

Barriers and enablers to multi-level governance: Sanitation upgrading in the Murray informal settlement, Cape Town

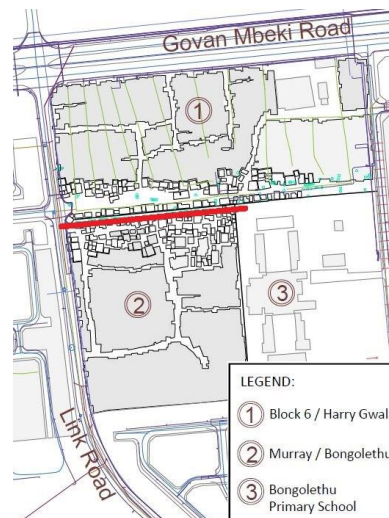
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RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Cape Town's urban area is growing. Linked to this is the growth of informal settlements. In many of these, the technical provisioning of sanitation services is far behind that of formal residential areas. This can and does result in unsanitary living conditions and a need to upgrade infrastructure. In a bid to be included in the decision-making processes that surround infrastructure provisioning, the residents of informal settlements and community based organisations in those settlements advocate for the City of Cape Town (CoCT) and the community to partner through multi-level governance arrangements.

The Murray informal settlement is in Philippi, Cape Town. In 2017, the Murray upgrading project was initiated by a community based organisation: the Informal Settlement Network (ISN). They were supported by a non-governmental organisation (NGO), the Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC), and the project was carried out in partnership with the residents and local government. It aimed to upgrade the sewage pipeline along the northern border of the informal settlement in three phases. Phase 1, an emergency clean-up, was completed in August 2018. The Phase 2 sub-surface works were scheduled for the same month, but were not completed, and the Phase 3 surface works could not be undertaken.

The project provides a good case study for considering barriers and enablers to multi-level governance in the broader context of informal settlements. Qualitative research was therefore carried out in 2019 and consisted of interviews with actors across scales who were all significantly involved in the upgrade project: 2 residents, 2 ISN members residing locally, 1 CORC representative, 2 councillors and 4 CoCT officials. These highlighted that the project was considerably more complicated than was anticipated.



Above | Sewage overflowing from a leaking manhole in Murray (left); Map of Murray informal settlement (right)

KEY FINDINGS

In informal settlements, such as Murray informal settlement, Cape Town, technical provisioning of sanitation services lags behind that of formal areas, resulting in unsanitary living conditions.

Residents and community based organisations advocate for CoCT-community partnerships through arrangements of multi-level governance to ensure residents are included in decision-making around infrastructure provisioning.

CoCT officials rely on a vertical structure that includes ward councillors to fulfil their community engagement mandate.

The poor relationship between the ward councillor and the CoCT has a negative impact on both processes and communication.

A local NGO's role as intermediary is very valuable.

Full paper:

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Keywords: Multi-level governance; informal settlement; sanitation upgrading.

BARRIERS AND ENABLERS

Multi-level governance refers to both the vertical and horizontal layers of governance arrangements and linkages. In Murray informal settlement, the research showed both barriers and enablers to multi-level governance.

Governance arrangements consisting of the “interplay between actors, levels and sectors of government”

with the specific aim of tackling complex challenges.

Multi-level governance, definition (Vedeld et al, 2015)

Barriers were identified at all scales by the interviewees (see table below). The community members felt that the CoCT was not adequately involving them in decision-making and was failing to keep promises (B1). This negatively impacted the credibility of local leadership. Furthermore, historical injustices from Apartheid have left the community with a sense of despondency and deep mistrust for CoCT officials who, in response, sometimes enter defensive mode and lack transparency (B4). At the city level, the complex and ever-changing nature of the CoCT meant that there was a lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities, making it difficult for residents to engage with the CoCT (B3). However, informal settlements are challenging spaces for infrastructure implementation and the project was also hindered by the settlement being on private land, a lack of planned service layouts and high crime rates (B2).

Interviewees also highlighted some enablers to multi-level governance. Despite being critiqued by the community, the CoCT did contribute significant time, effort and resources to the sanitation upgrade project in Murray (E3). In particular, one CoCT official facilitated an important co-design process with the residents. The residents of Murray informal settlement showed robust and multi-faceted community leadership throughout the upgrading project, incorporating residents' voices through the creation of a Project Steering Committee (E2). The considerable role of CORC was recognised by all involved in the project (E1). However, some CoCT officials criticised CORC for occasionally raising false hopes among the Murray community. They felt this had a negative impact on relations between the CoCT and the residents. In fact transparent and mindful communication was mentioned as something that is necessary for multi-level governance to be successful (E4). However, clear communication was not often deemed to be present in the case of the Murray project.

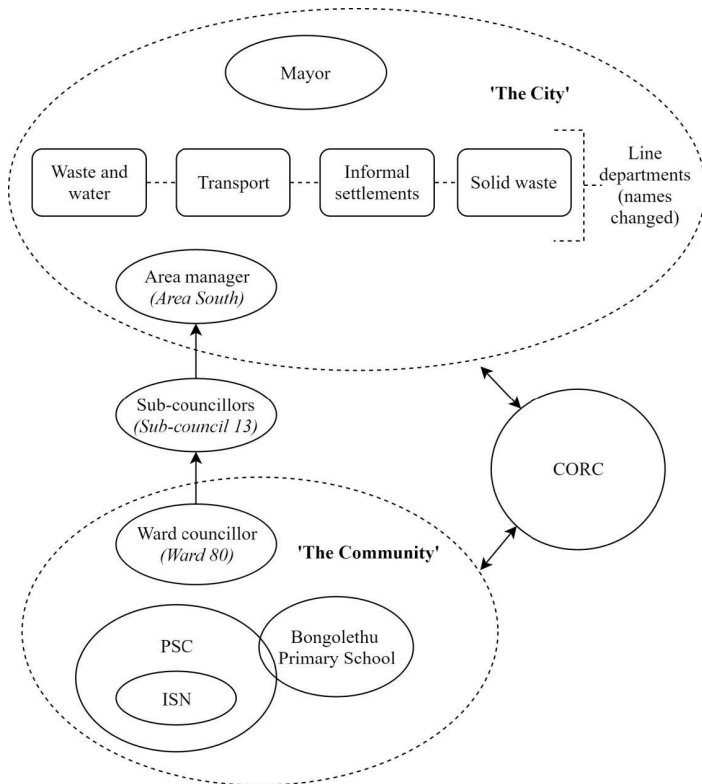
Below | Summary of barriers and enablers to multi-level governance as identified by the 12 interviewees independently of each other and without prompting (where C stands for CORC, Council. for Councillor and ISN for Informal Settlement Network).

Barriers and enablers to multi-level governance		Number of interviews											
		Resident/ISN					C	Council.		City			
Barriers		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	12	8	9	10	11
B1	City playing 'hide and seek'	■	■	■	■	■	■		■				
B2	Complexities of informality	■		■			■	■	■	■	■	■	■
B3	Roles and responsibilities are not clear	■			■					■	■		
B4	Historical and political context					■	■	■	■	■		■	■
Enablers													
E1	CORC as the mediating intermediary	■	■	■	■	■			■	■		■	■
E2	Strong community leadership	■	■			■	■		■				
E3	City facilitating production	■				■	■			■			■
E4	Communication				■	■	■				■	■	■

ROLES AND ENGAGEMENTS

The interviews revealed a complex situation. Although the residents, ISN, CORC and the CoCT had cooperated positively during Phase 1 of the project, there were several barriers to multi-level governance.

Below | Visual representation of the observed involved entities



The CoCT's service delivery efforts were hindered because the Murray informal settlement has developed on private land. Furthermore, with Philippi being historically under serviced, the upgrading efforts in Murray were inextricably linked and hindered by repeated delays in the upgrading of the adjacent Link Road sewer pipeline. As a result, the CoCT's promise to lay a new sewer pipeline in Murray (Phase 2) was not kept. There is an historically strained relationship between the CoCT and the community. Community members felt that the CoCT was playing hide and seek with them, thereby acting as a stumbling block for this project. Conversely, CoCT officials implied that community members were at fault for poor service delivery because they did not take ownership of services provided for them. Most officials appeared to narrowly interpret their mandate regarding community engagement, only communicating via emails to the ward councillor. However, some CoCT officials did implement a co-design approach. The CoCT makes provision for ward councillors who are meant to bridge the city-community gap, but this structure does not seem to be working in Murray. A poor relationship between the ward councillor and CoCT is negatively impacting the process and communication around it. This may be due to Ward 80's ANC affiliation in a DA led CoCT. Residents say this has led to neglect. CORC's role as intermediary between the CoCT and residents is therefore important.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR POLICY, PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

- Technical processes are hindered when there is a lack of understanding regarding the social and institutional drivers at play. The social and institutional context in which technical processes such as sanitation provisioning are embedded create several challenges. Multi-level governance helps to implement technical solutions in their context by bringing various entities to the table and enabling them to engage with the socio-political dynamics at hand.
- Local sanitation challenges cannot be solved at the local level alone since they require city-level support and engagement between scales. Without the CoCT's buy-in and strong leadership, incremental upgrading projects such as the one in Murray have limited capacity to succeed.
- Mistrust and a lack of transparency are key obstacles to achieving multi-level governance. Underlying mentalities are fundamentally what enable and hinder cross-scalar engagements. Neither the mistrust displayed by the community, nor the "decide-announce-and-defend method" adopted by some CoCT officials are helpful. Ward councillors are in a unique position to try to improve this if enabled to do so.

FURTHER READING

Enqvist, J.P. and Ziervogel, G. 2019. [Water governance and justice in Cape Town: An overview](#). Wiley *Interdisciplinary Reviews: Water* 6:e1354.