that urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa is marked by contestations and tensions between municipal authorities and local communities.

To be sure, there has been a prevalent of violent community protests attributed to the failure of the post-apartheid South African government to provide water to the communities especially the urban poor in Cape Town. One can argue that despite the formulation and implementation of various legislation and policies for water

governance, access to water services remains a major challenge in Cape Town as most of the urban poor population has limited access to water. The government has consistently used state apparatus, like security forces, against most of the urban poor population who participate in community water service demonstrations across South Africa.

This research concludes that the existing urban water policies and strategies remain mostly a rhetoric as most of the urban poor have limited access to water services. In Cape Town, water policies and strategies have not been effective to the needs of the people regarding water services. This means that despite the existing urban water governance legislation and policies, the government there is a sluggish provision of water services to the people sluggishly. The main legislation and policies that govern water in post-apartheid South Africa are formulated by the national government and implemented at the local government level. The decisions and actions of the local government in relation to water governance are partly aimed at achieving the objectives set out by the national government through the formulation of urban water policies and strategies. National urban water legislation and policies constitute an overarching framework for urban water governance and the provision of water services to communities.

The post-apartheid urban water governance legislation and policies in South Africa prefigure the possibility of a government driven urban water governance model. This is done through placing or vesting more powers and responsibilities on the government to formulate and implement water governance legislation and policies to affect water supply to all communities. The urban water governance model in South Africa is a government driven participatory arrangement in which both the national and local governments are expected to play a central role through a process of collaboration with other actors, including the communities. This is an approach in which the state and its apparatus, such as local government, is the focal point for urban water governance. At the same time, it also sets the operating guidelines for non-state actors to participate in water affairs, including urban water supply.

The local government and urban municipalities are at the centre of the water governance process and the subsequent supply of water. The local government is placed as the sphere of government that is closest to the people. As a result of this,

municipalities have a constitutional mandate to plan and deliver basic urban social services such as water and electricity to all communities in South Africa. This gives municipalities the power to formulate and implement urban water governance legislation and policies to drive effective water supply to communities. However, municipalities may not formulate and implement policies that are in contrast to or not aligned with the South African constitution. The thesis has established that the contents of the post-apartheid South African urban water governance legal framework are Eurocentric and thus incapable of addressing the fundamental water needs of most of the urban poor in Cape Town.

The current legal framework for urban water governance in post-apartheid South Africa is mainly Eurocentric. The contents of the urban water governance legislation seem to emanate from Western experiences rather than the daily demands of urban South Africa. Legislation such as the Water Services Act 108 of 1997 and the National Water Act 36 of 1998 are complex and difficult to implement at the local level. Research findings have revealed that urban water governance practitioners and various stakeholders find it difficult to comprehend the contents of the existing legislation in post-apartheid South Africa. This poses a challenge in translating such, legal framework into urban water governance strategies and projects. Due to the complex and technical nature of the South African urban water governance legislation, municipalities depend on experts to make sense of the legal provisions. This thesis argues that such a legal framework has contributed to the sluggish processes of water provision in Cape Town. This research has suggested that such a legal predicament has partially contributed to the failure of both the national and local government to formulate and implement effective urban water governance legislation and policies in the post-apartheid South Africa.

This research concludes that the relation between the South African water governance legal framework and the existential experiences of the urban poor is dialectical. Put differently, the point is that there is a disjuncture between the provisions of the urban water governance legislative framework and the daily experiences of the urban poor in relation to water access in the post-apartheid South Africa. The thesis has demonstrated that despite the promulgation of various laws and policies that regulate urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa, most of the urban poor have limited access to water services. This has been associated with the swelling of

water related diseases, especially in urban peripheral spaces where the masses of the urban poor live in the post-apartheid South Africa. Poor coordination between the national and local government has contributed to the persistent challenge of urban water policy implementation failure, characterised by the growing water access inequalities in the post-apartheid urban South Africa.

This research has established that the existing legislation and policies encourage both the national and local government to promote an inclusive urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa. In principle, this means that urban water governance should be an inclusive process characterised by the participation of different actors, including the communities. However, this thesis concludes that despite the implementation of the existing water policies and strategies, there is a lack of community involvement in the urban water governance in the post-apartheid urban South Africa. Post-apartheid urban water policies in South Africa seem to be disjointed- there is a serious lack of policy coherence as policies and strategies do not build on each other. This is one of the main factors that impedes the effective implementation of the urban water policy in post-apartheid South Africa.

Policy implementation is piecemeal, with little emphasis on monitoring and evaluation, which constitute some of the fundamental aspects of a successful public policy. This research has demonstrated that post-apartheid South African urban water policies have not led to meaningful urban transformation, understood as social change in which the majority of the previous disadvantaged communities get access to basic services such as water. In the post-apartheid urban South Africa, there has been a continuous marginalisation of the urban poor in water governance processes and the subsequent supply of water services. This has contributed to the persistent water access inequalities characteristic of the urban South African cities, including Cape Town.

The second objective of this study was to analyse how the existing structural configurations are aiding or constraining effective urban water governance in Cape Town. In relation to this objective, the thesis concludes that structural configurations have a direct influence on the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. Put differently, institutional features such as the vision and mission statement of government institutions regulate the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. For example, urban water governance actors, including government officials,

are expected to align their thinking and decision-making with the existing structural configurations. Urban authorities in Cape Town have established structural configurations that provide a basis for the expected behaviour of various urban water governance stakeholders. Government officials are obliged to familiarise themselves with the constituent structural configurations embedded in the Cape Town council. The urban water governance process must be executed through upholding and complying with various structural configurations, such as the code of conduct and institutional culture.

The findings of this study have shown that during the urban water governance process in Cape Town, officials are encouraged to work according to the stipulated rules and procedures. This means that government officials are expected not to violate the basic structural configurations as this may result in serious punishment such as disciplinary hearing and dismissal. The thesis concludes that structural configurations are used to enforce the accepted behaviours of different actors in the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. These structural configurations delimit the decisions and actions of urban water governance actors. This regularises the formulation and implementation of urban water policies and strategies in Cape Town. The challenge with the established structural configurations is that they turn out to be rigid and static.

Regularised structural configurations such as organisational culture and tradition can contribute to the failure of the government to grasp and resolve the water demands of the people. Water needs are continuously changing, and people require water for different reasons. Thus, it is also necessary that the government keeps up with such societal developments and ensure that the demands of the people regarding water are addressed on continuous basis. This thesis argues that organisational culture and tradition has contributed to water policy implementation failure in the post-apartheid urban South Africa. In Cape Town, structural configurations such as institutional rules and organisational culture hinder the process of urban water governance and the subsequent provision of water services to the communities. The argues that rigid structural configurations have contributed to urban water policy failure marked by excessive water access inequalities in Cape Town.

The formulation and implementation of the urban water policy require creativity and critical thinking from the side of government authorities. However, the thesis concludes

that the colonial and apartheid bequeath structural configurations embedded in government institutions undermines the autonomy and creativity of different urban water governance actors in Cape Town. Structural configurations determine *ab initio* the outcomes of the urban water governance process and the subsequent provision of water services to communities, including the urban poor in Cape Town. The formulation and implementation of urban water policies and strategies are predetermined by the existing structural configurations. The thesis argues that there is an interlink between structural configurations and the urban water governance process. The point is that structural configuration renders it possible for the governance to have control over the urban water governance and the provision of water services to the people. While government officials can influence and manipulate the established rules of an organisation, this remains limited because infringement can result in punishment. Thus, government actors, particularly employees, when participating in the process of urban water governance, generally comply and work in line with the existing structural configurations.

The thesis argues that while structural configurations are a result of human agency, once established, they supersede the capabilities and autonomy of the officials. The process of urban water governance has more to do with the structure of government institutions than the abilities of government officials. Put differently, the internal structure of the department prefigures the decisions and actions of various urban water governance actors in Cape Town. This is made possible through the application of various institutional properties such as the code of conduct and the hierarchy of authority embedded in public institutions. This study has found that the rationale behind the entrenched structural configurations in the post-apartheid South Africa and particularly in Cape Town is to enforce compliance and accountability.

Urban water governance has been marked by established structural configurations that mostly contribute to the sluggish process of water provision in urban poor communities in Cape Town. The thesis argues that structural configurations can contribute to internal bureaucratic delays in the formulation and implementation of the urban water policy in Cape Town. This challenge has manifested in the failure of the urban water policy marked by the continuous water access inequalities in Cape Town. The thesis concludes that structural configurations can result in lack of transparency

in the formulation and implementation of the urban water policy in the post-apartheid South Africa particularly in Cape Town.

Research findings have revealed that urban water governance actors who fail to align their decisions and actions with the existing structural configurations often face punishment. This research has established that in Cape Town, government officials who fail to adhere to stipulated rules, procedures, and instructions in the process of urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water services to local communities are subjected to disciplinary measures or institutional sanctions. These disciplinary measures include penalties, hearings that can lead to demotion and dismissal. This study concludes that urban water governance institutions have embedded sanctions that are meant to correct the behaviour of actors in the process of urban water governance in Cape Town.

The thesis argues that the process of urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa is based on rules and regulations. This means that the government has to apply the existing rules and regulations in the process of urban water governance. The formulation and implementation of the urban water policy in Cape Town is based on institutional rules and regulations. The current urban water governance legislation discussed in chapter four of this study serves as the overarching framework for the formulation and implementation of any water strategy and projects in South Africa. Thus, the local government in Cape Town has to align its decisions and water strategies with the existing national framework for water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa. Urban water governance legislation such the Constitution of South Africa and the National Water Services Act determine the nature and characteristic of the water policy in Cape Town. When partaking in the process of policy formulation and implementation, urban water governance actors are expected to apply the existing national legislation regulating water in South Africa. This means that the objectives of the national water policy in the post-apartheid South Africa are achieved through the implementation of water projects in Cape Town.

The thesis concludes that public institutions in South Africa are marked by internal rules and regulations for supporting effective urban water governance and the provision of water services to communities. In Cape Town, institutional rules and regulations are the basis for enhancing effective urban water governance. But the

implementation of such rules and regulation in the process of urban water governance has faced various challenges including the lack of coordination between the municipality and the local communities. Structural configurations such the internal rules and regulations impede on the transparent interaction between the government and local communities. The views and demands of the people regarding water access are usually infiltrated and misinterpreted within the hierarchal and bureaucratic institutional processes. While these institutional processes are required by the existing rules and regulations, they contribute to delays in the implementation of water strategies and projects in Cape Town. This thesis concludes that for any water project to be implemented, there is a legal requirement for approval by the higher officers, such as the director of the department. The study concludes that this bureaucratic process determines the pace of the implementation of urban water policy and the provision of water services to all communities, especially the urban poor in Cape Town.

This thesis has established that despite their inherent limitations, structural configurations such as the hierarchy of authority can increase performance in an urban water governance institution. In Cape Town's water governance institutions, the hierarchy of authority compels government employees to work and deliver on expectations. In this regard, there is an element of the theory of structuration that seems to be relevant. In the structuration theory, Giddens (1984) argues that it is not the agency or employees that determine what must be done in an institution, but rather the structure foregrounds and predetermines what must be done and how it must be done. This research concludes that the structure of an organisation has the potential to limit or promote the autonomy of employees in making decisions and actions about water affairs. In Cape Town, the hierarchy of authority obliges government official, particularly those involved in urban water governance, to report their work to their senior managers. Thus, this thesis concludes that the decisions and actions of government officials when partaking in urban water governance in Cape Town are prefigured and inevitably determined by the structure of the institution.

The third objective of the study was to explore the role of communities in urban water governance in Cape Town. In relation to this objective, the thesis concludes that the post-apartheid legislation and policies in South Africa emphasise the need for both the national and local government to promote the role of communities in the urban water

governance process in Cape Town. The post-apartheid South African government has a constitutional obligation to promote continuous public participation in the formulation and implementation of the urban water policies and strategies. This thesis argues that the formulation and implementation of the current urban water policies and strategies in Cape Town are largely marked by poor public participation. This research has shown that the views and suggestions of the communities, especially the urban poor, do not necessarily shape the direction of urban water governance and the provision of water services in Cape Town. In this regard, community participation remains a rhetoric with less effort to involve people in the decision-making process. Community participation in urban water governance has not been practical as the government continuously fails to engage with the people at the grassroots level. The thesis argues that there is a mismatch between the water demands of the people and the current urban water policy in Cape Town.

This study concludes that because of the institutional legislation, the local government carries a legal mandate to encourage and create conditions for the local community to participate in urban water governance. The bureaucratized and technocrats driven community participation is problematic. This is because it assumes the possibility of governing through the principle of representation in which the technocrats or government officials are regarded as the representatives of the interests of the entire communities. This research has demonstrated that the community participation model considers the government as the central decision-maker in the process of urban water governance. This research concludes that this government driven top-down approach to community participation has contributed to the continuous marginalisation of the communities and particularly most of the urban poor, in the formulation and implementation of urban water governance policies and strategies in Cape Town.

The elite-driven process of community participation often undermines the water demands and experiences of the urban poor. Here, one must return to the insurgent planning theory (Sandercock, 2024). The insurgent planning theory suggests that government institutions are incapable of understanding the needs of the people in relation to water services. It is the communities that should be at the centre of governance. Thus, communities should be allowed to engage and question the decisions and actions of the government. The theory stipulates the need for community-based urban water governance. However, in Cape Town, the thesis

argues that urban water governance is largely an institutional process with less consideration of the role of communities in the decision-making. Communities are viewed as receivers of the government services without necessarily partaking in the process. One can argue that lack of effective community participation in South African urban water governance has continuously led to poor policy implementation. This governance failure has manifested in urban water policy implementation quagmire contributing to the persistent water access inequalities in Cape Town.

The thesis argues that post-apartheid South Africa, the government has formulated and implemented various community participation mechanisms to ensure that the views and needs of the people are incorporated into water policies and strategies. The South African government through the existing legislation and policies has emphasised the need to promote the participation of local communities in the urban water governance process and the provision of water services to the people. But this thesis maintains that the existing mechanisms including public meetings have largely failed to promote community participation in the formulation and implementation of the urban water policy in Cape Town. Research findings have revealed that one of the major factors that contribute to poor community participation in urban water governance is the language of communication is often English at the expense of local indigenous languages largely spoken in local communities of Cape Town. The point is that most of the people in urban poor communities are not competent in using English as the language of communication.

However, government officials often use English as the main language of communication when engaging with local communities. This has often led to communication failure as most of the people particularly the urban poor cannot properly communicate using English. The failure of the government to promote effective participation of the urban poor population in the decision-making renders the urban water governance process questionable especially its legitimacy. The thesis argues that the legitimacy of the urban water governance process can be achieved through effective community participation in the formulation and implementation of the urban water policy in Cape Town. The thesis suggests that while community participation is a legal requirement enshrined in the South African Constitution, the participation of the urban poor in the decision-making process in Cape Town remains

superficial. Put differently, community participation in urban water governance has become an activity of spectator politics with insignificant community change.

Research findings have shown that the formulation and implementation of the urban water policy in the post-apartheid South Africa have been marked by a constellation of contradictions. Such contradictions can be seen in the continuous marginalisation of the urban poor in water governance decision-making processes in Cape Town. Urban water policy formulation and implementation in Cape Town remains an elite-driven process with less attention given to the views and demands of the urban poor population trapped in squalid living conditions. This thesis concludes that in Cape Town, this challenge has led to most people and the urban poor, withdrawing from participating in public meetings. Furthermore, this constellation of contradictions in urban water governance manifests in the limited technical and financial capacities of both the nation and local government to incorporate the water demands of the people into public policy formulation and implementation in Cape Town.

This thesis concludes that these contradictions considered synchronously together with the existing structural configurations such as institutional culture and tradition, forms the primary conditions for the possibility of the failure of both the national and local government to promote community participation for an inclusive and effective urban water governance process in Cape Town. The main findings of this research have shown that there is a need for the government to improve the process of urban water governance. This is important for effective public policy formulation and implementation to fast-track the provision of urban water services to all people, including most of the urban poor trapped in the peripheral areas of Cape Town. Thus, the following section provides the proposed model to strengthen urban water governance efficiency in the post-apartheid urban South Africa and in Cape Town in particular.

7.3 Research Contribution: Participatory Urban Water Governance Model

Based on the literature and research findings discussed in the preceding chapters, this thesis proposes a model to reconfigure the existing urban water governance process through fostering community participation. The model embraces the fundamental role of communities in the urban water governance process in Cape Town. As displayed in the following diagram, the model consists of different components that should be

considered during the urban water governance process in Cape Town. Research findings demonstrate that one of the major factors that have contributed to poor implementation of the urban water policy in Cape Town is the lack of community participation in governance processes. To be sure, the government has consistently failed to promote community driven urban water governance processes in Cape Town. This is due to, among other things, the weak technical capacity of both the national and local governments to implement the existing community participation mechanisms in urban water governance. Thus, the proposed participatory urban water governance model outlines some of the fundamental elements that can be considered to promote community participation in urban water governance decision-making processes in Cape Town. At the same time, the model has been specifically designed to improve community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town, with minor adjustments, it can be used in other cities within South Africa and beyond.

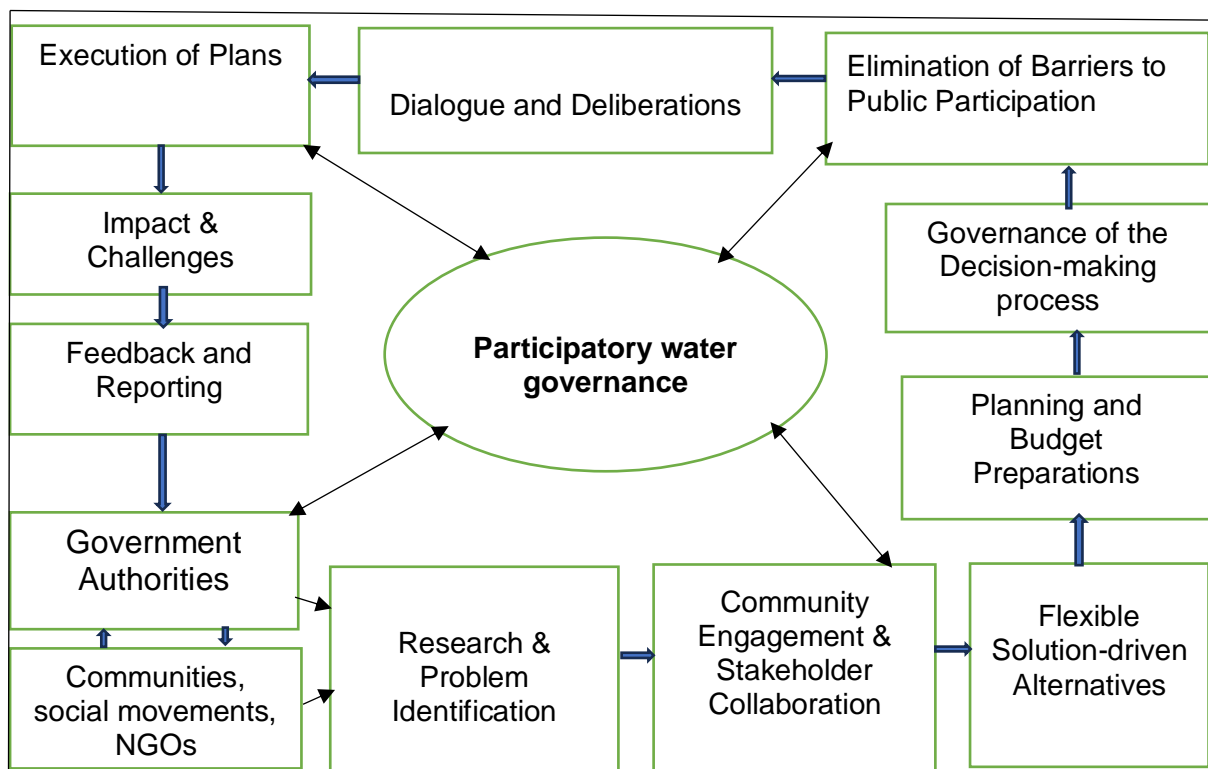


Figure 7.1: Participatory urban water governance model (Source: Author’s construction, 2025).

The components of the proposed model are dialectically connected to promote the aspect of community participation in urban water governance. In other words, the

components are interconnected to advance the process of urban water governance with particular emphasis on the fundamental role of the communities in the decision-making process. The intention is that the government must consider and implement these components in the process of urban water governance. Each component of the proposed participatory urban water governance model is discussed below in terms of its constituent parts.

Phase 1: Research and Problem Identification

The proposed participatory urban water governance model requires that the government start by conducting scientific research and identify the problem relating to water challenges. Research is critical to diagnose the problem and understand its constituent parts. This would allow the government to develop appropriate strategies and solutions to address the identified problem. The research and problem identification phase is imperative to support evidence-based urban water governance processes and the provision of water services to communities. This means that the municipality should invest time and resources to ensure a proper diagnosis of the problem before embarking on policy formulation and implementation. In this way, the government can be able to formulate relevant policies and strategies to promote effective urban water governance and the provision of water services to communities. This phase of the proposed participatory urban water governance requires research and problem analysis skills.

Phase 2: Community Engagement and Stakeholder Collaboration

This phase of the proposed model is concerned with the need for the government to promote the direct participation of different actors in the process of urban water governance. The urban water governance process should be characterised by the continuous interaction between the government and the people at the grassroots level. This requires a municipality committed to enhancing the role of communities in the process of urban water policy formulation and implementation in Cape Town. Both the national and local government should coordinate and create opportunities for an inclusive water management through effective stakeholder engagement. It is important to emphasise that this phase of the model is not merely concerned about the consultation processes and is simple informing the communities about the plans and decisions of the municipality. On the contrary, the phase implies that communities

must be at the centre of the urban water governance process in Cape Town. Thus, communities should also become decision-makers and valuable stakeholders in the process of urban water governance. This is crucial in promoting a participatory urban water governance model in Cape Town. This phase requires municipalities to identify and work together with communities, the private sector and NGOs to foster an inclusive or participatory urban water governance model. While this might be time-consuming, it allows for a legitimate urban water governance process informed by the needs of the communities and other relevant stakeholders.

Phase 3: Flexible Solution-driven Alternatives

Following the problem identification phase, the next stage is choosing a flexible solution-driven alternative. The government should choose a flexible, solution-driven alternative to address the identified urban water related problem. The chosen alternative should be directly linked to the problem. In other words, the government should consider the best alternative to address the identified problem. Most importantly, this must be done in consultation with all relevant urban water governance stakeholders, including the communities. This is imperative to promote a participatory urban water governance model characterised by the central role of communities in the decision-making processes. The most practical solutions must be considered to improve urban water governance. The possible challenge regarding this phase of the model is that there could be many alternatives, and it is difficult to determine one alternative to respond to the identified social problem effectively. This is because some alternatives may seem most relevant at the initial stages but fail to promote participatory urban water governance. Thus, urban water governance practitioners should properly scan the environment and take into consideration the fact that the needs of the communities may change overtime. So, a flexibly alternative should be considered to embrace participatory urban water governance in Cape Town.

Phase 4: Planning and Budget Preparations

Another element of the proposed participatory urban water governance model is planning and budget. This is important because every project to be successful demands proper planning and stable funds. So, the government should understand the importance of planning and budgeting for an effective urban water governance process. Planning and budget preparations demand that the municipality be proactive

and invest some time and money to ensure that the implementation of urban water governance policy alternatives is accomplished. Proper planning and budgeting imply that all urban water governance stakeholders, such as the communities, are engaged and informed about government plans as early as possible. This could promote transparency and accountability in the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. Furthermore, the planning and budgeting preparation phase includes deliberations on viable cost recovery mechanisms in the process of urban water governance.

Phase 5: Governance of the Decision-making process

Another central component of the proposed participatory urban water governance is the governance of the decision-making process. Urban water governance is about decision-making, with the government expected to lead in the process. Thus, the decision-making in the urban water governance process needs to be well governed. This requires the government to pay particular attention to the decision-making process through ensuring that all actors, including communities, participate. This should go beyond giving communities an opportunity to express their views. It is important that the local government properly governs the process of decision-making about urban water governance to ensure that the experiences and perspectives of the people at the grassroots level are considered. This may allow people and the urban poor to engage and influence the process of urban water governance and the provision of water services in Cape Town. This can result in the effective implementation of the urban water policy in Cape Town. When the decision-making process is properly conducted and managed, this creates a possibility of harmonising the needs of the people and the urban water policy making and implementation. This is crucial to reinvigorate and maintain trust between the communities and municipalities in urban water governance.

Phase 6: Elimination of Barriers to Public Participation

This phase primarily focuses on the need for the government to reduce or eliminate any barriers that obstruct effective community participation in urban water governance. This research has demonstrated that one of the serious challenges to urban water governance is the lack of community participation. Thus, the government should be committed to removing barriers that making it hard for communities to engage with

municipalities in the formulation and implementation of the urban water governance policies and strategies. Public participation must be embraced through effective mechanisms that are context sensitive and should meet the needs of the people. For instance, language can be one of the major barriers to effective community participation in the process of urban water governance. So, the municipality would have to pay attention to different languages that are used in communities during public meetings. People can provide varsity and crucial information when allowed to speak in their own languages. Elimination of barriers to public participation can contribute to an increased number of people willing to engage and challenge municipal decision-making in the process of urban water governance.

Phase 7: Dialogue and Deliberations

Dialogue and deliberations are an important component of an inclusive participatory urban water governance model. This implies that the government should promote an urban water governance model characterised by continuous dialogue and deliberations among all actors, including the communities. Dialogue and deliberations between the government, interest' groups, NGOs, SMs and communities at large are crucial in the urban water governance process. This phase of the proposed model should be considered throughout the urban water governance process. Dialogue and deliberations can ensure that the government chooses a practical and effective alternative to address the water needs of the communities. Dialogue and deliberations between the municipality and various stakeholders also contribute to transparency in municipal decision-making. This creates a possibility for an effective participatory urban water governance marked by the consolidation of diverse experiences to achieve adequate water services to the communities.

Phase 8: Execution of Plans

The decisions and plans of the government need to be put into practice. Execution of plans implies that all urban water policies and decisions that have been adopted by the municipality through deliberations and consultations must be implemented. The execution of plans involves the actual application of what has been documented into practice. This means that urban water governance laws, policies and strategies must be translated into manageable projects to ensure effective provision of water services to communities. This needs adequate project management and leadership skills. This

is crucial to manage and respond to some challenges that may emerge during the implementation of municipal urban water policies and strategies. It is imperative to note that the municipal context is diverse and requires flexibility and critical thinking skills when implementing urban water policies and strategies. The municipality must ensure that the articulated objectives and outcomes of urban water policies and strategies are achieved through collaboration. The execution of the adopted resolutions and plans is important to ensure that the government's promises to communities are fulfilled. This means the actual delivery of water services as articulated in the existing policies and strategies.

Phase 9: Impact and Challenges

Impact and challenges form part of the proposed participatory urban water governance. It is important for the government to assess the impact and challenges during the implementation of urban water governance projects. The municipality should assess the impact of the undertaken projects against the stipulated objectives. Relevant questions should include what the articulated objectives of the implemented project were, and are these achieved. This is important to determine the impact of government policies and actions. This component of the participatory urban water governance also requires that the municipality reflect and adjust on the challenges encountered during the implementation of any urban water policy and projects. This is crucial for future urban water governance and water service projects. The benefit is that the government would be in a better position to deal with such challenges during the implementation of other projects.

Phase 10: Feedback and Reporting

When government policies and projects are implemented, feedback and reporting to different stakeholders are fundamental. Informing the communities about the impact and challenges of a particular water policy or project can build social trust. Even when the government is facing some challenges in its efforts to meet the needs of the communities, keeping communities informed about such issues can create strong relations between the government and the people. This can also reduce regular community protests. The proposed participatory urban water governance model represents and reflects the main findings of the research, the lessons learned, and the insights captured during this study. The model is aligned with the objectives of the

local government and with all the legislation and policies that apply to urban water governance in South Africa. The benefits of the model can be attained once the political intent to embrace community participation in urban water governance is revitalised. Based on the main findings of this study, the next section provides some measures to strengthen urban water governance in Cape Town.

7.4 Suggested Measures to Strengthen Urban Water Governance in Cape Town

That there is a need for strategies for effective urban water governance is not in doubt. Based on the main findings of this research, this section provides some measures that can be adopted to improve the process of urban water governance and the provision of water services to all communities in Cape Town. These measures, as discussed below, include the transformation of the existing structural configurations, formulation of reliable mechanisms for community participation, reducing bureaucratic institutional processes, increasing budget for water governance, improving communication, promoting effective intergovernmental relations, public policy coherence, research and training.

7.4.1 Transformation of the Existing Structural Configurations

This research has revealed that the urban water governance process is characterised by conservative structural configurations, often limiting the capacity of government officials and other actors to formulate and implement effective policies and strategies in Cape Town. Thus, there is a need for the transformation of the existing colonial and apartheid bequeathed structural configurations to improve the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. Both the national and local governments should eradicate some of the structural configurations, such as the colonial and apartheid organisational culture embedded in water governance institutions, including municipalities. Research findings have demonstrated that some structural configurations, such as institutional disciplinary measures, can make government officials work under pressure of being disciplined or even dismissed. There is a need for the government and municipalities to revise such structural configurations to give autonomy to the actors to exercise their capabilities and innovation skills in the process of urban water governance in Cape Town.

The findings of this research have established that structural configurations such as the institutional rules and regulations promote a centralised form of urban water

governance in which municipalities have limited legislative authority. This thesis suggests that the government should emphasise the transformation of these structural configurations to give legislative and policy formulation powers to local urban water governance institutions, including municipalities. It is also vital for the government to reevaluate the relevance of the existing structural configurations to improve urban water governance in Cape Town. This shall allow urban water governance institutions to adapt to the changing environment and adequately respond to the contemporary needs of the communities concerning water access. This research has shown that structural configurations form the basis upon which all urban water governance policies and decisions are formulated and implemented. Therefore, both the national and local governments should reshape the existing structural configurations to align with the water needs of the people. This can contribute to the desired effective urban water policy formulation and implementation marked by the continuous accessibility of water services to all people, including most of the urban poor in Cape Town.

7.3.2 Reliable Mechanisms for Community Participation

The findings of this research have revealed that the process of urban water governance is cut-short through various factors. Such factors include limited community participation in the decision-making processes. This study recommends that there is a need for the government to formulate reliable mechanisms for community participation to improve the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. This can provide opportunities for the communities to participate in the decision-making processes to improve urban water governance and the supply of water services to all people, including the urban poor. The thesis has established that the current mechanisms for community participation often fall short in channelling the views and needs of the urban poor to the level of public policy formulation and implementation. It is therefore recommended that the government consider creating more structures for community participation to improve urban water governance in Cape Town. The existing community participation mechanisms, such as joint public meetings, have not been effective due to a lack of social trust. Reliable community participation mechanisms can assist in rebuilding the broken trust between the government and the local communities.

7.3.3 Increased Budget for Urban Water Governance

The findings of this research have shown that local government has a limited financial capacity to implement the urban water policy. Thus, this thesis recommends that the government should increase the budget for urban water governance and the subsequent provision of water services to all people, including the urban poor in Cape Town. Insufficient financial support for urban water governance and the implementation of various water policies and strategies has emerged as one of the main challenges that contribute to the sluggish provision of water services in the post-apartheid urban South Africa, particularly in Cape Town's poor areas. Therefore, the budget increase for urban water governance is vital to capacitate both the national and local government to improve the supply of water services to all communities in Cape Town. The thesis suggests that the government should consider re-allocating unused funds from various departments and institutions to invest in urban water governance and the effective provision of water services to all communities in the post-apartheid urban South Africa, particularly in Cape Town. Furthermore, the government should ensure that the funds allocated for urban water governance and the continuous supply of water services to communities are used in compliance with the existing financial regulations including the MFMA.

The study has also revealed that one of the main factors contributing to dysfunctional urban municipalities is the scourge of corruption and financial mismanagement in both the national and local government institutions. Thus, the thesis recommends that the government should emphasis developing public financial management skills and foster strong legislation to combat the rampant problem of corruption in urban water governance institutions, including municipalities. The government should also engage with external investors to boost the financial capacity of both the national and local government to improve urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water services to the communities in Cape Town. This can be done through the promotion of public-private partnerships (PPPs) to secure more funds for urban water governance and water provision. Furthermore, there is a need for robust cost recovery methods to enable the government to generate more funds for effective urban water governance and the subsequent provision of water services to all people, including the urban poor in Cape Town.

7.3.4 Improving Communication

Poor communication between the local government and various actors emerged as the major challenge in urban water governance. Yet, communication is fundamental to promoting understanding between the actors involved in the urban water governance process in Cape Town. The government should also use local communication platforms such as community radio stations to communicate their plans and actions concerning urban water governance and the provision of water services to the communities in Cape Town. Effective communication is crucial to ensure that the government and the local communities work together in resolving water related issues. This can help in building social trust and transparency in urban water governance and the provision of water services to the people and the urban poor. The findings of this study have also demonstrated that English as an official language of communication in government can impede the participation of the communities in urban water governance.

This research recommends that the government should improve communication through promoting other official languages predominantly used in Africa in the process of urban water governance in Cape Town. This is imperative because most of the people in Cape Town, especially the urban poor are not competent in comprehending and communicating using English as a language. The thesis suggests that the government should emphasise writing water related posts using different home languages of the people living in urban peripheral areas of Cape Town. This can increase the level of community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town. Furthermore, the government should improve communication by ensuring that structures such as the ward councillors and ward committees maintain a continuous relationship with the local communities. This can help in ensuring the communities are updated about the plans and actions of the government concerning urban water governance and the provision of water services to local communities in Cape Town. This thesis suggests that the government should ensure that information flows from the communities to the government through reliable communication channels and structures.

7.3.5 Improving Public Policy Coherence

Part of the challenges that contribute to the urban water governance failure in the post-apartheid South Africa is poor policy coherence. There has been little progress towards reform, and this can mean that the existing post-apartheid urban water legislation and policies are benefiting some elite sections of society. This means that there is a gap between the intentions of the post-apartheid South African urban water legislative framework and the experiences of the urban poor population. Improving public policy coherence can assist in ensuring that urban water strategies are well coordinated, and this can contribute to an effective implementation process. Research findings have demonstrated that, despite the adoption of an incremental model in policy formulation and implementation, in post-apartheid South Africa, urban water authorities are still bent on bidding good riddance to ways of life and modes of practice that do not fit into the official social schema of the modern city. Thus, to revise this situation, this thesis suggests that it is imperative for both the national and local government to formulate coordinated water policies and strategies that would align with the needs of most of the urban poor. The thesis recommends that the governing authorities should deal with such bottlenecks in the process of policy formulation and implementation for effective urban water governance in the post-apartheid South African cities, including Cape Town.

7.3.6 Research and Training

Research and training in urban water governance are vital to promote effective policy formulation and implementation. However, there is still a lack of research directly focusing on urban water governance in the post-apartheid South African cities like Cape Town. In this regard, the thesis recommends that the government should emphasise supporting research on urban water governance. This can assist the government in formulation and implementing urban water policies and strategies based on scientific evidence. This study has shown that part of the main factors contributing to the continuous failure of the government to formulate and implement relevant water policies and strategies is the paucity of research and information on African modes of relating to water and other natural resources. Research on urban water governance is largely Eurocentric and thus often becomes incapable of addressing African water challenges. Therefore, this thesis recommends that the

government should invest and support urban water governance research that particularly focuses on African modes of relating to water.

Research on African modes of relating to water is important because it may assist the government and different actors, including the communities, to understand water from an African perspective and thus be able to device relevant water policies and strategies. This thesis further suggests that the professional and academic training of public officials is vital to improve urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa. There is a growing need for effective urban water governance and the continuous provision of water services to all people, including the urban poor, across South African cities. However, urban water governance as an academic discipline has not evolved in the post-apartheid South African higher education sector. This thesis recommends that the government should engage with South African universities and colleges to offer urban water governance degrees and diplomas. This is fundamental to provide advanced training in urban water governance to both the current government officials and the upcoming generation of public servants. The ensuing section outlines some areas that still need to be researched to support effective urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa.

7.4 Suggestions for Future Research

This thesis has analysed the relationality between structural configurations and urban water governance in South Africa, with particular focus on Cape Town. But it is evident that there is a need for further research in water governance. Future research can focus on the interface between water governance and politics in urban South Africa. Politics seems to play a major role in the failure of the urban water policy in South Africa. It is important to examine how politics shapes the implementation of the urban water policy in South Africa and beyond. While this study has covered the aspect of community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town, studies of the same nature should be conducted in other post-colonial African cities. This is important to reveal some of the major challenges faced by other post-colonial cities in urban water management, particularly in promoting the role of communities in water provision.

Future research can also examine the role of NGOs and other community-based organisations in urban water governance in the post-apartheid urban South Africa. Furthermore, one of the key shortfalls of the contemporary urban water governance

scholarship in South Africa is the failure to appreciate the long history of various water management approaches used prior to the implementation of European colonialism. There is a need for a serious exploration of the precolonial African ways of water management. Such scholarly work may render it possible for the current government to learn from the past and shape the future of water governance in South Africa and beyond.

7.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has concluded the thesis by providing the main conclusions drawn from the research findings. The chapter has also proffered some recommendations to strengthen urban water governance efficacy in the post-apartheid urban South Africa, particularly in Cape Town. Following this, the chapter has proposed a participatory governance model as a contribution towards effective urban water governance characterised by the role of local communities in the decision-making process in Cape Town. In the coda, the chapter has presented some of the key areas for future research concerning water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa.

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Appendices

DECLARATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITING

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled:

Structural configurations on the governance of urban water supply in cape town, South Africa

authored by **Thembelani Tyhotyholo**

has been proofread and edited for grammar, punctuation, clarity and referencing (excluding the appendices).

Date of Editing Completion: 17 September 2025

Editor: Sibonginkosi Saruchera

Doctor in Human Resource Management, Master of Science in Human Resource Management, Bachelor of Commerce in Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations, Diploma in Education, Certification in Proofreading and Editing - Masterclass.

Academic Editor

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Signature:



Disclaimer

The editor(s) make (s) no claim as to the accuracy of the manuscript contents nor the objectives of the author. While all possible efforts have been made to ensure the text edited is readable and grammatically correct, the author(s) have the option to accept or reject suggestions and trackable changes made to the document before submission.

Ethics clearance certificate



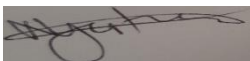
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Office of the Chairperson Research Ethics Committee	FACULTY: BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES
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The Faculty's Research Ethics Committee (FREC) on **06 May 2024**, ethics **Approval** was granted to **Tyhotyholo Thembelani** for a research activity for a **Doctor of Public Administration** at Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Title of dissertation/thesis / project:	Structural configurations on the governance of urban water supply in Cape Town, South Africa Lead Supervisor (s): Prof Bongani Ncube
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Decision: APPROVED

 <hr/> Signed: Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee	18.06.2024 <hr/> Date
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The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the CPUT Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study requires that the researcher stops the study and immediately informs the chairperson of the relevant Faculty Ethics Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.

4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, notably compliance with the Bill of Rights as provided for in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (the Constitution) and where applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003 and/or other legislations that is relevant.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after two (2) years for Masters and Doctorate research project from the date of issue of the Ethics Certificate. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report (REC 6) will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Clearance Certificate No | 2024_FBMSREC_ST03

Date : 16 October 2023

To : Director: Policy & Strategy

Reference : PSRR-1055

Research Approval Request

In terms of the City of Cape Town System of Delegations (Research

In terms of the City of Cape Town System of Delegations (June 2023) - Part 35, No 2 Subsection 2, 3 and 4 "Research:

(2) To consider any request for the commissioning of an organizational wide (excluding directorate specific) research report in the City and to approve or refuse such a request.

(3) To grant authority to external parties that wish to conduct research within the City of Cape Town and/or publish the results thereof.

(4) In consultation with the relevant Executive Director: grant permission to employees of the City of Cape Town to conduct research, surveys etc. related to their studies, within the relevant directorate.) - Part 29, No 1 Sub-Section 4, 5 and 6

The Director: Policy & Strategy is hereby requested to consider, in terms of Sub-Section 5, the request received from

Name THEMBELANI TYHOTYHOLO

Designation: PhD Candidate

Affiliation: Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Research Title: Structural configurations on the governance of urban water supply in Cape Town, South Africa

Taking into account the recommendations below:

Recommendations

That the CCT via the Director: Policy & Strategy grants permission to Thembelani Tyhotyholo, in his capacity as a PhD student in the Public Administration Department,

Cape Peninsula University of Technology, to conduct research subject to the following conditions:

General conditions

- Engagement is limited to the scope and scale of the study, and restricted to the participants' professional input;
- Additional CCT respondents or data to be identified and line approval sought via an addendum to initial (approved) request;
- Clear acknowledgement in the research report that the analysis generated from City data does not constitute official CCT policy;
- Clear acknowledgement in the research report that views of the CCT officials are not interpreted as official CCT policy where interviews are granted;
- Interviews and/or participation from CCT staff are not to interfere with staff assigned work and tasks;

POPIA compliance

- The researcher to familiarise him/herself with and ensure POPIA compliance, which is to be strictly and fully adhered to;

Site Access

- The researcher's access to any City facility is at their own risk and the City cannot be held liable for any injury, loss, damage or theft the researcher may experience;

Sharing of research products

- Pre-final analysis of the data to be shared with the Water and Sanitation: Bulk Services Department such as a findings report and/or presentation, via the designated contact person(s) for verification;
- The final draft of the academic publication and any other related future publications to be submitted to the Water and Sanitation: Bulk Services Department and the Research Branch, for information;
- Submission of the completed research report to the Water and Sanitation: Bulk Services Department and the Manager: Research, Policy and Strategy, within 3 months of completion of the research report;

Limitations

- Approval is subject to staff capacity (time and resource availability) and the willingness of City officials to participate in the research, on a voluntary basis;

-The use of direct quotations in the report to be agreed in advance and in writing by the respondent concerned, and any text for direct quotation/s must be verified and signed off ahead of any publication of the report;

-City officials and their inputs, including any quotations, are to be anonymised, and referenced by the functional role, and not by name or designation in the City;

-The City logo and brand, not be used in the research publication unless with the City's consent;

CCT Engagements

-Project identification of relevant departmental officials for interviews to be advised by the Water and Sanitation: Bulk Services Department, via communications with Meagan Donnelly (Meagan.Donnelly@capetown.gov.za);

-All applicants to be available to share a presentation on request by the CCT line department, on a shared platform;

Delegated Authority:

Status : Approved

Comments:

Director: Policy & Strategy: Hugh Cole

Date: 16 October 2023

Research Instrument 1: Interview Guide

Cape Town Officials in the Department of Water and Sanitation

Dear research participant.

My name is Thembelani Tyhotyholo a doctoral student in the Department of Public Administration and Governance, Faculty of Business and Management Sciences at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in Cape Town. I am conducting a study towards a Doctor of Public Administration Degree. The main objective of my research is to investigate the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town. The focus of the study is on examining how structural configurations such as the internal rules, code of conduct, institutional sanctions and hierarchy of authority shapes the decisions and actions of different urban water governance actors in Cape Town.

I kindly request you to participate in this study through sharing your knowledge and experience on the subject of urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water services in Cape Town. You are kindly requested to participate in this interview that I will be conducting to collect data for this study. The findings of the study may contribute towards strengthening urban water governance in Cape Town. The recommendations of the study may also help national, provincial and local governments to enhance urban water policy and provision of water services equitably to all communities in South Africa.

Your participation in this study will be much appreciated. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me on the following contact details.

Thembelani Tyhotyholo
Department of Public Administration & Governance
Faculty of Business and Management Sciences
Cape Peninsula University of Technology
Email: 213003376@mycput.ac.za

Consent Letter

Dear research participant.

You are kindly requested to participate in a study conducted by Thembelani Tyhotyholo a PhD student in the Department of Public Administration and Governance at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in Cape Town. The main objective of the study is to investigate the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town. Please take note that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and this means that you are free to decline from participation at any time. Research participants are free not to respond to some interview questions asked by the researcher without providing any reasons. A consent form will be provided to all research participants to sign before partaking in the study.

Please be advised that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained throughout this research and therefore the results of this study will neither divulge the institution's particulars nor the individual's particulars. In case where the researcher wants to record the interview, permission from research participants will be obtained prior to the interview. This means that the recording of the interview will not be done without the consent of research participants. All records and tapes of the interview sessions shall be kept safe and accessible only to the researcher. Deception and harm will be avoided through clearly communicating the purpose and objectives of the study prior to the interviews with research participants. When possible, interviews will be conducted using the language of choice of the research participant.

Your participation in this study will be much appreciated. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me on the following contact details.

Thembelani Tyhotyholo
Department of Public Administration & Governance
Faculty of Business and Management Sciences
Cape Peninsula University of Technology
Email: 213003376@mycput.ac.za

Interview estimated time: 1 hour.

Introductory remarks by the researcher

- Welcoming of the key informant and introduction.
- A brief discussion on the ethics guiding principles: voluntarism, confidentiality and privacy.
- Highlight the need to transcribe information for coding.
- Request permission to record the interview from the research participant.

Interview Questions

1. What position do you currently hold in your department and how long have you held this position?
2. What are the roles and responsibilities of your department in relation to water affairs?
3. What measures have your department implemented to promote access to water in low-income communities in Cape Town?
4. Can you please explain some of the institutional aspects such as rules, institutional culture, code of conduct, hierarchy of authority and guiding principles in your department?
5. Can you please explain how these institutional aspects influence the decisions taken in your department in relation to promoting water access in Cape Town's low-income communities?
6. Do you think the use of institutional rules, sanctions, the hierarchy of authority and power relations promote or undermine the operational autonomy of policy makers? Please explain.
7. What are some of the different actors that participate in water affairs within Cape Town?
8. Is there adequate community participation in water governance systems in Cape Town? Please explain
9. Can you please elaborate on the importance of community participation in water affairs in Cape Town?
10. What are the existing mechanisms or methods for promoting community participation in decision making in your department?

11. What are some of the challenges your department faces in promoting the practice of community participation in water governance in low-income communities?
12. What do you think can be done to promote effective water access in low-income communities in Cape Town?

Thank you for your time and participation.

Research Instrument 2: Focus Group Discussion Guide- Community residents in Cape Town

Dear research participant.

My name is Thembelani Tyhotyholo a PhD student in the Department of Public Administration and Governance, Faculty of Business and Management Sciences at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in Cape Town. I am conducting a study towards a Doctor of Public Administration Degree. The main objective of my research is to investigate the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town. The focus of the study is on examining how structural configurations such as the internal rules, code of conduct, institutional sanctions and hierarchy of authority shapes the decisions and actions of different urban water governance actors in Cape Town.

I kindly request you to participate in this study through sharing your knowledge and experience on the subject of urban water governance and the subsequent supply of water services in Cape Town. You are kindly requested to participate in this interview that I will be conducting to collect data for this study. The findings of the study may contribute towards strengthening urban water governance in Cape Town. The recommendations of the study may also help national, provincial and local governments to enhance urban water policy and provision of water services equitably to all communities in South Africa.

Your participation in this study will be much appreciated. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me on the following contact details.

Thembelani Tyhotyholo
Department of Public Administration & Governance

Faculty of Business and Management Sciences
Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town
Email: 213003376@mycput.ac.za

Consent Letter

Dear research participant.

You are kindly requested to participate in a study conducted by Thembelani Tyhotyholo a PhD student in the Department of Public Administration and Governance at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in Cape Town. The main objective of the study is to investigate the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in Cape Town. Please take note that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and this means that you are free to decline from participation at any time. Research participants are free not to respond to some interview questions asked by the researcher without providing any reasons. A consent form will be provided to all research participants to sign before partaking in the study. Please be advised that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained throughout this research and therefore the results of this study will neither divulge the institution's particulars nor the individual's particulars. In case where the researcher wants to record the interview, permission from research participants will be obtained prior to the interview. This means that the recording of the interview will not be done without the consent of research participants. All records and tapes of the interview sessions shall be kept safe and accessible only to the researcher. Deception and harm will be avoided through clearly communicating the purpose and objectives of the study prior to the interviews with research participants. When possible, interviews will be conducted using the language of choice of the research participants.

Your participation in this study will be much appreciated. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me on the following contact details.

Thembelani Tyhotyholo
Department of Public Administration & Governance
Faculty of Business and Management Sciences
Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town.
Email: 213003376@mycput.ac.za

Estimated time per Focus Group Discussion: 1:30 hour.

Introductory remarks by the researcher

- Welcoming of all research participants and introduction.
- A brief discussion on the ethics guiding principles: voluntarism, confidentiality and privacy.
- Rules guiding the discussion: respect and accommodation of diverse views.
- Guide against abuse of persons, avoidance of domination of discussion by few individuals and objectivity.
- Highlight the need to transcribe information for coding.
- Request permission to record the discussion from all research participants.

Focus Group Discussion Questions

1. Can you please explain the current status of water access in this area?
2. What are some of the daily challenges do you face in relation to water access in your community?
3. Do you think communities have a voice on how water should be managed in Cape Town? Please explain.
4. In your view, why do you think community participation is important in water affairs in Cape Town?
5. What are the mechanisms/ platforms of community participation in water affairs in this area?
6. How effective are these platforms in promoting community involvement in water affairs in Cape Town?
7. What actions/ steps has this community taken to ensure that its water demands are considered by the Cape Town officials?
8. What do you think can be done to promote effective water access in low-income communities within Cape Town?

Thank you for your time and participation

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Category of Participants (tick as appropriate):

<i>Staff/Workers</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Teachers</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Parents</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Lecturers</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Students</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Other (specify)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>								

You are kindly invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Thembelani Tyhotyholo from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. The findings of this study will contribute towards:

<i>An undergraduate project</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>A conference paper</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>An Honours project</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>A published journal article</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>A Masters/doctoral thesis</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>A published report</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Selection criteria

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because:

- You are involved in the formulation and implementation of water governance policies and strategies in Cape Town under the Department of Water and Sanitation, Reticulation Branch.

- You can share information about the influence of structural configurations (codified rules, hierarchy of authority, vision and mission statements) on water governance in Cape Town.

The information below gives details about the study to help you decide whether you would want to participate.

Title of the research:

Structural configurations on the governance of urban water supply in Cape Town, South Africa

A brief explanation of what the research involves:

The purpose of this research is to investigate the influence of structural configurations on water governance in urban South Africa using the case of Cape Town. The study will focus on the role and influence of structural configurations such as institutional culture, vision and mission statement, codified rules and the hierarchy of authority on water governance in Cape Town. The aim of this research is to develop an empirically grounded understanding of the influence of structural configurations on urban water governance in South Africa using Cape Town as a case study. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- Assess the legislative frameworks for urban water governance in the post-apartheid South Africa.
- Analyse how the existing structural configurations are aiding or constraining effective water governance in Cape Town.
- Explore the practice of community participation in urban water governance in Cape Town.
- Propose possible measures to strengthen urban water governance efficacy in Cape Town.

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Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study:

1. I, Thembelani Tyhotyholo will describe the main research procedures to you in advance, so that you are informed about what to expect.
2. I, Thembelani Tyhotyholo, will treat you with respect by arriving on time for all the interview schedules and well prepared;
3. I, Thembelani Tyhotyholo, will conduct an introduction with you in order to break ice.
4. You will be asked for permission to record the interviews and also take some notes where applicable;
5. In a case where there is no clarity, you will be allowed to ask for confirmation or clarity of words/sentences/phrases to ensure accuracy of the data collected;
6. The information will be treated with full confidentiality and if published, it will not be identifiable as yours;
7. You will be given the option of omitting questions you do not want to answer or feel uncomfortable with;
8. I, Thembelani Tyhotyholo, will ensure that all questions asked do not pose any realistic risk of distress or discomfort, either physically or psychologically, to you;
9. I, Thembelani Tyhotyholo, will debrief you at the end of your participation (i.e. give a brief explanation of the way forward).
10. You are invited to contact me should you have any questions about the research before or during the study.
11. You will be free to withdraw your participation at any time without having to give a reason.

kindly complete the table below before participating in the research.

Tick the appropriate column		
Statement	Yes	No
1. I understand the purpose of the research.		
2. I understand what the research requires of me.		
3. I volunteer to take part in the research.		
4. I know that I can withdraw at any time.		
5. I understand that there will not be any form of discrimination against me as a result of my participation or non-participation.		

6. Comment:

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Please sign the consent form. You will be given a copy of this form on request.

Signature of participant	Date

Researcher

	Name:	Surname:	Contact details:
1.	Thembelani	Tyhotyholo	213003376@mycput.ac.za

Contact person: Thembelani Tyhotyholo	
Contact number: 0735219492	Email: 213003376@mycput.ac.za