Politicised and contested environmental governance in local government in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

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DECLARATION

As the candidate's Supervisor I agree/do not agree to the submission of this thesis.

I, Shaheen Sewparsadh Thakur (212511172) hereby confirm that this doctoral dissertation entitled: ***Politicised and contested environmental governance in local government in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*** is the outcome of my own research, investigation, assessment, critical analysis, and discussion. I confirm that this thesis has not previously been submitted to any extent for any other academic degree or any other academic institution. All references and citations have been acknowledged and accredited to the best of my ability. The ethics committee from the University of KwaZulu-Natal has provided an ethical clearance for this research. This doctoral thesis is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of philosophy in Geography in the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

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"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit" – Aristotle

ABSTRACT

Environmental sustainability and governance are critical aspects of local municipal development planning and implementation globally and in Africa. The transition towards a more environmentally sustainable mindset is becoming normative in the local government sector, especially in the global South. On a Southern African scale, local government in South Africa (SA) shares an intimate connection with communities, especially in terms of service delivery and environmental sustainability. The South African constitution promotes effective local Environmental Governance (EG) and a clean and healthy environment for all, but there are diverse political factors that influence local EG such as political instability, power relations, neopatrimonialism, factionalism and cadre deployment, amidst contemporary political alternation and incumbent decline. In depth, grounded research in SA that focuses on the political influence on the local environmental sector in the contemporary context is lacking. The study aims to identify and explore diverse political dynamics and influences on effective local environmental governance, environmental service provision and environmental-based neopatrimonialism on labour dynamics and incentivisation in the Endumeni local and uMzinyathi district municipalities in the KwaZulu-Natal province of SA. The theoretical framework consisted of a combination of the Political Ecology Approach (PEA), the Moral Economy Approach (MEA), and the Practical Environmental Governance Framework (PEGF). The research methodology was guided by a pragmatic and grounded research philosophy that included both inductive and deductive research approaches. The findings were obtained using both qualitative and limited quantitative data. The qualitative methods consist of key-informant interviews, observation, focus groups and meetings. The quantitative method consisted of a community questionnaire. A combination of purposive, non-probability and snowball sampling were applied to identify the most relevant stakeholders. The findings indicated that political dynamics, power relations and inter and intra party factions both enabled and constrained progress towards local EG and environmental service provision depending on political leadership within the council, the control of political power and the access to municipal resources. Essentially, the environmental sector was politicised and used as a political tool for securing political power over municipal leadership and resources. However, neopatrimonial relationships were sometimes enabling of environmental governance and justified by respondents from a utilitarian redistribution standpoint based on providing livelihood support to competent and impoverished cadres from the majority of the previously disadvantaged people of SA. Rather than liberal notions that neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment represent mere moral failings or underdeveloped citizenship, a moral economy approach suggests that, in contrast to 'grand' corruption, petty forms of patronage are embedded in moral economies of survival and relationships of 'nested dependence' that are more structural – persisting across political party orders and supported by their respective voters. This research contributes to an emerging body of research on municipal environmental governance, contested local politics and coalition councils in SA and provides a deeper understanding of politicised local environmental governance, environmental sustainability and the moral reasoning dictating the distribution of environmental-based incentives and opportunities in South African LG. The findings highlighted the complex, transitional nature of political theory in SA and point towards a multifaceted and delicate integration of environmental governance in post-apartheid local state democratisation.

Key words: Environmental governance, politics, environmental sustainability, political ecology, neopatrimonialism, local municipalities, moral economy

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IMPORTANT CONCEPTS AND TERMS:

Cadre deployment: the appointment by a government governing party of a loyalist member(s) in an organization and bringing that institution under the party's control rather than the state.

Clientelism: the direct exchange of a citizen's vote in return for direct payments or continuing access to employment, goods, and services.

Coalition in governance: a formalised political partnership or agreement between different political parties to act collectively regarding political decision- making, leadership and governance of a certain geographical territory.

Corruption: a breach of trust which arises from the misuse or abuse of public power of personal interest.

De facto legal perspective: a situation that is true in fact, but that is not officially sanctioned in law.

Democratisation: the process in which authoritarian rule moves from democratisation to democratic governance.

Democratised local governance: a process of creating democratic institutions and overall democratic citizenship rooted in a democratic political culture.

Environmental governance: a set of regulatory processes, mechanisms and organisations through which political actors influence environmental actions and outcomes or the processes of decision-making involved in monitoring and managing the environment and natural resources.

Environmental-based services in local government: refer to activities aimed at protecting and enhancing the environmental sustainability within a local municipal jurisdiction. These services are important for public health and community well-being and consist of waste management, water quality monitoring, air quality management, environmental health, and climate change mitigation.

Faction: commonly used to designate any constituent group of a larger unit which works for the advancement of particular persons or policies.

Factionalism: any intra-party combination, clique, or grouping whose members share a sense of common identity and common purpose and are organized to act collectively – as a distinct bloc within the party – to achieve their goals.

Governmentality: the study of power that emphasises the governing of peoples conduct through positive means rather than sovereign power to formulate the law and is usually associated with the willing participation of the governed.

Grounded theory: a research strategy that resulted in continuous and rigorous data collection to the point of data saturation and theory formation.

Institutionalised environmental governance: refers to the legal and established rules, processes, and institutions that guide the actions of different stakeholders such as local communities and the private sector manage their relationship with the environment.

Lay morality: refers to how people should treat others and be treated by them, matters that are important for their subjective and objective well-being.

Local governance: is a sphere of governance which deals with matters concerning the people living within the local scale of government. It represents the microscopic interests of the locality leading to the broader concept of welfare and happiness of its people.

Local government: a public organisation authorised to manage and govern the affairs of a given territory or area of jurisdiction within the local government scale.

Moral Economy Approach: a way of studying the world, it examines and assesses the moral justifications of basic features of economic organization, it also examines and assesses the moral influences on, and implications, of economic activities, and how economic practices and relations are evaluated as fair, unfair, good, or bad.

Neopatrimonialism: the way that formal institutions and rational-legal rule of the state coexist along with patrimonial relations, patrons typically are officeholders who use public funds or the power of being in office to build a personal following allowing them to stay in power.

Professionalism: refers to being competent, efficient, masterly and qualified.

Public sector professionalism: refers to the overall value that encompasses all other values that guide the public service.

Political Governance: the formation and stewardship of the formal and informal rules that regulate the public realm, the arena in which state as well as economic, societal and political actors interact to make decisions.

Political Ecology Approach: a theoretical and political lens through which to understand, challenge, and structure further inquiry into nature–society relationships in the contemporary world, with certain methodological preferences following from its dominant theoretical perspectives and normative commitments.

Political patronage: the proffering of public resources (most typically, public employment) by office holders in return for electoral support, where the criterion of distribution is again the clientelist one: did you—will you—vote for me?

Political-administration interface: is defined as the relationship between the administrative and political components at the municipal level; it is this relationship which will largely determine whether policy and programs are successfully implemented.

Political hierarchy: the transfer of decision-making power from one political entity or political official to another based on access to resources, economic development, and political biasness.

Political territory: territorial justification, boundaries and the relation of land and place to individual autonomy.

Political moment: refers to political actions that are inclusive of community interests and that inspire radical political change and transition of political authority and influence.

Political geography: is a subdiscipline of Geography that focuses on the spatial dynamics and analysis of political organisations, processes and outcomes across different spatial territories and boundaries on the earth's surface.

Practical Environmental Governance framework: a conceptual framework developed by Bennet and Satterfield (2018) to design, assess and evaluate practical EG in different institutions and contexts.

The research philosophy of pragmatism: assesses and evaluates beliefs and theories in relation to the success and of their applicability and practicality- doing what works best for the research outcome.

Theoretical sampling: is a sensitive and investigative technique that allows the researcher to identify recurring ideas and construct patterns from different datasets.

Utilitarianism in political theory: is described as making decisions that benefit the majority and decisions that have the least consequences.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LG	: Local Government
LM	: Local Municipalities
EG	: Environmental Governance
TMNs	: Transnational Municipal Networks
LED	: Local Economic Development
WLAs	: White Local Authorities
BLAs	: Black Local Authorities
PEA	: Political Ecology Approach
COSATU	: Congress of South African Trade Unions
PEGF	: Practical Environmental Governance Framework
MEA	: Moral Economy Approach
PP	: Public Participation
ANC	: African National Congress
IDP	: Integrated Development Plan
NEMA	: National Environmental Management Act
EMIs	: Environmental Management Inspectorates
PR	: Proportional Representation
IFP	: Inkatha Freedom Party
DA	: Democratic Alliance
EFF	: Economic Freedom Fighters
NMBMM	: Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality
SA	: South Africa
SARS	: South African Revenue Service

SAPS	: South African Police Service
PE	: Political Ecology
ME	: Moral Economy
PEGF	: Practical Environmental Governance framework
UDM	: uMzinyathi District Municipality
ELM	: Endumeni Local Municipality
DEA	: Department of Environmental Affairs
GE	: Green Economy
CSOs	: Civil Society Organisations
IWMP	: Integrated Waste Management Plan
NGOs	: Non-Governmental Organisations
UN	: United Nations
SMMEs	: Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises
UKZN	: University of KwaZulu-Natal
KZN	: KwaZulu-Natal
GT	: Grounded Theory
COGTA	: Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
EDTEA	: KZN Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs
ULM	: Umvoti Local Municipality
NLM	: Nquthu Local Municipality
MLM	: Msinga Local Municipality
IDT	: Independent Development Trust
EPWP	: Expanded Public Works Programme
CWP	: Community Work Programme
SALGA	: South African Local Government Association
PR	: Participatory Research

DWS : Department of Water and Sanitation

DFFE : Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries

DARD : Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

SDFs : Spatial Development Frameworks

EMFs : Environmental Management Frameworks

CCRSs : Climate Change Response Strategies

SPSS : Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

UNEP : United Nations Environment Programme

COP : Congress of the Parties

PG : Political Governance

RDP : Reconstruction and Development Plan

GEAR : Growth, Employment and Redistribution

EIAs : Environmental Impact Assessments

NSSD : National Strategy for Sustainable Development

NDP : National Development Plan

LEGS : Local Environmental Government Support

LGS : Local Government Support

YEC : Youth Environmental Coordinators

HODs : Head Of Departments

WMOs : Waste Management Officers

EOs : Environmental Officers

MPAC : Municipal Public Accounts Committee

MIG : Municipal Infrastructure Grant

BP : Biodiversity Plan

DMP : Disaster Management Plan

LOP : Landfill Operation Plan

EPIP : Environmental Protection and Infrastructure Programme

NRMP : Natural Resource Management Programme

PAC : Project Advisory Committees

PPE : Personal Protective Equipment

ABC : Abantu Batho Congress

SDBPs : Service Delivery Budget Plans

APRs : Annual Performance Reports

EUs : Environmental Units

SCM : Supply Chain Management

DMD : Disaster Management Department

SIU : Special Investigating Unit

NMBMM : Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality

CBDs : Central Business Districts

HR : Human Resources

PA : Personal assistant

MM : Municipal Manager

CFO : Chief Financial Officer

DMR : Department of Mineral Resources

DPW : Department of Public Works

Chapter one: Introduction

1. Politicised and contested environmental governance in local municipalities

1.1. Introduction: Geographies of local governance

The influence of political dynamics such as council coalitions, alternating periods of political power and leadership in municipal councils and neopatrimonialism is entrenched in Local Government (LG) globally (Natalini, 2010; Erlingsson and Odalen, 2013; Koma, 2016). The operations and administration of LG are directly influenced by political leadership and decision-making. The environmental sector in LG is also impacted by political dynamics and power relations (Pasquini, and Shearing, 2014). Numerous scholars such as Bulkeley (2005), Gambert (2010) and Loppolo et al (2016) have debated on the effect of the political—administrative interface on EG in Local Municipalities (LMs). The political-administration interface in LMs is a space where politicians interact with and influence municipal administration and officials (De Visser, 2009; Cameron, 2010). Loppolo et al (2016) acknowledged the diverse political- administrative factors that are important in achieving EG principles in different LMs globally and proposed a geographical specific EG strategic plan for LMs. The strategic plan focuses on the specific social, environmental and economic factors of LG in different geographical areas, as evident in Nebrodi, Italy, where Loppolo et al (2016) implemented a strategic EG plan to encourage context specific and progressive EG.

The increasing concern in environmental sustainability and sustainable development by international governments resulted in the prioritisation of environmental issues, especially EG, which is defined as, "*a set of regulatory processes, mechanisms and organisations through which political actors influence environmental actions and outcomes"* (Lemos and Agrawal, 2006: 298). The Department of Environmental Affairs (2004: 54) defined EG as *"the processes of decision-making involved in controlling and managing the environment and natural resources".* EG principles are entrenched in most LMs globally (Rodgers, 2016). LMs are now also responsible for providing and maintaining a safe and healthy environment for communities by managing environmental issues, implementing progressive and effective EG and promoting sustainable local development. With regards to space and locality, local EG is context specific and dependent on the geographical location of LMs (Du Plessis, 2015). Leitheiser and Follmann (2020) emphasised that effective LG in urban environments is important for promoting environmental sustainability by implementing political policies and practices that prioritise EG and promote innovative environmental development in cities.

The factors of territory and geographical proximity also influence EG in LG. Gambert (2010) identified that territory and geographical proximity negatively influenced the capacity of LG in achieving EG objectives, as communities located on the outskirts of local municipal- Central Business Districts (CBDs) proved more difficult to service due to geographical barriers. The acknowledgment of relevant

spatial concepts is vital for assessing contemporary forms of EG, for instance, Bulkeley (2005) proposed a different perspective of EG geographies that prioritise political space, scale and networks. Bulkeley (2005) also mentioned that concepts such as territory and hierarchy can be utilised to provide a better understanding of EG. Political dynamics also influenced physical environmental features such as geographically rescaling and utilising watershed boundaries for the benefit of particular stakeholders (Cohen, 2012). The link between local politics, power relations, geographical aspects and EG was also highlighted in a study conducted by Shen and Ahlers (2018) in Hangzhou City, China, revealing that innovative and interactive EG between stakeholders at the local scale resulted in the enforcement of air pollution legislation from a bottom-up approach.

The enhancement of EG on a global scale is also influenced by international political relations that ostensibly contribute to the adoption and implementation of progressive and effective EG in LMs globally. Progressive and effective EG has a consistent positive influence and outcome on the local environment, environmental-based resources and environmental-based service delivery. Zimmermann (2018) assessed the importance of intergovernmental and political relations between the national, regional and local in Germany, Canada and Brazil and revealed that political decision making and public policy is more efficient when all spheres of government from the same country and from different countries function cohesively. The initiation of international partnerships to improve EG such as Transnational Municipal Networks (TMNs) between cities has attempted to assist numerous cities towards achieving EG objectives. Wiharani and Holzhacker (2015) highlighted the importance of TMNs in enhancing the institutional capacity of LMs in addressing environmental issues. Wiharani and Holzhacker (2015) also investigated the effectiveness and applicability of TMNs in a decentralising state such as Indonesia where LG is awarded a greater sense of authority. They asserted that LG could contribute substantially to national EG and sustainable development objectives, if TMNs are utilised effectively by LMs in combination with political stability.

LMs are governed by council members that support and belong to political parties with differing political mandates and political contestations (Zuern, 2011; De Jager, 2015; Kotze, 2015). The local sphere of government is directly involved with local communities and is mandated to provide service delivery, Local Economic Development (LED) opportunities, public participation spaces, the enforcement of the rule of law, effective governance and other public administration duties (Erlingsson and Odalen, 2013; Kotze and Plessis, 2015). The concept of LG can be described as, *"an institution, which deals with matters concerning the people living in the particular locality. It represents the microscopic interests of the locality leading to the broader concept of welfare and happiness of its people"* (Sikander (2015:171). According to Biermann and Pattberg (2012) within the last few decades, human induced-environmental issues and concerns have exacerbated rapidly, pressuring global leaders to prevent and mitigate detrimental environmental impacts.

According to Picard and Mogale (2014) the national government is responsible for developing the different spheres of government in a country through the process of legislation and executive power. The core focus of LG is to provide services to a particular geographical area as demarcated by national government. LG is a separate government entity from regional and national government, and this indicates that LG possesses the authority to govern communities within a particular location, as well as administer local elections and elect a local representative council (Shah, 2006). Erlingsson and Odalen (2013) stated that local councils have executive and legislative powers to develop and implement local legislation such as by-laws and tariff policies, approve budgets and capital projects, as well as make decisions pertaining to LED, municipal operations, and community related issues. The progression of democratic LG has become more apparent in the last century, as many countries implement democratic principles through the local sphere of government (Chikulo, 2013). Buccus et al (2008) emphasised the role of LG in ensuring communities are involved in democratic decision-making and participation. The importance of accelerated and effective development is largely dependent on the participation and interaction of local people through LG platforms. Democratic LG must be centered on the ethical and efficient management of public services and the equal participation and representation of local communities.

1.2. Local governance in South Africa

During the Apartheid era LG in SA was segregated, as different racial groups experienced irregular and unfair service delivery and human development opportunities. Local communities were demarcated into separate racial spaces that were governed by local councils of the same racial group (Mayekiso, 1996; Van Donk and Swelling, 2008). The demarcation of LMs in SA dates back as far as the early 1900s when White Local Authorities (WLAs) and Black Local Authorities (BLAs) were formed. The residents in WLAs had access to high levels of service delivery, as there was a strong fiscal foundation. The Apartheid regulations restricted the development of fiscal bases and service delivery in BLAs (Parnell and Pieterse, 2002; Van Donk and Swelling, 2008). Mayekiso (1996) emphasised that environmental and service delivery conditions in the townships were appalling and the implementation of environmental governance in townships were not prioritised during the Apartheid era, however the conservation of game parks and protected areas were prioritised.

The pre-interim stage of democratic LG was implemented in 1994 when SA hosted its first democratic election and the ANC emerged as the dominant political party in the country (Parnell and Pieterse, 2002). The ANC planned and implemented rapid political and developmental changes and the process of cooperative governance gained popularity in SA (Van Donk and Swelling, 2008). In 1996, the three spheres of government were formed under section 40 (1) of the constitution that required distinctive, interdependent, and interrelated government spheres. The formation of LG spatial boundaries commenced after the 1996 local elections during the interim stage of democratic LG. The interim stage focused on the amalgamation of apartheid-era LG structures (Parnell and Pieterse, 2002).

LG in SA is considered as the third sphere of government and is mandated by the constitution to address socio-economic issues, inequalities and promote LED within the municipal spatial boundary. LG is accountable by the principles of the constitution of which is the definitive authority in South African society (Atkinson, 2002; Koma, 2016). Parnell and Pieterse (2002) and Madumo (2015) emphasise that South African LG is centred on the process of achieving and implementing democratic principles. According to De Jager (2015: 9), the concept of democratisation in LG can be described as *"a process of creating democratic institutions and overall democratic citizenship rooted in a democratic political culture"*. De Jager (2015) discusses two aspects of democracy in SA: substantive and procedural. Substantive democracy focuses on inequalities and transformation in communities and procedural democracy allows for the creation of democratic institutions, fair and equal elections, as well as a structured democratic government.

Nealer and Raga (2007), Van Donk and Swilling (2008), De Visser, (2009), Chikulo (2013) and Rogerson (2018) have debated and argued about inroads made by LMs towards improving LED, service delivery and infrastructure development. Rogerson (2018) acknowledges the positive progress made by LMs in achieving LED objectives, however, claims that LED policies must be revamped to cater for the needs of impoverished communities. There have also been positive examples of effective LG and council administration in SA, as a study conducted in the Kungwini Local Municipality in the Gauteng province by Msibi and Penzhorn (2010) revealed that participatory stakeholder interaction proved vital for the planning and implementation of LED projects, as well as the development of environmental plans such as the Integrated Waste Management Plan (IWMP) and Environmental Management Framework (EMF). The participatory communication techniques were implemented effectively by the municipality with few limitations indicating that LMs can utilise participatory methods successfully.

In addition, De Visser (2009) and Motubatse et al (2017) stated that government institutions such as the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) have assisted LMs in improving operational and administration duties such as becoming more financially responsible and sourcing qualified human resources. COGTA has also approved grants to aid LMs in capital and operational budgets resulting in a better standard of LG and service delivery. Mbulawa (2019) emphasised that LMs in SA are gradually abiding to national legislation, polices and strategies such as the *"White Paper on Local Government"*, resulting in good LG. Some municipal case studies such as the Midvaal LM (see Kolisang, 2019) and the Okhahlamba LM (see Asmal, 2019) have indicated that LMs in SA are implementing their constitutional obligations by adopting principles of developmental and democratic LG such as promoting LED, providing satisfactory municipal services, and encouraging the implementation of a community-based environmental management agenda.

The prioritising of environmental health issues also became prevalent in the 1970s, especially within South African townships. The majority of black South Africans were forced to vacate homeland areas for conservation purposes such as in the case of the Isimangaliso wetlands park (Hansen, 2014). There

were also environmental health injustices in South African townships. The townships were utilised as waste dumping areas by the private sector and neighbouring affluent communities, a relevant example is that of the Alexandra township that is located near the affluent area of Sandton (Mayekiso, 1996; Pernell and Pieterse, 2002; Pieterse, 2009). The increase in environmental injustices resulted in the prioritisation of environmental management and the brown environmental agenda in South African impoverished communities (Du Plessis, 2015). The environmental injustices associated with sectors such as waste management, water pollution, and environmental degradation were popularised (Mayekiso, 1996; Patel, 2009; Lawhon and Patel, 2013; Hansen, 2014; Du Plessis, 2015; Masuku, 2019). In the post-apartheid era, the democratic ANC government prioritised environmental issues considerably (Kotze, 2007; Fuo, 2015). The environmental health injustices, environmental-service delivery and environmental issues became a core component of democratic local governance (Pernell and Pieterse, 2002). The section 24 of the South African constitution prioritises environmental management, environmental rights, access to environmental service delivery and effective EG as a mandate for all government departments and municipalities (Kotze, 2007; Du Plessis, 2008; Patel, 2009).

The South African political philosophy is entrenched in democratic principles (Zuern, 2011; De Jager, 2015). De Jager (2015) claims that the political authority in SA is classified as unitary with interlinking federal features. In SA, political parties compete with each other using elections to gain power. The registration of more political parties indicates a stronger democracy (Zuern, 2011). The effectiveness of LG is determined by numerous political and power dynamics such as political stability, power and authority of municipal decision making and the occurrence of factionalism and political contestations (Mngoma *et al.,* 2011; Hellberg, 2014; Pasquini, and Shearing, 2014, Du Plessis, 2015). For instance, Khodr and Awwad (2021) found that political instability and a lack of environmental regulation placed pressure on environmental resources in Lebanon. Khodr and Awwad (2021) claimed that political factors such as corruption, a lack of communication between political leaders and a contested, top-down autocratic governance approach resulted in detrimental impacts on the environment. However, they suggested that peaceful networking and collaboration between politicians can promote EG by creating a stable platform for stakeholders to voice their environmental concerns, especially in this current period of political alternation in South African politics, where political parties alternate power during different election periods and move towards more coalition-based government and local councils (Thakur and Nel, 2023).

Furthermore, Nelson and Agrawal (2008), Von soest (2010), Lodge (2014) and Mukwedeya (2016) debated patronage networks in LG and the influence on socioeconomic and environmental factors such as the access to employment opportunities, the access to state resources and access to the economic benefits associated with environmental resources. The political concepts of neopatrimonialism, factionalism and clientelism influence LG both positively and negatively and this impacts EG and environmental service provision. According to Therkildsen (2005: 37) Neopatrimonialism can be

conceptualised as *"the way that formal institutions and rational-legal rule of the state coexist along with patrimonial relations, patrons typically are officeholders who use public funds or the power of being in office to build a personal following allowing them to stay in power"*. Zariski (1960:33) described factionalism as *"any intra-party combination, clique, or grouping whose members share a sense of common identity and common purpose and are organized to act collectively – as a distinct bloc within the party – to achieve their goals"*. Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007: 2) defined clientelism as *"the direct exchange of a citizen's vote in return for direct payments or continuing access to employment, goods, and services,"*. Through the process of neopatrimonial, clientelist and factionist relationships, environmental services, resources and opportunities can be utilised as incentivisation for political support in LMs between political elites and comrades in SA.

According to Von Soest (2010) and Lodge (2014) neopatrimonial and clientelist relations are entrenched in the state system through interactions between public officials and cadres. Hicken (2011) stated that clientelism is complex and has social, economic, and political implications on society, for example, acting as a hindrance in achieving accountable and transparent governance. Several scholars such as Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2004), Hicken (2011) and Benit-Gbaffou (2011) have highlighted the link between local democracy and clientelism in SA. Clientelism was practiced during the Apartheid era and is now apparent in democratic SA (Sebudubudu, 2008). The prevalence of clientelism at the local scale is related to the close and personal relationships between political leaders and communities through communication platforms such as ward committees and political war rooms[1] (Raga and Taylor, 2005; Piper and Deacon, 2008).

There has been research conducted on political incentivisation in LG, for instance, Feng et al (2018) emphasised the political incentivisation encouraged municipal officials in China to achieve environmental and economic objectives. Mason (2020) found that in Turkey, water infrastructure development and water supply was prioritised for politically inclined communities by LG, resulting in territorial patronage. The politisation of EG in LMs globally is a widespread process and research conducted by Bulkeley (2005), Gambert (2010), Cohen (2012), Loppolo et al (2016), Feng et al (2018), Shen and Ahlers (2018), Mason (2020) and Khodr and Awwad (2021) confirmed this, however scholarly attention of politicised local EG in South Africa (SA) is required, hence the purpose of this study.

1.3. The political influence on environmental governance in South African local municipalities

SA is accustomed to a politically violent and contested history with a transition from an oppressive based Apartheid government system towards a democratic government system in 1994 (Mayekiso,1996; Van Donk and Swilling, 2008; Koelbe 2017). In the post-apartheid era, there are three

[1] A political war room is an enclosed location utilised by a political campaign or political party, inclusive of political members to plan and strategize a specific political agenda. It is the epicenter for a political campaign's communications and tactical strategy, especially during an election cycle.

spheres of government in SA that consist of the national, provincial, and local spheres (Picard and Mogale, 2014). In SA, the ruling political party from 1994 is the African National Congress (ANC), the ANC has experienced a subtle of support from the public for numerous reasons such as corruption, factionalism, ineffective and incompetent governance, increased levels of income inequality and a rise in socioeconomic issues, as well as increased neopatrimonialism and state capture (Olver, 2018; Nzo, 2019).

Natalini (2010) and Reddy (2016) argued that the lack of leadership and governance by the majority of ANC political leaders has resulted in incompetent and under functioning LMs that have failed to provide efficient service delivery and Local Economic Development (LED) for impoverished communities. The lack of effective governance and political stability at the LG scale has impacted and influenced the environmental sector, as EG in LMs is directly influenced by factors such as local council decisions, political stability, access to municipal budget and resources, as well as competent and skilled recruitment (Pasquini and Shearing, 2014; Du Plessis, 2015). The concept of EG in SA is defined as, *"the processes of decision-making involved in controlling and managing the environment and natural resources",* the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA, 2004: 54), this definition of EG is critical for the formulation and implementation of all LM environmental plans, policies, and strategies in SA.

Several studies conducted by scholars such as Meyer (2006), Magnani (2012), Pasquini et al (2015) and Olver (2018) have indicated that LMs faced diverse challenges in promoting and attaining effective EG and providing environmental-based services to communities such as financial constraints, incompetent human resources, and unstable political leadership. The concept of environmental-based services in LG refers to activities aimed at protecting and enhancing the environmental sustainability within a local municipal jurisdiction. These services are important for public health and community well-being and consist of waste management, water quality monitoring, air quality management, environmental health, and climate change mitigation (IDP, 2019/20). The concepts of political governance and political power relations are important influential factors in achieving and implementing progressive EG and promoting functioning and competent environmental departments within LMs (Patel, 2009; Hellberg, 2014). Political Governance refers to *"the formation and stewardship of the formal and informal rules that regulate the public realm, the arena in which state as well as economic, societal and political actors interact to make decisions"* (Hyden and Court, 2002:8).

Cilliers and Aucoin (2016) and Reddy (2016) have also debated that political governance at the LG scale is a complex and dynamic process and may influence various environmental developmental and environmental service delivery components for local communities. There are also diverse factors that influence political decisions in LMs such as power relations, potential financial incentives for officials, political party coalitions, local government structures and the relationship between municipal officials (Cilliers and Aucoin, 2016). In this research, it was important to consider whether transitions to effective EG in LMs might produce power relations of inequality, governance, and injustices, as well as unequal

access to environmental benefits, services and income generating opportunities just as the industrial revolution and Apartheid system assisted in producing contemporary inequality and injustices.

Numerous allegations and incidents of corruption and state capture are common in the public sector (Bruce, 2014; Reddy, 2018; Olver, 2018). In response, stakeholders such as COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions), AfriForum and the Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse (OUTA) have been pushing for political party funding transparency and accountability of misused funds from illegal sources (Kroukamp, 2016). Netshakhuma (2020) asserts that recently party funding from the state and private sector has become regulated in SA. The new approved legislation to regulate and monitor private funding sources. It is compulsory for parties to be transparent about private funding sources and amounts. Professional and ethical behaviour is also crucial for effective service delivery provision, enhancing LED opportunities and community development in LMs (Mafunisa, 2001; Cameron, 2010; Kroukamp and Cloete, 2016). Sinclair (1993:910) describes professionalism as *"being competent, efficient, masterly and qualified"*. Whereas UNDESA (2000:5) defined public sector professionalism as *"the overall value that encompasses all other values that guide the public service"*. However, patronage is rife in South African LMs and directly influences EG.

The rise of incompetence and political factionalism in LMs have severely impacted EG, environmental service provision and environmental interventions (Mukwedeya, 2015; Olver, 2018). Kotze (2018) claims that the ANC is renowned for intra-party factionalism, and in July 2021, a factional battle in the ANC between the former president and current presidents' political camps sparked violent rioting, looting and political conflict that spilled down to the LG scale and placed additional pressure on limited municipal financial and organisational resources that could have been utilised to promote EG (Nyoka, 2021). According to Tsheola (2014) and Beresford (2015), the process of neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment in LMs have also increased, influencing EG through the process of environmental incentivisation that forms the core analysis of the third analysis chapter in this thesis.

Olver (2018) emphasised that the ANC possesses a rich history of neopatrimonialism and reciprocity in exchange for vote-buying and sustained political support between cadres and political elites. LG is the focus of this research, as it is the level of governance closest to the public, therefore, in this research, neopatrimonialism is discussed in relation to the environmental sectors in two local municipal study sites in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province of SA. The neopatrimonial focus in the study sites are focused on labour dynamics and incentivisation from the environmental sector and not on large scale corruption and tender procurement neopatrimonial relationships in the government sector. Kotze (2007) and Du Plessis (2008) emphasised that in the South African constitution it is mandatory for LMs to initiate and implement EG principles and provide adequate environmental service delivery. LMs are also responsible for providing a safe and healthy environment for communities within a specific municipal boundary (Parnell and Pieterse, 2002; Kotze, 2007; Van Donk and Swelling, 2008; Reddy, 2018).

Research conducted by Mngoma et al (2011), Hellberg (2014) and Olver (2018) have confirmed that political dynamics and power relations in South African LMs directly influence leadership efficiency and council stability, and this has implications on environmental-based decision making such as the approval of environmental interventions, the implementation of environmental policy, the approval of environmental developmental plans and recruitment of specialised environmental officials in LMs. The role and actions of LM councils and local political power relations can also result in incompetent LG that negatively impacts EG (Pasquini and Shearing, 2014). Teles (2016) asserted that incompetent LG is characterised by high crime rates, corruption, a lack of public participation, a lack of transparency and accountability, as well as factional contests between political parties.

In contrast, Feris (2010) and Madumo (2015) emphasised that the characteristics of competent LG are political stability, accountability, public participation, absence of violence, rule of law, government efficiency and effectiveness, as well as the control of corruption. Siddle and Koelble (2012), De Jager (2015) and Reddy (2018) claim that effective and competent LG can contribute towards the attainment of progressive EG and effective environmental-based service delivery provision. LMs are well placed to positively influence EG policies and strategies by implementing interventions and environmental development plans that focus on green development and innovation such as energy and water efficiency, appropriate management of waste streams and the development of parks and recreational areas (Nhamo, 2013).

There is no denying that political dynamics are engraved in LM functions, leadership, and governance, therefore it is important to critically assess and understand how political dynamics at the local scale directly impact EG and the environmental sector by assessing enabling and constraining dynamics. Previous research on EG in South African LMs conducted by Patel (2009), Du Plessis (2010), Mngoma et al (2011), Hellberg (2014), Pasquini and Shearing (2014), Fuo (2015), Kotze and Plessis (2015) and Houdet (2016) acknowledge the effects of political dynamics on EG. However, I hypothesize that incompetent LG and consistent political contestations in LMs are likely to act as barriers towards the attainment and transition towards effective and progressive EG. This has implications on potential environmental benefits and opportunities for impoverished communities, the upholding of municipal environmental compliances and legislation, as well as the development of municipal environmental policies and plans. I also predict that environmental resources, opportunities, and services are often utilised as incentivisation for political support in municipal neopatrimonial relationships between the local political elite and politically inclined communities and municipal officials. My research aims to strengthen this claim and provide detailed evidence to confirm and emphasise the fragile influential interrelationship between local politics, power relations, factional contests, neopatrimonial relationships, environmental incentivisation and the transition to effective and progressive EG and environmental service provision in South African LMs.

1.4. Research problem, questions, aims and objectives

Research conducted by Feris (2010), Hlahla et al (2014), Leck and Crick (2014), Pasquini et al (2015) and Houdet (2016) provided evidence of the gradual progression and development of EG in South African LMs. Local council members and political elites have also acknowledged the potential benefits in the environmental sector and have budgeted for environmental compliances purposes, environmental by-law formation, environmental development plans and recruitment in the environmental departments of LMs (Du Plessis, 2010; Kotze and Plessis, 2015). However, the research problem of this study arises by the lack of critical research in SA that focuses on an in-depth analysis of political influences, political contestations, power relations and neopatrimonial relationships in the local environmental sector, as well as the implications and influence of these dynamics on EG and environmental service provision in LMs.

There is currently insufficient research conducted on the influence of neopatrimonial, clientelist, and factional relationships on local EG. The majority of research focuses on the effects of neopatrimonial, clientelist and factional relationships on LG with limited environmental considerations. The limited literature provided key findings on the influence of neopatrimonial, clientelist, and factional relationships on local EG, however there are limitations regarding an in-depth study on the processes of environmental politisation, the influence of contested intra-factional and inter-factional dynamics on EG and a critical analysis of neopatrimonialism and the morality of using environmental resources and opportunities as incentivisation for politically inclined communities and municipal officials. This study aimed to fill this research gap by firstly applying a Political Ecology Approach (PEA) to discuss the politisation of EG and the influence and implications of contested factional dynamics on EG at the LM scale.

The research problem will be investigated and explored within a local and district municipality in the Northern KwaZulu-Natal area of SA; the Endumeni Local Municipality (ELM) and the uMzinyathi District Municipality (UDM). Considering the political climate of the mentioned study sites, research questions can be posed such as how do political dynamics and political contestations influence and effect EG and environmental service provision? This question is essential provided that the transition towards progressive EG and environmental service provision at the local scale is mandated by the South African constitution as the responsibility of local government. Studies conducted by Holgate (2007), Mngoma et al (2011), Lawhon and Patel (2013) Pasquini and Shearing (2014) and Olver (2018) revealed that the transition towards effective EG in LMs is dependent on progressive and effective decision-making and the leadership qualities of local councils and the local political elites.

1.4.1. Research question:

How are local municipalities in SA that experience contested political dynamics, unequal power relations and neopatrimonial relationships attempting to transition towards and implement effective environmental governance?

1.4.1.1. Supplementary research questions:

Thus, in addition to the primary question, subsidiary questions are raised:

1. What are the implications of politicised environmental governance and environmental service provision within the municipal study sites?

2. How do contested intrafactional and interfactional local politics influence environmental governance and the environmental sector of the municipal study sites?

3. What are the implications of neopatrimonial relationships on environmental governance and the environmental sector of the municipal study sites?

4. What are the benefits of neopatrimonial relationships from the environmental sector for politically inclined communities and comrades within the municipal study sites?

5. What are community perceptions of politicised environmental governance and neopatrimonialism in the environmental sector within their local municipality?

1.4.2. Aims:

There are two central aims for this research study:

1. To identify and explore the influence and dynamics of politicised and contested local politics on effective environmental governance and environmental service provision in the Endumeni and uMzinyathi local municipalities in the province of KwaZulu-Natal within South Africa.

2. To investigate and assess how politicised environmental governance and neopatrimonialism influence labor dynamics and community perceptions in the environmental sector of the Endumeni local and uMzinyathi district municipalities in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa.

1.4.3. Objectives:

1. To identify and discuss the influence of local political dynamics on environmental governance and environmental service provision within the municipal study sites.
2. To assess the influence of local contested and factional politics on environmental governance and environmental service provision within the municipal study sites.
3. To investigate and discuss the implications of neopatrimonial-based practices on effective environmental governance within the municipal case study sites.
4. To identify and assess the benefits of neopatrimonial-based practices for politically inclined comrades and communities.
5. To identify community perceptions on politicised and neopatrimonial-based environmental governance and environmental incentivisation within the municipal study sites.

1.4.4. Theoretical framing:

I applied three theoretical approaches in this research. The first was the Political Ecology Approach (PEA) and it was utilised to discuss and assess the political influence on EG within the political-administration interface. The PEA was applicable because it incorporates politics, EG, power relations, governance and environmental injustices into one theoretical lens. The PEA is defined as, *"a theoretical and political lens through which to understand, challenge, and structure further inquiry into nature–society relationships in the contemporary world, with certain methodological preferences following from its dominant theoretical perspectives and normative commitments"* (Perreault *et al*., 2015: 621). Secondly, the Practical Environmental Governance Framework (PEGF) by Bennett and Satterfield (2018) was utilised to assess the current state and progress of EG in the municipal study sites. Lastly, a Moral Economy Approach (MEA) was applied to critically assess and discuss neopatrimonial relationships in the local environmental sector of the municipal study sites. The MEA is conceptualised as *"a way of studying the world, it examines and assesses the moral justifications of basic features of economic organization, it also examines and assesses the moral influences on, and implications, of economic activities, and how economic practices and relations are evaluated as fair, unfair, good, or bad"* (Sayer, 2015). The PEA, PEGF and MEA can be applied to different spatial scales and are the guiding theoretical framework in this research and will be unpacked in section 2.5 of the thesis.

1.5. Rationale, scope, and delimitations

There are many reasons for the justification and importance of conducting this study. There is currently limited research focusing on the influence of political dynamics on EG and environmental service provision at the LM scale in SA. There is also insufficient research in SA that utilises a political ecology theoretical framework at the LM scale to understand the politicisation of EG, environmental service

provision and access to opportunities from the environmental sector. This study provides a comprehensive and critical assessment of the interrelationship between local politics, power relations, governance, and environment issues in LMs within a South African context. The study is also important for identifying and discussing the implications of local political contestations and inter and intra party factionalism on EG and how politicians manipulate the environmental sector for political benefits. The political process of neopatrimonialism has become a commonality in LG, and this study identifies and discusses the neopatrimonial relationships in two local municipal study sites and how cadre deployment has become a normality in municipal recruitment. This research also provides evidence of neopatrimonial relationships in the environmental sector and indicates how environmental resources and opportunities are used as incentivisation sources for politically inclined communities and municipal officials. The application of the MEA was also vital in providing moral reasoning for the benefits of neopatrimonial relationships and environmental-based incentivisation for impoverished politically inclined communities and municipal officials.

In terms of study scope, the research study period only allowed me to focus on two local municipal study sites in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province of SA, the Endumeni LM, and the uMzinyathi DM. The academic areas of study in the research consists of local environmental politics, political ecology and local EG. The study focuses mainly on the interrelationship between EG, local politics and power relations at a LM scale and to a lesser extent the provincial and national government spheres of SA. All stakeholders that were involved in LM politics and environmental issues from the municipal study sites were regarded as potential data sources for the research, this included the municipal managers, head of departments, sectional managers, supervisors, general workers, councilors, and community members. In terms of research delimitations, the maximum study period was limited therefore there was a limited time period to obtain data and complete the research.

The study did not cover municipal study sites in other provinces in SA and only focused on KZN. In the allocated study period, only two municipal study sites were studied in KZN. The municipal study sites are confined and underdeveloped, the scope and range of stakeholders are slightly limited in comparison to metropolitan municipalities such as Durban, Johannesburg and other cities that include developed civil society and international environmental governance sectors. The community questionnaire was administered to communities in the ELM and excluded the other three LMs in the uMzinyathi DM due to time constraints of the study. The research was also limited to stakeholders that possessed knowledge of political and environmental issues. There were also challenges in accessing councils, senior managers, and other political officials due to availability, accessibility, and politically related safety reasons.

1.6. Thesis structure

Thesis by papers structure:

The findings section of the thesis will be presented in four published and reviewed research papers instead of the conventional thesis findings chapter approach.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Provides a contextual background and the contemporary state of local political and local governance issues in South African LMs. A brief discussion of competent and incompetent LG is provided with linkages to EG and environmental service provision at the local scale. A logical narrative of the thesis is provided together with the research problem, research questions, aims, objectives, rationale, scope, and research delimitations, as well as a brief description of the thesis chapters and the thesis argument.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and theoretical framework

The chapter provides literature on the background and current state of governance and environmental governance on a local scale in SA. Literature is also provided on political parties, contested local politics and factionalism in South African local municipalities. The next section of the chapter focused on debates around neopatrimonialism, clientelism, and corruption in South African local governance, as well as the influence of politics on professionalism in South African local municipalities. The review of literature provided various relevant theoretical insights and perspectives on the research aspects covered in this study, as well as shortcomings that require further research. This chapter also describes and discusses the theoretical framework of the study that consists of a combination of three theoretical perspectives that are utilised to assess the influence of politicised and contested EG, as well as neopatrimonial relationships in a South African local municipal context. The theoretical framework consists of the Practical Environmental Governance Framework (PEGF), the Moral Economy (ME) perspective and the Political Ecology Approach (PEA).

Chapter 3: Research methodology

This chapter discusses and describes the research methodology of the study that consists of an in-depth description of the pragmatic research philosophy and diverse qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques and strategies used in the study, as well as the research strategy that consisted of attributes from the grounded theory approach. Furthermore, a description is provided of the inductive and deductive research approaches and the case study background of the municipal study sites. A discussion is also provided of the research choices, data collection techniques and procedures, as well as fieldwork experiences and limitations.

Chapter 4: Taking a back seat: the politicization of municipal environmental governance in South Africa

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Journal: South African Geographical Journal

Limited scholars have attempted to examine the in-depth relationship between political dynamics, environmental issues, and local municipalities within the political-administrative interface in SA. To address this, we utilise a Political Ecology Approach (PEA) to assess the influence of political dynamics on local EG and the provision of environmental services in the political-administrative interface over a 20-year timeframe in the uMzinyathi district and Endumeni local municipalities in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, SA. A high level of access was enabled by the first author's insider status, producing some rigorous, in-depth results. The paper addresses objectives 1 and 5.

Chapter 5: Alter-nation? Factions, Coalitions and Environmental Governance in the Context of Contested Post-apartheid Local State Democratisation

Published online: 22 December 2023

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Journal: Urban Forum

Limited research in South Africa (SA) focuses on the influence of political contest and factionalism on local Environmental Governance (EG), especially within a current state of transition and political shift towards a more coalition-based government. I provide an analysis of contested local politics on EG within the process of democratisation and local state formation in the Endumeni Local (ELM) and the uMzinyathi District (UDM) municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), SA. The study was theoretically framed by a broad Political Ecology Approach (PEA). The paper addresses objectives 2 and 5.

Chapter 6: *"We are political soldiers of the council"* – The moral economy of neopatrimonialism and 'cadre deployment' in municipal environmental governance in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa

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Journal: Politikon

There is insufficient research conducted on the influence of neopatrimonial relationships on local EG in South Africa (SA). We examine and discuss neopatrimonial relationships between the political elite and municipal officials in the environmental departments, as well as communities in the Endumeni local

and uMzinyathi district municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), SA. We apply aspects from the Moral Economy Approach (MEA) to present a moral perspective of neopatrimonial relationships that result in potential opportunities for politically inclined supporters and communities. This paper addresses objectives 3 and 4.

Chapter 7: The application of a Practical Environmental Governance Framework in politicised and neopatrimonial local government relations: the case of Endumeni and uMzinyathi municipalities in South Africa

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Journal: Southern African Studies

LMs in South Africa (SA) are gradually implementing EG principles under a myriad of challenges such as political instability and municipal incompetence. Limited research focuses on whether EG is achievable within a politicised environment. Using the Practical Environmental Governance framework (PEGF) as an implementative and conceptual lens, I assess and evaluate practical EG in the Endumeni local and uMzinyathi district municipalities in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province of SA. This paper addresses objectives 1, 2 and 5.

Chapter 8: Synthesis, conclusion, and recommendations

This chapter provides a summary of the main research findings from all four analysis chapters/ papers. The findings are integrated into a logical presentation of evidence that answers the research questions, aims and objectives. The importance and limitations of the research are emphasised, followed by research reflections, recommendations, and suggestions for future research studies in the academic fields of environmental politics, political ecology, political geography, and the moral economy in the context of local municipalities, local politics and local environmental governance in SA and globally.

1.7. Thesis argument

The thesis argument is that promoting and implementing EG at the LM scale is challenging without considering the fragile and closely knitted interrelationship between local political dynamics, power relations, council leadership qualities, environmental governance, and injustices, as well as neopatrimonial dynamics and cadre deployment in LMs. I focus on petty forms of patronage that are embedded in moral economies of survival and relationships of 'nested dependence'[2] that are more structural – persisting across political party orders and supported by their respective voters.

[2] The concept of nested dependency describes a hierarchical system where one subsystem is entirely contained within another depicting a sense of dependency.

The existence of political dynamics, power relations, political contestations, factionalism, and neopatrimonialism within the municipal study sites directly influenced the progress and transition towards effective EG, the provision of environmental-based services and the development of the local environmental sector, both positively and negatively depending on local political preferences and mandates. In LG, political dynamics and council decision-making determine the prioritisation of the environmental sector and the progress towards EG principles, as well as environmental compliances, and environmental policy and legislation formation and implementation. Local politicised EG has implications for regional and national environmental legislation and policies, as well as how the local environmental sector is influenced by contested councils and conflicting political leadership. The occurrence of neopatrimonial relationships within the municipal study sites also influenced local EG negatively, however, at times neopatrimonial relationships were morally logical for the majority of impoverished politically inclined cadres that are dependent on environmental-based incentivisation that assists in sustaining livelihoods by creating income generating opportunities.

Chapter two

Literature review and theoretical framing:

Towards a political ecology of local environmental governance and contested local politics in South Africa

In this chapter, literature is obtained from diverse disciplines such as sociology, political sciences, political geography, political ecology, environmental governance, local governance, and public sector professionalism to compile a literature review that covers all relevant aspects of this study. The chapter commences with literature on the background and current state of governance and environmental governance globally and on a local scale in SA. Thereafter, literature on political parties, contested local politics and factionalism in South African local municipalities are discussed. The next section focuses on debates around neopatrimonialism, clientelism, and corruption in South African local governance, as well as the influence of politics on professionalism in South African local municipalities. Lastly, the theoretical framework section focuses on a combination of three theoretical perspectives that are applied to the study. The theoretical framework consists of the Political Ecology Approach (PEA), the Practical Environmental Governance Framework (PEGF) and the Moral Economy Approach (MEA). The review of literature provided various relevant theoretical insights and perspectives on the research aspects covered in this study, as well as shortcomings that require further research.

Firstly, I argue that there are currently insufficient literature and research conducted on the influence and implications of local politics and local contested politics on local environmental governance in SA. Secondly, the review of literature revealed that the application of a political ecology theoretical framework to understand the complexities between politics, power relations, environmental issues, governance, and the economy in South African LMs is also insufficient. Lastly, there is a literature shortfall regarding the moral economy theoretical perspective on political influences in South African LMs, especially in the environmental departments of LMs. The political influences include concepts such as neopatrimonialism, clientelism, factionalism and patronage with emphasis on politically inclined cadre appointments within environmental departments in LMs, the implications on environmental issues and the utilisation of environmental resources and environmental-based service delivery for political gain and oppression. In the last section of the chapter, the theoretical framework of the study is presented and discussed, consisting of practical environmental governance, the moral economy and political ecology perspectives.

2.1. The geographies of local governance

The section commences with a brief discussion of LG on a global scale, followed by the definition, characteristics, and attributes of LG. A brief history of LG in SA is discussed, thereafter, contemporary

critical literature on LG in SA is provided, highlighting the positives and potential of effective LG and also the challenges faced in local municipalities with particular focus on political influences.

In the contemporary governance literature, several scholars such as Sowman and Brown (2006), Lawhon and Patel (2013) and Pasquini and Shearing (2014) provided evidence that the local government has become a crucial deciding factor in providing effective service delivery to communities and in transitioning to a greener, sustainable local economy. Sowman and Brown (2006), Lawhon and Patel (2013) and Picard and Mogale (2015) emphasised the importance of LG in achieving national developmental and environmental goals through community channels. The origin of LG is a debated topic, as Picard and Mogale (2015) claim that informal LG can be traced to the initial colonial period (the indirect rule) when colonialists overthrew local traditional communities and developed a structural authority of control. The initial colonial rule was based on undemocratic and non-developmental principles of LG.

The origin of formal LG has also been debated by academics and is dependent on the political history of a particular country (Seeley, 1978; Shah, 2006; Kersting *et al.,* 2009). Cole and John (2012) claimed that a formal structure of LG originated in the eighteenth century in the Global North such as the United Kingdom and France. Seeley (1978) asserted that the central purpose of formal LG system was to cater for the specific needs and services of local communities within a demarcated geographical area, as this simplified governance and service provision of local communities for the central government. LG is highly dependent on spatial context and territory and can be traced to nineteenth century liberal political philosophy (Seeley, 1978). A liberal mindset for LG was favoured and implemented in European countries. LG was regarded as participatory and empowering for communities to express their concerns and participate in the decision-making process (Seeley, 1978). The processes of industrialisation and urbanisation were also major contributors to the development of LG. The increased demand for services and other municipal functions from industrialisation and urbanisation in local communities resulted in the development of local political structures and councils that were responsible for service delivery on the local scale (Shah, 2006).

This research focuses on LG from largely a geographical and political perspective. Erlingsson and Odalen (2013) mentioned two common approaches of defining LG. The first approach considers all government spheres below national government as local government, and the second approach is based on the specific characteristics and responsibilities of local government such as possessing local authority, demarcated geographical boundaries, local politics and elections and service provision, as well as local budgets and local taxes. The definitions of LG that are most important in this research are the following: Sikander (2015:171) described LG as *"an institution, which deals with matters concerning the people living in the particular locality. It represents the microscopic interests of the locality leading to the broader concept of welfare and happiness of its people".* In a South African context, Koma (2016: 128) defined LG as *"a public organisation authorised to manage and govern the affairs of a given territory or area of jurisdiction".*

The literature in SA indicates that LG can be rated as either bad or good depending on the financial stability of the municipality and the attainment of service delivery objectives (De Visser, 2009; Chikulo, 2013; Madumo, 2015; Koma, 2016; Reddy 2016). The attributes of good LG are associated with transparency, accountability, integrity, effective stakeholder communication and financial sustainability. These good attributes are strongly correlated to achieving sustainable democratic LG (De Visser, 2009; Chikulo, 2013). The application of consistent, good LG ensures effective service delivery provision, community safety and welfare, as well as a better quality of life and a healthy, clean environment for local communities (Madumo, 2015). Natalini (2010) and Reddy (2016) claimed that the characteristics of bad or incompetent LG are mainly associated with the mismanagement of funds (Corrupt, fruitless and wasteful expenditure), inadequate service delivery provision, political and council instability, fraud, corruption, a lack of community participation, blatant neopatrimonialism, and a lack of transparency.

When communities experience bad governance to a point of saturation, unrest and conflict develops leading to service delivery strikes and at times the removal of corrupt council representatives (Reddy, 2016). Mello (2018) asserted that LMs lack effective monitoring and evaluation systems and communities must nominate councillors with relevance experience and expertise to ensure competent decision-making. Community conflict is sometimes met with resistance from council representatives, and this leads to oppression and violence in communities (see Hough, 2008). Local councils exercise political power and resistance towards local communities to protect the benefits associated with local leadership and governance such as having access to municipal funding opportunities and local resources, as well as administrative and operational decision-making of the municipality (Natalini, 2010). If good LG is to be achieved consistently, then the principles of democracy must be applied effectively with the inclusion of multiple stakeholders (Picard and Mogale, 2015, Reddy, 2018). The principles of democracy create the freedom of critical reflection from institutions such as the media and opposing political parties to question the decisions and actions of ruling parties. This provides communities with awareness of their government leadership and ensures, in most cases, corrupt officials that misuse state resources are exposed and accountable to the law of a particular country (Reddy, 2016).

The current state of democratic LG in SA is widely debated, as there have been both positive and negative inroads in the attainment of a sustainable democratic culture in LG (Van Donk and Swilling, 2008; De Visser, 2009; Madumo, 2015). Numerous scholars such as Kotze (2007), Olver (2017) and Reddy (2018) critiqued the process of democratic LG and emphasise the rapid and blatant fraud and corruption practices in SA LMs (see Olver, 2013 for a municipal case study of state capture and corruption). However, Parnell and Pieterse (2002) and De Jager (2015) debated that democratic and developmental LG is a recurring process. De Jager (2015:92) described democratisation as *"the process in which authoritarian rule moves through democratisation to democratic governance"*. The democratisation of LG is vital for community upliftment and reducing inequalities. However, De Jager (2015) also emphasised that most South Africans consider democracy as a personal economic and social upliftment process that is linked to employment opportunities and access to basic services. This

indicates that most local communities in SA lack knowledge of the deeper significance of democratic principles.

According to Van Wyk (2012) it has become increasingly confusing to decipher which sphere of government is responsible for certain roles and responsibilities in SA. According to Steytler and Fessha (2007) definitive functional areas are lacking in SA government, as there are overlapping duties and responsibilities, for example, both provincial and LG are responsible for implementing environmental legislation, however, public environmental and service delivery complaints are usually pushed back and forth between different spheres of government, claiming it is not within their jurisdiction (Van Wyk, 2012). The provincial and LG have been criticised for dysfunctional actions and outcomes, hence national government restructuring interventions such as *the "back to basics programme*" that aimed to restructure LMs in 2015 by encouraging effective service delivery, promoting academically qualified municipal administrations, and decreasing fraud and corruption of municipal resources (Kroukamp, 2016). However, Olver (2017) claimed that LM restructuring interventions are impacted negatively by political parties and municipal councils with claims of unconstitutional and unreasonable objectives.

The increase in fraud and corruption in South African LG has resulted in a substantial decrease in community trust in LG over the last decade (Feinstein, 2010; Bruce, 2014; Olver, 2017; Reddy, 2018). Kroukamp (2016) claimed that despite anti-corruption efforts from government, accountability and transparency are lacking at LMs. The reliance on national government departments by LG for financial and legal assistance indicates that even though government spheres exist in their own right, less financial and legal power is decentralised to provincial and LG (Van Wyk, 2012). De Jager (2015) asserted that the ruling ANC government has appeared to centralise financial and legal power in national departments, thereby creating a dependency from LG to access financial and legal powers beyond their spatial boundaries.

According to De Jager (2015) there are three different types of accountability in South African LG. The first is horizontal accountability that consists of legally authorised public institutions that proceed with necessary actions and decisions to punish corrupt public officials. The second is vertical accountability that is implemented through free and fair elections and lastly, vertical societal accountability, when society utilises the legal system to discipline corrupt political or government officials. These three types of accountability are also applied by stakeholders such as civil society that are unsatisfied with municipal services, the misuse of municipal funds, fraud, and corruption (Feinstein, 2010; Bruce, 2014; De Jager, 2015). The democratic principles of Public Participation (PP) and the media are also important for promoting development, service delivery and improving democratic LG (Buccus *et al.,* 2008). PP at the local level is compulsory for compiling LED plans, IDP planning, ward committee formation and environmental management planning (Raga and Taylor, 2005). Daniels (2012) emphaised that the media must not be politically inclined or biased and possess freedom of speech. However, in 2008, the South African government published the protection of information bill, this has limited the role of the

media in investigating top secret government information, especially in terms of political relations and contestations (Daniels, 2012).

Contemporary LG in SA has been critiqued for providing inadequate standards of service delivery, resulting in violent community protests (Dawson, 2014). A study conducted by Marias et al (2008) in the Phumelela LM within the Free state province of SA demonstrated that community protests were mainly caused by ineffective governance, inadequate service delivery and a lack of communication between municipal structures and local communities. Ballard et al (2006) mentioned that the main reasons for local community protests in post-Apartheid SA are related to poverty, exclusion, marginalisation, and the lack of access to basic services. Similarly, Atkinson (2007) stated that contemporary community protests are influenced by the inability of LMs to provide for community needs. De Visser (2009) asserted that the organisational culture of LMs is not suited to provide effective service delivery and LMs are burdened with failing national developmental policies and strategies, as well as a lack of human resources to service local communities. Atkinson (2007) and Dawson (2014) also emphasised that continuous political turmoil and contested council decisions also trigger community protests and conflict.

The failure of national government developmental policies also place pressure on LMs to provide solutions to socioeconomic issues faced within communities (Govender and Reddy, 2012). LMs lack financial resources and competent officials to manage daily operations and provide for the needs of communities (Madumo, 2015). Beresford (2015) indicated that the political governance structure of LMs is based on popularity, comrade loyalty and reciprocity that influences the recruitment process, as comrades are rewarded with employment opportunities in exchange for political loyalty. Moti (2019) found that it is common for management positions to be occupied by incompetent, yet politically inclined individuals and this influences the efficiency of daily municipal operations. Mandatory assistance by government departments and institutions such as SALGA and the Independent Development Trust (IDT) support LMs through capacity building workshops and interventions (Kroukamp, 2016), however, there are still challenges faced by LMs in SA.

There is a myriad of challenges that impact LG in SA (Parnell and Pieterse, 2002; Swelling, 2008; Madumo, 2015; Koma, 2016; Reddy, 2018). Maharaj (2002) and Reddy (2018) mentioned four categories of challenges that influence LG in SA, these are political, financial, administrative, and socioeconomic challenges. The major political challenges in LMs include political conflict and power inequalities that result in unethical political structures and contestations (Mukwedeya, 2016; Reddy, 2016). The main financial challenges are corrupt activities and the misuse of financial resources, especially the tender and procurement processes (Laubscher, 2012). The administrative challenges were present in a study conducted by De Visser (2009) and Kariuki and Reddy (2019) that comprised of poor-quality operations and service delivery and the socioeconomic challenges are centred on high levels of inequality, a low quality of life and insufficient access to livelihood opportunities. McClendon (2016)

asserted that racial factors are also problematic for LMs, as the de-racialisation of LG represents a major challenge in readdressing Apartheid socio-spatial planning in contemporary development plans that has resulted in community conflict and dissatisfaction, as well as racial biases by local politicians.

Numerous scholars such as De Visser (2010), Siddle and Koelble (2013) and Reddy (2018) have mentioned a lack of capacity in South African LG that impacts institutional and administrative performance. Human capacity refers to possessing qualified and experienced officials and councillors to manage the operations of LMs competently (Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2010). Financial capacity refers to having a sustainable budget that ensures LMs achieve the goals and objectives stated in their IDPs (Reddy, 2016). The material and technological capacity focuses on having sufficient resources to provide service delivery in a sustainable and effective manner (Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2010). De Visser (2010) and Reddy (2018) emphasised the political influence on the administration and operations of LMs, as well as the interface and boundaries between politics and LG. Reddy (2018) also highlighted political factors such as factionalism, abuse of political power and state capture and the implications on LG and service delivery. De Visser (2010) and Reddy (2018) found that there is a decreasing sense of public confidence in LMs, stemming from factors that hinder good governance such as financial mismanagement, unethical decision-making, poor LED planning and the lack of investment and maintenance of public facilities. Siddle and Koelble (2013) claimed that the failure of effective LG reflects the shortcomings of decentralised LG in SA.

In response to the challenges in LG, the South African national government tasked numerous institutions to assist LMs towards a path of good governance. The department of COGTA and SALGA has attempted to increase competent employee capacity at LMs by applying stringent recruitment processes and policies that focus on merit and ethics (Kroukamp, 2016). However, Olver (2018) claimed that LM officials are not always employed on a merit basis, but rather through political connections and influence. The national government has also encouraged the adoption and implementation of transformative and innovative political and administrative leadership in LMs (Naidoo, 2017). Siddle and Koelble (2013), De Jager (2015) and Reddy (2018) claimed that a diverse, educated, and competent LG system is required to specifically focus on the LM context, as this may result in a better understanding of LM dynamics and factors that influence good governance in SA.

2.2. The geographies of local environmental governance

The previous section in this chapter focused inclusively on LG literature globally and in SA. This section focuses on local EG in LMs. The chapter begins with a short description of EG on a global scale. Thereafter, a history of the emergence of EG in SA is provided, followed by a description of South African environmental legislation and policies, as well as the opportunities and limitations of EG in South African LMs. I then provide relevant case studies and examples of progressions and challenges of EG in LMs under politicised environments in SA.

According to Bennett and Satterfield (2018), governance is a vital contributing factor in the implementation of effective environmental management practices, especially within LMs. There are many definitions of EG, Lemos and Agrawal (2006: 298) defined EG as "*a set of regulatory processes, mechanisms and organisations through which political actors influence environmental actions and outcomes"*. This definition is more politically inclined and favours politics as the controlling influencer in attaining sustainable EG. A more academic focused definition of EG is provided by Batterbury and Fernando, 2006: 1856), as a *"discrete area of policy and research, particularly in the context of expanding the theoretical and knowledge base of sustainability and environmental justice"*. On a South African scale, the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA, 2004: 54) defined EG as *"the processes of decision-making involved in controlling and managing the environment and natural resources".* The definition provided by DEA is required to be applied by all spheres of government in SA as a guiding definition in developing environmental-based municipal policies, plans and strategies (DEA, 2004).

The concept of EG gained popularity in the early 1990s because of mounting pressure from civils society, environmental activists, and scientists towards adopting a sustainable development agenda (Bennett and Satterfield, 2018). There are diverse academics disciplines such as Geography, Sociology and Development Studies that have accepted and applied EG in understanding human-nature interactions (Bridge and Perreault, 2009). A critical aspect of EG is understanding that environmental issues require multi-stakeholder input and holistic approaches in forming robust solutions (Bodin, 2017). Bennett and Satterfield (2018) asserted that the application of EG occurs at different spatial scales and includes a variety of stakeholders from different sectors. Scholarly interest in EG has focused on studies conducted in numerous environmental-based disciplines such as conservation, forestry, agriculture, urban development, environmental legislation, and resource utilisation, as well as environmental policy-making and strategic planning and more recently climate change (Fuo, 2015; Bodin, 2017; Bennett and Satterfield, 2018). This research focuses on EG at a LM scale under the influence of local contested politics and environmental service delivery issues.

EG in European and American municipalities is often viewed as an integrative process that involves numerous stakeholders and institutions. This integrative process results in the formation of transnational municipal networks (TMNs) that are vital in attaining environmental sustainability at a local scale (Bulkeley *et al.,* 2003). EG in western countries is usually implemented and guided by neo-liberal principles, focusing on green grabbing, the privatisation and commodification of environmental resources (Fairhead *et al.,* 2012). Picketts (2018) emphasised the implications of political decisions and changes in power on EG and environmental interventions, claiming that politics must be closely intertwined with EG. In an African context, EG is at a developmental stage in LMs in most countries and the literature provides evidence of this, for example, a study conducted in Zambia by Rodgers (2016) revealed that economic factors in LMs are prioritised over EG decisions and that additional research is required to assist in integrating environmental sustainability with economic benefits. Rodgers (2016) further claimed that LG is vital in promoting effective EG, however in Zambia, local

EG is influenced negatively by a lack of environmental-based human capacity and a lack of implementation of the environmental agenda. Similar findings were identified by Bazaara (2003) and Asongu and Odhiambo (2020) in sub-Saharan Africa.

2.2.1. Environmental Governance in South Africa

According to Steyn and Wessels (2000), the initial focus of environmental management and EG in SA dated as far back as 1654 and was centred towards the conservation of the flora and fauna. The first environmental conservation legislation was approved for the overexploitation of penguins in Cape Town. The commencement of environmental legislation indicated that environmental management and EG was in the process of being prioritised in SA. During the Apartheid era, environmental management was prioritised as there was an increase in the demarcation of national parks and game reserve areas. In the 1970s, the focus of environmental management shifted from the conservation of flora and fauna to the protection and conservation of environmental resources (Steyn and Wessels, 2000).

South Africa's (SA) position within the international environmental agenda between 1972 and 1992 was limited and inconsistent. The government's policy of apartheid resulted in an isolation of participation in the global political arena, especially regarding a meaningful contribution to environmental management at the global scale (Steyn, 2001). SA's lack of involvement in the international environmental agenda meant that other countries could not assess the government's environmental performance. Environment sustainability was never a prioritised by the South African government between 1972 and 1992. However, on a national level the government attempted to promote environmental management by establishing a Department of Environment Affairs in 1984 and the adoption and implementation of environmental legislation such as the Environment Conservation Act (ECA), 100 of 1982 (Steyn, 2001). However, it proved ineffective in dealing with issues related to environmental management. It was then superseded by the Environment Conservation Act, 73 of 1989 that included aspects of environmental protection and fair and equal development (Steyn and Wessels, 2002).

In 1989, the Minister of Environment Affairs, published a document detailing an environmental evaluation procedure aligned to a South African context. This procedure is known as Integrated Environmental Management (IEM) and is focused on ensuring that environmental impacts are investigated and considered in the planning and decision-making process of developmental projects (Patel, 2009). The IEM process provides a set of principles and environmental assessment and management tools that are focused on promoting sustainable development. Some examples of these tools are Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and Social Impact Assessments (SIAs). The implementation of IEM tools is important for directing stakeholders such as developers and local communities towards sustainability. The effectiveness of IEM is largely dependent on collaboration

between all interested and affected stakeholders to ensure a path towards environmental sustainability, especially within local municipalities (Patel, 2009).

The process of democratisation in SA resulted in the broadening of environmental policy and environmental rights debates leading to the development of co-operative environmental governance. The development of the environmental agenda in LMs positively influenced socio-economic issues and community environmental rights by emphasising environmental legislation and policy frameworks (Fuo, 2015). Du Plessis (2015) mentioned that the green environmental agenda focuses on environmental protection and conservations and LMs are vital in sustaining both the brown and green environmental agendas. According to Mngoma et al (2011) co-operative EG in SA is ostensibly based on four key principles: transparency, fairness, responsibility, and accountability. The main focus is of co-operative EG is to ensure all spheres of government are responsible for environmental protection, conservation, and the socio-environmental upliftment of communities. The concept of co-operative EG is the basis for all environmental legislation in SA (Muller, 2018).

According to Mngoma et al (2011), Du Plessis (2015) and Kotze and Plessis (2015) in post-apartheid SA, the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) 107 of 1998 is the main legislative framework utilised to enforced section 24 of the constitution. The NEMA promotes integrative EG and ensures the environmental rights of South Africans are prioritised. The NEMA also promotes economic development that is environmentally and socially sustainable. The secondary environmental legislation in SA such as the NEMA: Waste Act 59 of 2008 and the NEMA: Biodiversity Act 10 of 2004 were formed from the principles of NEMA. The environmental policies, strategies and plans in government departments and LMs are also formed from the NEMA legislation (Kotze and Plessis, 2015). An important directive by NEMA is the promotion and implementation of effective EG within all government spheres, especially LMs, as there is direct interaction with communities (Du Plessis, 2015; Fuo, 2015).

There are important characteristics of effective EG that LMs must prioritise. These are institutions and law, participation, rights and representation, accountability, and transparency (Mngoma *et al.,* 2011; Feris, 2010). Kotze and Plessis (2015) asserted that LMs adopt the roles of both a regulator and provider of environmental-based services within their municipal boundaries, hence, LMs must ensure that there is environmental management and environmental compliance within their boundaries. Du Plessis (2010) claimed that LG have four categories of environmental influences, that is governance, municipal actions, service provision and conservation. LMs must also strive to achieve a balance between short term developmental needs and long-term sustainable development goals (Kotze, 2006).

In terms of LM environmental legislation, Du Plessis (2010) emphasised the importance for LMs to develop environmental by-laws that are aligned with provincial and national environmental legislation that result in protecting the common good. The majority of environmental by-laws in South African LMs are outdated and lack enforcement, as LMs do not have competent and authorised personnel. There

is also confusion amongst government stakeholders as to who has jurisdiction or authority to enforce environmental by-laws and challenges with acquiring Environmental Management Inspectorates (EMIs) in LMs that are qualified and authorised to enforce environmental by-laws (Du Plessis, 2010). The EMI qualification process is lengthy, and environmental by-laws are required to be approved by municipal councils and thereafter gazetted before enforcement (Du Plessis, 2010). LM EG responsibilities in SA are also mandated by legislation, for instance, the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 places environmental management obligations in the institutional framework and developmental policies of LMs such as providing municipal services in a financially and environmentally sustainable manner and promoting a safe and healthy environment (Kotze, 2007).

Local political contestations and dynamics have a significant impact on EG in LMs (Mngoma *et al.,* 2011; Hellberg, 2014; Pasquini, and Shearing, 2014, Du Plessis, 2015). The LMs in SA are influenced by political mandates that are usually prioritised over EG mandates (Roberts, 2010; Pasquini, and Shearing, 2014). Pasquini and Shearing (2014) and Hellberg (2014) stated that LM councils are responsible for environmental decision-making and the approval of environmental resources. However, municipal councils often utilise environmental resources and interventions to obtain political support from communities and provide incentives to politically inclined community members. Patel (2009) asserted that political power struggles in government institutions negatively influence environmental-based decision making by promoting environmental injustices and prioritising the environmental needs of the political elite. Roberts (2010) emphasised the lack of priority provided for environmental issues in the eThekwini Metropolitan municipal developmental plans such as the IDPs and encourages LMs to prioritise environmental management for compliance and environmental adaption purposes. Olver (2018) also highlighted the deprioritising of environmental responsibilities by an unstable council at the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan municipality and the negative impact on environmental health and environmental service delivery in communities. Houdet (2016) claimed that municipal administrative and political stability positively influences local EG and the transition towards a green local economy.

It is vital for EG to be initiated and implemented in LMs (Lawhon and Patel, 2013). Pasquini and Shearing (2014) identified four vital factors that ostensibly contribute towards the development of EG in politicised LMs. Firstly, functional external stakeholder networks, secondly, the existence of political champions, thirdly, resilient, internal social interactions and relationships within LMs and lastly, municipal incentives from engaging in and implementing environmental initiatives. Pasquini and Shearing (2014) and Pasquini et al (2015) found that political influence can trigger the process of environmental institutionalisation in LMs by allowing political champions the opportunity and support to promote EG for political benefits and political competition between opposing parties can result in the improvement of environmental management and environmental service delivery during elections. However, Pasquini et al (2015) also cautioned that political contestations can impede environmental institutionalisation and hamper positive EG progression when there are changes in political mandates

and the discontinuation of environmental interventions in politically unstable LMs. Meyer and Le Roux (2006) claim that politicians lack environmental institutional capacity in LMs, and this requires rectification for EG to be prioritised by councils.

Pasquini and Shearing (2014) claimed that there is insufficient research that focuses on how LMs address environmental sustainability under the influence of political contestations and instability. In stable LMs, councils maintain power for five-year period cycles, and this is usually inadequate in comparison to environmental changes that span decades and require consistent decision-making from stable councils (Sowman and Brown, 2006; Lawhon and Patel, 2013). In a study conducted by Pasquini and Shearing (2014) in a Western Cape rural LM, it was apparent that the environmental agenda was sustained throughout different council changes due to the following factors: a similar environmental mindset between the different councils, the political power hierarchy of the council, the environmental incentives for the LM and the municipal environmental culture. However, Pasquini and Shearing (2014) stated that a change in political leadership resulted in different wards been targeted for environmental interventions and emphasised that political dynamics impact the environmental culture of a municipality such as political scheming between opposition councillors that result in disagreements on environmental issues. The influence of political leadership on environmental interventions and support was also apparent in a study conducted by Holgate (2007) in Cape Town and Johannesburg, SA. Pasquini and Shearing (2014) highlighted that the Western Cape LM did not change senior management in the environmental departments, as the council valued environmental competence and experience. Magnani (2012) stated that local communities do not always accept environmental interventions, they oppose interventions based on long term environmental, financial, and political benefits. Pasquini and Shearing (2014: 291) emphasised that institutionalisation of EG at the local scale will limit the influence of political dynamics, *"to minimize the disruptive effects of political issues on the achievement of green governance at local government levels, we suggest that green governance must be rapidly institutionalized"*.

There have been both positive and negative advancements in South African local EG. From a positive perspective, Feris (2010) claimed that good EG can be defined as progressive and sustainable that benefits all stakeholders without negatively impacting the environment. LMs in SA are encouraged by national government departments to promote and implement good and effective EG. According to Mngoma et al (2011) the characteristics of good EG are responsibility, accountability, enforcement, stakeholder integration and participation, as well environmental knowledge sharing and the sustainable use of environmental resources. Leck and Crick (2020) mentioned that collaborative decision-making and assistance between neighbouring municipalities is vital for promoting EG, for example, the Ugu district and eThekwini metropolitan municipalities in KZN, SA responded differently to environmental agendas and experienced challenges, however, the alignment of environmental agendas was recommended by Leck and Crick (2020). Steyn (2002) and Hlahla et al (2014) have emphasised the popularity of the community development-based approach in SA that has resulted in the *"greening"* of

political decisions, addressing the injustices of the past, and attempting to meet the needs of impoverished communities through sustainable development and the GE in LMs.

The challenge of obtaining effective local EG is closely related to fragmented EG that is apparent within different spheres of government in SA (Kotze, 2006; Naidoo, 2017). Fragmented EG is the failure to interact collaboratively when discussing environmental issues and environmental roles and responsibilities between government departments and municipalities are not effectively defined (Kotze, 2006; Le Roux, 2012). Other factors contributing to fragmented EG are a lack of human capacity, a lack of environmental-based knowledge and fragile environmental departments in LG (Le Roux, 2012). There is also a lack of enforcement of environmental policies and environmental legislation in SA (Naidoo, 2017). Meyer and Le Roux (2006) emphasised that municipal politicians and officials usually require training in environmental education and sustainable development principles. Environmental education and awareness interventions in LMs are also limited in scope and implemented with limited resources and are centered around political objectives (Meyer and Le Roux, 2006). Meyer and Le Roux (2006) advised for the implementation of effective and integrative environmental awareness and capacity building workshops in LMs to promote EG.

2.3. Political parties, contested local politics and factionalism in South African local municipalities

The third section of this chapter focuses on political party dynamics in SA and contested politics and power relations between political parties in LG. Literature is also presented on the political culture of SA with focus on political trends, patterns, and democratic principles in South African politics. Thereafter, literature on contested politics and violence in South African society is discussed with relevant case studies and scholarly arguments. Lastly, factionalism in South African LMs is discussed with literature focusing on the challenges of factions in LG, intra-party, and inter-party factions within the ruling party in SA.

2.3.1. Political parties in South Africa

According to Pottie (2001) and Zuern (2011), the role of political parties in SA is to practice democratic governance and to ensure responsiveness, accountability, and transparency. The SA voting system caters for Proportional Representation (PR). The PRs are elected on a second ballot paper every five years (Southall, 2019). In the research context of this study, the local election process is discussed. The LG elections utilises a mixed electoral system that includes an open list single constituency ward system and a closed party list system. An open list system provides all voters the power to choose and determine the political arrangement of LG. In a closed system, the political party officials, active members, or consultants chooses its representative candidate not the voters (Southall, 2019). De Jager (2015) asserted that smaller political parties are unlikely to win at a national level but influence decision-making and collaboration with other parties at the local level. The political party spectrum can be used

to categorise political parties into right or left side politics. The right side is a more liberal mindset and the left a more socialist/ communist (De Jager, 2015).

The South African major political parties such as the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the Democratic Alliance (DA) are more liberal orientated, and the African National Congress (ANC) was always more socialist but has slowly changed towards a liberal mindset (De Jager, 2015). De Jager (2015) emphasised that contemporary political parties in SA usually adopt a combined capitalist and socialist perspective. According to Butler (2010) political parties require financial assistance for their existence. The funding is required for elections, maintaining offices and congresses. Parties are also required to pay for contesting national and provincial elections. Party funding in SA is sourced from donations, membership fees and the state. The amount of state funding is dependent on power proportionality, currently the ruling party which is the ANC is allocated the most funding. The nearest opposition is the DA, and their funding continues to grow as the DA is a growing party (Butler, 2010). However, De Jager (2015) claimed that state funding alone is insufficient to cover the expenses for political parties, hence parties seek donations from the private sector.

The ANC has dominated post-Apartheid politics in SA (Van Donk and Swilling, 2008; Koelbe 2017). Koelbe (2017) asserted that the party dominance theory can be applied to describe the ANCs political control in SA. For party dominance to occur, the political system must be both liberal and illiberal democracies. The threshold for and nature of dominance must be sufficient to dominate state and public policy. There must be a heroic occurrence for dominance to occur, as evident with the ANC during the Apartheid regime (De Jager, 2015; Koelbe 2017). Another characteristic of party dominance is allowing opposition parties to compete in elections but not expecting them to win. The time span of four or more consecutive election wins also indicates party dominance (De Jager, 2015).

2.3.2. The political culture in post-Apartheid South Africa

According to Kotze (2015) the political culture in post-Apartheid SA is multifaceted and consists of a multi-racial and cultural diversity of citizens. SA is one of the most economically unequal countries in the world and consists of a high level of uneven development (Kotze, 2015). The South African constitution encourages a political culture based on human rights and equality. The socio-political environment in SA is based on two vital attributes; firstly, identities formed from the Apartheid legacy and secondly, the prevalence of socio-economic issues from the black population such as inequality and poverty (Kotze, 2015). Political awareness and socialisation are important for the public to understand the reason they are voting for a particular party and what are the benefits and consequences from this decision (Kotze, 2015; De Jager and Steenekamp, 2016). Kotze (2015) stated that political culture and political awareness forms from the mindset and beliefs of an individual and their expectation of governance. The implementation of a democratic culture in the context of uneven post-Apartheid development is important for government and political parties to ensure there is political interest from

the public. SA political parties have failed to do this effectively, hence the growing number of uninterested people in voting and participation in political activities (De Jager and Steenekamp, 2016).

The vital process of political socialisation focuses on learning about political identity and culture. Political socialisation can be obtained from various stakeholders such as family members, schools, community leaders and the media, as well as our own political experiences (Kotze, 2015). According to De Jager and Steenekamp (2016) political socialisation is informed by poverty and the opportunities presented by political parties to escape poverty and provide financial sustainability in return for political loyalty. The process of democratic consolidation in political governance is reached when majority of the public from all economic backgrounds are satisfied with the level of governance, economic development opportunities and service delivery provision from the ruling party (De Jager, 2015). In contrast, (De Jager and Steenekamp (2016) argued that democratic political fatigue occurs when empty political promises to the public reaches a point of saturation. Democratic political fatigue results in the public considering government institutions as failures, especially when the poor is ignored by political elites, recently this has become evident with the ANC. Political radicals view democratic political fatigue as an opportunity to form new political parties that are supposedly more people-centered and promote positive change, a relevant example is the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) that was formed by Julius Malema in 2010. The EFFs political philosophy and mindset closely resembles radical, progressive political change (Koekemoer, 2017). However, Kotze (2015) claimed that populist politics cannot be viewed as politics that educates and nurtures the public, but more of a seduction method to obtain political support from the masses.

2.3.3. Contested politics and violence in South Africa

Several studies conducted by Buccus et al (2008), De Visser (2009) and Chikulo (2013) revealed that democratic LG is predominately supported by South Africans. However, when the instrumental benefits of democracy are not achieved, protest action is common in SA, especially in informal and township settlements (Ballard *et al.,* 2006; Dawson, 2014). There are also consistent racial issues that have a significant influence on political behaviour and decision-making in SA. It is a common stereotype for certain racial groups to vote for specific political parties based on historical factors and the leadership qualities of the party. The government promotes non-racial governance that includes social, political, and economic benefits to all racial groups (Kotze, 2012). A violent undemocratic political culture in SA is common in certain situations, as it is instilled within the public from historical factors (Vahed, 2012; De Jager, 2015). The occurrence of socio-political-based violence has also become prevalent in SA (Vahed, 2012). Misago (2017) claimed that the recent Xenophobic attacks during the last two decades on foreign nationals were in some instances politically motivated. Misago (2017) and Onwuegbuchulam (2021) emphasised that political violence is also experienced in local communities between supporters of different political parties, especially during election campaigns. This is most apparent between supporters of rival ANC and IFP parties that have a history of violence spanning from the community

conflict in the Alexandra township during Apartheid (see Mayekiso, 1996) to recent examples in the KZN province of SA (see Onwuegbuchulam, 2021).

According to Onwuegbuchulam (2021) in contemporary SA, supporters from opposing political parties are still forced to vacate politically unstable communities and are hurt or killed by rival supporters. Political violence also occurs within the same parties through the process of political factions and internal conflict (Cooper, 2015; Onwuegbuchulam, 2021). The political killings of key political leaders and influential community politicians have also increased and are linked to political power struggles, access to state opportunities and resources, as well as changing political leadership structures by forceful local by-elections (Onwuegbuchulam, 2021). There are many examples of political contestations in local government See Mukwedeya, 2015 and Olver 2018). Mayekiso (1996) described how townships during the Apartheid era were utilised as dumps for waste and industrial chemicals, as well as the degradation of land and the inhumane environmental living conditions. In democratic SA, environmental health issues are still experienced in township and informal settlements (Mukwedeya, 2015; Nzo, 2019). Olver (2018) emphasised bad and corrupt governance, state capture and a lack of service delivery in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality. Olver (2018) found that environmental issues were not prioritised in communities and there were numerous environmental injustices. Nzo (2019: 3) emphasised the political conflict between local councillors and regional ANC leadership in the Kalahari LM located within the Northern cape province of SA, *"there are tensions between representing the interests of the ANC regional party, national government priorities and communities"*.

There are also political contestations between the local, regional, and national ANC party (Reddy, 2010; Olver, 2018; Nzo, 2019). At present, the ANCs track record is appalling, and corruption is a challenge in LG, especially regarding public sector contracts and tenders (Reddy, 2010). According to Bruce (2014) and Olver (2017) corruption is complex and goes beyond municipal councils, there are powerful elites that control councils like puppets and obtain financial benefits. Local councillors are forced to abide to the rules of powerful elites in the private sector or face the consequences of replacement. There are power structures beyond the council administration, *"Political power was exercised in pursuit of financial gain"* (Olver, 2017:15). De Visser (2009) Reddy (2018) argued that LMs must be politically acceptable to the society they serve and have the financial and human resources to serve people effectively and not abuse public resources for personal gain. The political society in SA is defined as arena in which political actors compete for the legitimate right to control public power. Civil society actors are independent of the political society and can assist in ensuring accountability and transparency (De Jager, 2015). Olver (2017) emphasised the ineffectiveness of LG restructuring programmes such as the *"Back to basics programme"* that was utilised by the ANC to rehabilitate dysfunctional municipalities, however intra-party factions in the ANC ensured that the programme was a failure.

2.3.4. Factionalism in South African local politics

The occurrence of political factions influences governance at all spatial scales in SA (Olver, 2018; Phadi, *et al.,* 2018; Nzo, 2019; Kanyane, 2021). There are numerous definitions of political factions. Lasswell (1931) provided one of the initial definitions, *"faction is a commonly used to designate any constituent group of a larger unit which works for the advancement of particular persons or policies"*. Lasswell (1931) claimed that factions arise from power struggles between party members to obtain resources and political authority of a certain area. Zariski (1960:33) conceptualised factionalism as *"any intra-party combination, clique, or grouping whose members share a sense of common identity and common purpose and are organized to act collectively – as a distinct bloc within the party – to achieve their goals"*. Zariski (1960) also claimed that factions are worthy of academic study as there are important factional features in politics and governance.

In SA, the ruling ANC party has a history of factionalism. In the 1950s, factions were apparent in the ANC youth league. In post-apartheid SA factions became prevalent in the ANC, the Jacob Zuma and Thabo Mbeki faction influenced national governance in SA and filtered down towards the LG level (Cooper, 2015). The factions at national level influence regional and LG. The factions in LG affect the operations of municipalities such as service delivery provision and the progression of the environmental agenda (Olver, 2018). Studies conducted by Mukwedeya (2015) and Olver (2018) revealed how intraparty factionalism in the ruling ANC structures negatively influenced EG in both the Buffalo City and Nelson Mandela Bay municipalities in SA.

Kotze (2018) and Olver (2018) and provided a detailed discussion of the fragile local government system in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan municipality. Olver (2018) emphasised intraparty and interparty factionalism in LG. Intraparty factionalism occurs within the same party and interparty factionalism occurs between two or more parties. In SA, the ruling political party possesses authority of choosing election candidates for council positions in LMs, this process leads to intraparty factions based on personal preferences within the party (Kotze, 2018). It is rare for consensus to be reached amongst all members of the same party (Cooper, 2015). Local politics is fragile and ruthless, however, rewarding depending on political mandates and duties (Olver, 2018). Nzo (2019) stated that permanent municipal workers of the opposition party are usually removed when political leadership changes, this also occurs with the same political party through factional mandates. Kotze (2018) claimed the ANC structures in Nelson Mandela Bay differed and changed with faction priorities revealing new conflicts and partnerships. Beresford (2015) asserted that gatekeeper politics has become prevalent in the ANC, where political leaders in authority positions dictate the access to and distribute of state resources. Beresford (2015) also claimed that gatekeeper politics within the ANC has resulted in crony capitalism, increased patronage relationships and a rise in intra-party factions.

The political factional process prioritises self-interest over community preferences (Nzo, 2019). In some instances, faction-based councillor candidates are chosen by the political party and not community wards (Olver, 2018). A study conducted in the Msunduzi LM by Piper and Deacon (2008) revealed that community ward committees are compiled from members that support the dominant political party faction, and this has implications on fair and transparent community participation. However, Olver (2017) claimed that impoverished communities benefit from political relations to obtain middle class status and approve their livelihoods through the processes of neopatrimonialism and clientelism *(literature on this will be provided in the next section)*. Nevertheless, De Jager (2015) claimed that faction- based municipalities commonly practice fruitless and irregular spending that are linked to corrupted political mandates. Irregular and inflated contracts are awarded to private sector companies while politicians behind the scenes control this process (De Jager, 2015; Olver, 2018). In the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan municipality, employees turned into whistle-blowers in order to express their concerns about the blatant stealing of public funds and the overwhelming factions in the ruling party (Olver, 2018). Reddy (2018) claimed that municipalities governed by faction-based administrations are known to lack adequate service delivery provision, provide insufficient LED opportunities and experience diverse community environmental injustices. This is because political mandates for control of resources and political authority are prioritised over service delivery and environmental priorities.

2.4. Debates around the political influence on neopatrimonialism, clientelism, corruption and professionalism in South African local governance

This section explores and discusses literature on the political concepts of neopatrimonialism, clientelism, patronage, corruption, and professionalism within South African LMs. Literature is presented on neopatrimonial relations and implications in LG, followed by a detailed review of clientelism and corruption dynamics in LMs with the provision of relevant case study examples. The challenges associated with neopatrimonial and clientelist political relationships in LMs are also explored and the rampant increase in corruption and state capture in LG. Lastly, the current state of LG professionalism in SA is discussed, focusing on the largely detrimental effects of political dynamics on professionalism and ethics in the local public sector.

2.4.1. Political neopatrimonialism in South African local municipalities

According to Von Soest (2010) and Lodge (2014) the concepts of clientelism, patronage and corruption are interrelated with the concept of neopatrimonialism. The description of neopatrimonial activities encompasses clientelist, patronage and corrupt attributes (Sebudubudu, 2008; Beresford, 2015). Neopatrimonial relationships can be found at differing scales of government that include the national, regional, and local (Lodge, 2014). According to Bratton and Van de Walle (1997) in African countries there

are three indicators of a neopatrimonial system: the concentration of political power, the immoral use of state resources and organised clientelism. The concentration of political power refers to individualistic dominance and control of state policies and politics, as well as the appointment of cadres to public positions. The state patron remains in power for a long time and must serve the cadres in the neopatrimonial system, this is known as *"big men politics"*. In Africa, there is frequent rotation of the political elite of one political party in the neopatrimonial system to prevent political power from reaching opposition parties. This tightly locked neopatrimonial system allows the ruling party to extend its clientelist network (Moti, 2019).

Von Soest (2010) mentioned two factors of characterising a neopatrimonial state. Firstly, all levels of government must practice neopatrimonialism and secondly, neopatrimonialism must be entrenched in the historical background of a state. Both factors are prevalent in SA. Tsheola (2014) claims that SA has become a neopatrimonial state by possessing the qualities of neopatrimonialism, the same as most African countries. Lodge (2014) asserted that neopatrimonialism is entrenched in the philosophy of the ruling ANC party in SA, stating that neopatrimonial networks in the ANC always existed and were controlled during Apartheid but have re-emerged now. Sebudubudu (2008) claimed that neopatrimonialism in SA was apparent during and after Apartheid by the National Party and the ANC. According to Von Soest (2010), a long presidential term with frequent cabinet changes indicates power concentration of a functional neopatrimonial system. The political leaders have extensive patronage linkages with comrades from all party branches in order to secure their political status as leaders with power in decision-making. Van de Walle (2005) claimed that a country's cabinet size and structure indicate the level of neopatrimonial relations. Generally, a larger cabinet indicates stronger neopatrimonial practices, as more ministers and government departments provide employment contracts and other opportunities to loyal comrades. Von Soest (2010) claimed that the immoral use of state resources is another feature of neopatrimonialism. State resources are unevenly distributed, as comrades are incentivised and rewarded by having access to state resources such as public sector contracts and employment opportunities. However, Nzo (2019) argued that occasionally there is resistance against neopatrimonial practices and political power struggles by local councillors as evident in the Kalahari LM.

2.4.2. Political clientelism in South African local municipalities

The concept of clientelism forms part of neopatrimonialism and is apparent in both democratic and autocratic states (Stokes, 2007; Hicken, 2011). Hicken (2011) claimed that through clientelist relationships the political elite usually possess control over state resources and impoverished communities are left with limited resources. There are also increased levels of corruption associated with clientism and fragile public trust in democratic principles (Bruce, 2014). The clientelist relationship consists of the client and patron with the occasional assistance of a broker that acts as a negotiator between the two parties (Hicken, 2011). According to Hopkin (2006) local councils utilise

the process of '*pork barrel politics'* of which is associated with clientelism and focuses on spending public budget and resources on targeted communities in order to obtain political support in elections.

According to Hopkin (2006) and Hicken (2011) there are four elements of clientelist relationships between the patron and client. The first element is a dyadic relationship that consists of a closely knitted patron-client relationship. The dyadic relationship is personal and is built of reciprocal trust, as the patron and client conduct face-to-face meetings. The second element is the hierarchical relationship between the patron and client. There is usually a socioeconomic contrast as the patron utilises power, resources, and influence to provide survival incentives and protection to the client (Hopkin, 2006). The client trades political support as an indication of reciprocity to the patron. The hierarchal element is considered important in clientelism, as it maintains loyalty and dependency between the client and patron from contrasting socioeconomic classes (Hicken, 2011). The third element is contingency between the client and patron. The client provides political support and loyalty only when the patron provides incentives. When an opposing political party provides better incentives, the client is tempted to support the opposition. Therefore, the reciprocal relationship between the client and patron must be consistent, incentives must be delivered timeously, and agreements must be fulfilled (Hicken, 2011). The fourth element is iteration that focuses on the continuous reciprocal relationship between client and patron that leads to sustained support and provision of incentives. The ongoing clientelist relationship results in expectations of incentives from the patron. It is common for cadres not to be rewarded instantly but when the patron has the capability to do so (Hopkin, 2006). Moti (2019) asserted that the application of organised clientelism in African states consists of the rewarding of public resources and employment opportunities, contracts, and licenses to comrades for their political loyalty and commitment to the ruling party. According to Sadie et al (2016), a study conducted in the impoverished communities of Riverlea, and Doornkop in West Johannesburg, SA revealed that clientelist relationships are more applicable within impoverished communities, as most affluent communities do not require incentives from political leaders or cannot afford to provide high-cost incentives for affluent cadres.

Lodge (2014) and Beresford (2015) viewed clientelism negatively at the local scale, however, BenitGbaffou (2011) and Anciano (2018) argued that clientelist relationships in SA contributed towards achieving democratic principles, this occurs when non-incentivised cadres report and hold patrons accountable by providing transparency on clientelist relationships to the media and other forms of accountability platforms. The ruling ANC party in SA is considered to possess the most clientelist relationships with a recent increase in political violence and intra-party assassinations (Reddy, 2010). Clientelism is rife during local elections, as political parties utilise resources, incentives, and increased service delivery provision in communities for the exchange of political support, as apparent in a study conducted in Mumbai and Johannesburg by Bawa (2011) that focused on community access to water resources and the influence of municipal councillors. Political parties in LMs incentivise key community supporters with municipal employment opportunities and this usually results in unqualified

politically inclined employees in managerial positions (Moti, 2019). Benit-Gbaffou (2011) also highlighted those compulsory political duties such as participating in election campaigning by politically inclined municipal workers affects effective municipal governance.

There are also positive outcomes related to clientelism at the local scale in SA (Benit-Gbaffou, 2011; Stokes, 2011; Anciano, 2017). Studies conducted by Benit-Gbaffou (2011) and Anciano (2018) revealed that clientelist relationships lead to the attainment of democratic principles such as transparency and accountability of disloyal political leaders. Benit-Gbaffou (2011:2) argues that *"clientelism is not per se anti-democratic, some forms allow for local and immediate accountability of politicians"*. The act of collective clientelism, as emphasised by Benit-Gbaffou (2011) contributed to the upliftment of low-income residents living in the inner city of Johannesburg, when service delivery provision was prioritised by political leaders to maintain political support from the residents. Clientelist incentives also allow marginalised and improvised communities access to employment and developmental state opportunities to sustain livelihoods (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith, 2004; Stokes, 2011). Stokes (2011) and Anciano (2018) claimed that clientelism does not always reflect forced power relations but rather a political strategy to uplift and develop politically loyal supporters towards a better standard of living. Kopecky (2011) and Hicken (2011) asserted that political party competition and contests promote clientelist behaviour resulting in the provision of better and more sustain incentives to loyal cadres and communities in an attempt to win and maintain political support. The rise of socioeconomic inequality in SA has encouraged clientelist relationships among the poor and rich, for the rich to maintain economic freedom and for the poor to access much needed state resources and opportunities in the hope of escaping poverty (Benit-Gbaffou, 2011).

2.4.3. Political patronage in South African local municipalities

Political patronage is common in state institutions and influences political decisions and outcomes (Mamogale, 2017). Political patronage is defined by Stokes (2011:3) as, *"the proffering of public resources (most typically, public employment) by office holders in return for electoral support, where the criterion of distribution is again the clientelist one: did you—will you—vote for me?"*. In a patronage relationship the political actor possesses a position of authority in the state, whereas in clientelism, the political actor might not have a position in the state office (Hicken, 2011). Patronage relationships are also linked to state capture, this occurs when state officials trade state resources and opportunities to private sectors tycoons for incentives such as cash, houses, and cars (Hicken, 2011). A relevant example of state capture and patronage networks was the NMBMM in SA when municipal officials were implicated in the irregular awarding of municipal tenders and the fraudulent approvement of numerous business licenses for businesses that financially donated to the ruling party. The private sector in NMB possessed political authority and threatened to withdraw financial support if the municipality failed to abide to their state capture mandates such as the inflation of land and property deals for housing contracts (Olver, 2017).

According to Stokes (2011) and Kramon (2013) patronage relations are reinforced at the local level by the process of vote buying. Community members are provided with cash incentives to vote for the patronage party, or to refrain from voting to weaken the opposition support. The patronage system is also considered as the spoils system, this occurs when politically inclined state officials practice nepotism and cronyism to reward loyal supporters and retain their support for future elections (Stokes, 2011). The patronage system is common in contemporary democratic SA and dates to the early 2000s when there was an increase in community protests regarding corruption and patronage networks in LG such as the Zandspruit informal settlement near Johannesburg (Dawson, 2014). Mukwedeya (2016) asserted that contestations for limited patronage opportunities enhances factionalist tendencies within the ruling party such as the ANC in the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality. The intraparty factions in LG are influenced by career mobility and incentives resulting from scare patronage networks. The rise of patronage networks in LG has impacted service delivery provision and effective EG, as Dawson (2014: 518), described, *"the state is not understood as a bureaucratic dispenser of public goods on the basis of rights but as a relational system of reciprocal dependence and obligation"*.

Mamogale (2017) claimed that patronage increases dependency of the poor on state and political actors, in the hope of receiving incentives for sustained loyalty and support. Community dependency results in the concentration of political power and stabilised control over local administration and governance. Mukwedeya (2016) stated that powerful stakeholders in patronage networks make governance decisions to suit their agenda and control the local council and administration. The more concentration of elite power in multiple patronage networks, the less influence municipal councils and administrations possess. According to Toral (2021), there are benefits associated with state-political patronage networks such as financial benefits for supporters and the accountability of dysfunctional and disloyal state officials. Toral (2021) claimed that when officials are recruited through patronage networks in the public sector, then officials are obliged to provide effective public services to communities as this reflects the ruling party's ability to govern. However, patronage networks are strongly associated with corrupt activities, the next paragraph will focus on corruption in LG.

2.4.4. Political corruption in South African local municipalities

According to Masenya (2017) and Olver (2018) corruption in SA is directly linked to neopatrimonialism, clientelism and patronage networks. Corrupt activities in LG contributes to inadequate service delivery provision and socioeconomic challenges such as in the Buffalo city Metropolitan municipality (Mukwedeya, 2016). The concept of corruption in the state sector can be defined as *"a breach of trust which arises from the misuse or abuse of public power for personal interest"* (Wilson, 2016:1). A relevant example was provided by Olver (2017), were municipal officials in the NMBMM allegedly used

municipal money to pay contractors for private jobs and obtain shares in private sector businesses, "*Corruption and state capture have become endemic to our local government system"* (Olver, 2017: 232). Olver (2017) also claimed that investigating corruption in municipalities can be problematic when government institutions such as the South African Revenue Service (SARS) and the South African Police Service (SAPS) are in some instances dysfunctional and uninterested to assist. The effects of corruption in LMs can lead to serious consequences for municipal officials that resist participation in corrupt activities such as job losses and violence.

Research conducted by Feinstein (2010), Nzo (2016) and Phadi et al (2018) have focused on the weak leadership and governance, as well as the rampant patronage relationships and corruption in LG by the ANC. Nzo (2016) found that resilient corruption relationships and fragmented political leadership have impacted the functionality of South African municipalities. Feinstein (2010) provided a detailed discussion on the post-Apartheid power struggles in the ANC and reveals corruption networks between political elites, government officials and the private sector. Feinstein (2010) believed that the national level of the ANC is the catalyst for corruption and this corruption mindset is filtered into lower levels of government. Feinstein (2010) and Phadi et al (2018) claimed that the ANCs corrupt, and patronage mindset has always been part of their political culture to reward loyal comrades for political support. This corrupt mindset has also increased contestations over access to resources and has degraded the democratic principles of the state, affecting economic growth and development in an unequal and socially fragile country.

The increase in corrupt activities in the South African public sector has impacted good governance in LMs (Pillay, 2004; Bruce, 2014; Olver, 2018). Corruption has decayed the democratic values of the South African constitution and betrayed public trust in effective governance and efficient service delivery provision (Feinstein, 2010). Pillay (2004:586) claimed that *"SA's complex political design is a contributing factor to the rise of corruption"*, as political strategies are reliant on neopatrimonial and clientelist relationships. In the early 2000s, the South African government implemented several strategies to decrease corruption such as anti- corruption awareness and the establishment of anticorruption agencies. However, there were challenges regarding coordination and practical implementation (Pillay, 2004). More recently, anti-corruption legislation in SA was established and politicians have also pledged to eradicate corrupt activities from the public sector. However, corruption remains to be resilient in the public sector, especially in LMs (Bruce, 2014). Bruce (2014) also claimed that corruption must be viewed from a moral economy perspective, as there are deep and underlying factors such as escaping extreme poverty that encourages corrupt activities by impoverished community members (*this will be discussed in the theoretical framework section of this chapter*). Contrastingly, Masenya (2017) emphasised that corruption benefits the wealthy and political elite with implications on service delivery provision, LED, and economic inequalities. A pertinent example provided by Olver (2017) was the allegation of the provincial ANC that planned to lose the local elections in NMBMM

due to trading positions to the opposition parties in order to drain the municipality of its finances impacting on service delivery provision and professionalism. The next section will discuss professionalism in South African LMs.

2.4.5. The political influence on professionalism in South African local municipalities

In SA, professional and ethical conduct in LMs is considered appalling and lacking. Numerous studies have revealed political, financial, organisational, and intellectual challenges to professional and ethical behaviour in LG (Nwezi *et al.,* 2016; Masuku and Jili, 2019). There is also a lack of professional municipal culture and underdeveloped performance and monitoring mechanisms (Cameron, 2010). Cameron (2010) emphasised that municipal recruitment in SA must be conducted using a merit system and not the spoils system, as there is less political influence in the recruitment process. The spoils system is associated with clientelist and neopatrimonial recruiting of comrades that are often incompetent and inexperienced to conduct municipal duties effectively (Mafunisa, 2001). Pasquini and Shearing (2014) mentioned that municipal workers prioritise service delivery for communities that are politically affiliated. Kroukamp and Cloete (2018) asserted that the majority of LMs in SA lack professional and ethical officials and this directly impacts service delivery, leading to community protests, financial mismanagement, and corrupt activities. Kroukamp and Cloete (2018) claimed that to improve professionalism in LMs, an accountable and competency-driven mindset must be implemented, as well as the initiation of institutional support and improvement interventions.

The political-administration interface determines the level of professionalism and service delivery in LMs, as politicians usually instruct municipal officials on service delivery priority areas in politically inclined communities. Municipal officials are recruited based on their political background and networks and rarely on merit and expertise. This recruitment strategy undermines professionalism and ethics in LMs and has been evident in most ANC governed LMs in SA (see Mohale, 2018; Masuku and Jili, 2019; Mngomezulu, 2020). Mafunisa (2001: 324) states, *"South African municipalities need managers who are competent and loyal in their work"*, indicating that politically influenced recruitment is detrimental to professionalism in the public sector and that a professional and competent culture of performance management and meritocracy is required. Kariuki and Reddy (2019) also emphasised the implementation of performance management and monitoring and evaluation systems in LMs to improve professionalism and service delivery. Maramura et al (2020:1) claimed that LMs should adopt a humanitarian and moral approach to professionalism and service delivery, *"the mandelafying of public service",* the same principles and values of former president Nelson Mandela. Kroukamp and Cloete (2018) asserted that the SA government must prioritise capacity-building and skills development interventions for municipal officials to improve service delivery in LMs, as well as the implementation of skills auditing also provides LMs with information on competency deficiencies and improvements.

2.5. Theorising politicised and contested local environmental governance in South Africa using practical environmental governance, the moral economy and political ecology perspectives

The theoretical framework for this study consists of a combination of three theoretical perspectives that are utilised to assess the influence of politicised and contested local EG, as well as neopatrimonial relationships within a South African local municipal context. The theoretical framework consists of the Political Ecology Approach (PEA), which is the main theoretical perspective and two secondary theoretical perspectives, the Practical Environmental Governance Framework (PEGF), as well as the Moral Economy (ME) perspective. The PEA is utilised in two analysis chapters of this study to identify and assess politicised and contested political influences on EG within the municipal case study sites. The PEA assisted in investigating and understanding the interrelationship between local politics, power relations, EG and socio-environmental issues and injustices within the study sites. Using concepts from PEA such as politics and environmental inequalities, I designed a PE conceptual diagram based on the context and findings of the study. The PE conceptual diagram can be relevant to other LMs in SA that encounter similar aspects and issues that was researched in this study. The PEGF guide formulated by Bennett and Satterfield (2018) was applied in the second analysis chapter of this study. The evaluative attributes and elements from the PEGF guide were utilised to evaluate and assess the contemporary influence of local political dynamics on EG within the municipal case study sites. The ME theoretical perspective by Sayer (2015) was utilised to provide a moral understanding of the neopatrimonial and clientelist relationships between the local political elite and party supporters within the environmental departments and communities of the local municipal case study sites. In particular, Sayer's (2015) lay morality was emphasised and utilised as a guiding ME perspective in the study. The emphasis on the morality of neopatrimonial and clientelist relationships from a De facto legal perspective (*a state of affairs that is true in fact, but that is not officially sanctioned in law)* in a local municipal environment in SA is a novel research enquiry.

2.5.1. The Political Ecology Approach (PEA)

The process of Environmental Governance (EG) is a category of Political Ecology (PE) (Bryant, 2015; Perreault *et al.,* 2015) and therefore forms part of the guiding PE theoretical approach of this study. The PE approach became popular in diverse academic disciplines during the 1960s and 1970s when Rachel Carson composed the book, '*Silent Spring'* in 1962 that focused on the effects of chemicals on the natural environment (Perreault *et al.,* 2015). Carson (1962) also focused on the implications of human behaviour on the environment and the responsibility of national governments to be accountable for environmental degradation and promoting environmental and sustainability legislation and principles. Carson (1962) contributed to the development of PE by changing the way academics viewed environmental issues by including politics, power relations, society, and governance with EG and environmental management. There are multiple definitions of PE depending on the context of its application (Perreault *et al.,* 2015). The common concepts and aspects associated with the PE approach

are politics, power relations, environmental issues, EG, socio-environmental injustices, environmental conflict, environmental sociology, environmental economics, and environmental change (Bryant, 2015; Perreault *et al.,* 2015). Perreault et al (2015: 621) defines PE as *"a theoretical and political lens through which to understand, challenge, and structure further inquiry into nature–society relationships in the contemporary world, with certain methodological preferences following from its dominant theoretical perspectives and normative commitments"*.

There are numerous political and social concepts that are linked to the PEA in this research. For instance, the concepts of governmentality, political hierarchy, territory, and scale form a crucial part of the theoretical framing in this research[3]. Governmentality is defined as, **"***the study of power that emphasises the governing of peoples conduct through positive means rather than sovereign power to formulate the law and is usually associated with the willing participation of the governed"* (Britannica online dictionary, accessed 17 November 2021). Lemke (2015) described the Foucauldian view of governmentality as the implementation of structured power and the active consent and willingness of individuals to participate in their own governance. The concept of governmentality is linked to the concept of the state, of which is described as the political organisation of society with a particular territory, consisting of institutions and the rule of law (Lemke, 2015). In the PEA, the term political subjectivity is important in understanding how communities and other stakeholders create political identities and perceive the political environment (Wood and Young, 2016). Political subjectivity assists in understanding the relationship between people, governance, and power, as well as the nature of subjectivity and subjective experience in power relations and politics (Wood and Young, 2016).

Our definition of PE is influenced by the context of this study and is defined as a theoretical approach that assists in investigating and understanding the interrelationship between local politics, power relations, environmental governance and socio-environmental issues and injustices within a local municipal context in SA. I utilised the PEA as a theoretical lens to critically assess and explain the politicisation and political contestations of EG in LG. I utilised the PEA approach to assess diverse political, EG and power relations such as the utilisation of environmental resources by municipal councils for political benefits, the effects of political-based decision making on the environment, the prioritisation of environmental issues and the interactions between politics, power relations, the environment, and local communities. The relevant concepts of PEA were applied to argue that EG and environmental resources were both enabled and constrained by political dynamics and power relations resulting in opportunities and challenges towards the progression of the local environmental agenda and

[3] Bo and Cheng (2021) conceptualise political hierarchy as the transfer of decision-making power from one political entity or political official to another based on access to resources, economic development, and political biasness. Yong (2017:293) asserts that political territory is associated with *"territorial justification, boundaries and the relation of land and place to individual autonomy"*. This is applicable to the municipal study sites and political influence of the council within demarcated municipal boundaries. According to Delaney and Leitner (1997) the conceptualisation of scale in political geography refers to "the analysis of political organisation and action from local to global in which political processes are set.

effective EG in the study sites. Using the PEA, I compiled a context specific PE conceptual diagram from the study overleaf.

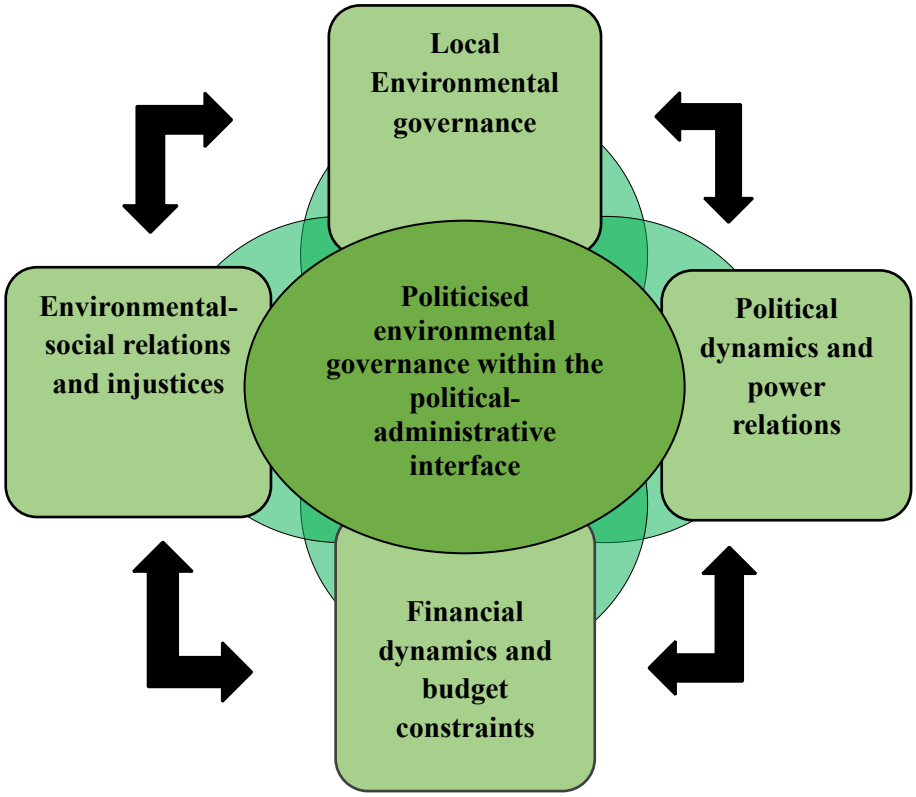


Figure 2.1: A political ecology approach applied to the Endumeni and uMzinyathi local municipalities.

The PEA assisted in assessing the effects of contested politics and power relations on environmental management and EG in the municipal case study sites. The PEA is popular for adopting an interdisciplinary approach to environmental problem solving (Bryant, 2015). Perreault et al (2015) claimed that the concept of ecology in the PEA is linked to politics when humanity interacts with and influences the natural environment. Environmental politics is a sub-discipline of PE and is most applicable in this research, as it focuses on how local government and communities interact politically with the environment. Additionally, Perreault et al (2015) noted that the political struggles over environmental benefits, the prioritisation and value of the environment, as well as the politicisation of the environment at the LG scale are also emphasised in environmental politics.

The concept of environmental justice is also an integral component of the PEA (Bryant, 2015). The environmental justice concept focuses on issues regarding environmental marginalisation, environmental racism, and environmental equity in predominately conservation spaces, however, it is also applicable at a LG scale (Perreault *et al.,* 2015). In LMs, environmental injustices occur in the

provision of environmental services, environmental inequalities in impoverished communities, political contestations over access to environmental incentives and interventions (Perreault *et al.,* 2015). Bryant (2015) and Perreault et al (2015) emphasised that environmental conflict is the main component of PE, as academics have attempted to use a PEA to solve multistakeholder environmental conflicts that are fuelled by the attainment of power and economic greed in diverse political and culturally sensitive environments. Perreault et al (2015) asserted that constant environmental contestations are an indicator that the majority of human–environment interactions are strongly linked to political struggles.

Several studies in SA have utilised the PEA to assist in assessing and analysing environmental issues in relation to politics, governance, economic and societal factors. The studies predominately focused on environmental conservation (Aitken *et al.,* 2009; Wilhelm-Rechmann and Cowling, 2011), water and energy management (Loftus, 2009; Krupa and Burch, 2011), environmental injustices (Leonard, 2012; Hansen, 2014), feminist ecology (Vaz-Jones, 2018). The direct use of the PEA in local politicised environmental governance studies in SA is lacking, however there are studies that have utilised aspects of the PEA such as political conflict, power struggles, ineffective governance, and environmental injustices (see Holgate, 2007; Patel, 2009; Hellberg, 2014; Magnani, 2012; Pasquini and Shearing, 2014; Pasquini *et al.,* 2015; Houdet, 2016; Olver 2018). These studies have not acknowledged the usage of the PEA as a theoretical framework in their studies and have not provided an in-depth analysis of the interrelationship between and implications of contested politics, power struggles, politicised environmental governance, environmental inequalities, and community relations in a local municipal context in SA. I utilised the PEA as a theoretical lens to address the literature deficiency in the context of this study and provide an in-depth analysis of how local contested political and power dynamics influence local environmental governance and environmental issues in South African LG.

2.5.2. The Practical Environmental Governance Framework (PEGF)

The Practical Environmental Governance framework was developed by Bennet and Satterfield (2018) to design, assess and evaluate practical EG in different institutions and contexts (*see figure 2.2. overleaf*). In the context of this study, I utilised (PEGF) to assess and evaluate the progression, influence, and challenges of contemporary local EG within a politicised and contested environment in the Endumeni (ELM) and uMzinyathi (UDM) local municipalities. Perreault et al (2015) mentioned that the PEA can be utilised to critically assess research that focuses on political, social, economic and environmental factors that affect each other in a particular research context. I attempted to use a combination of the PEA approach with the PEGF to best interpret the research findings in this study.

The PEGF was suitable and applicable to the municipal research context of the study, as the attributes and elements in the framework were applicable to a municipal context. In the PGEF, there are four main categories with attributes, consisting of effective, equitable, responsive, and robust EG. The elements of EG according to the PEGF includes institutions, structures, and processes between stakeholders in EG. Using the PEGF, I explored the objectives and attributes of EG in the ELM and UDM that were

influenced by political dynamics and power relations. Bennet and Satterfield (2018) have highlighted the applicability of the PEGF to different spatial and sectoral contexts and this research inclusively focuses on the local municipal scale in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa (SA).

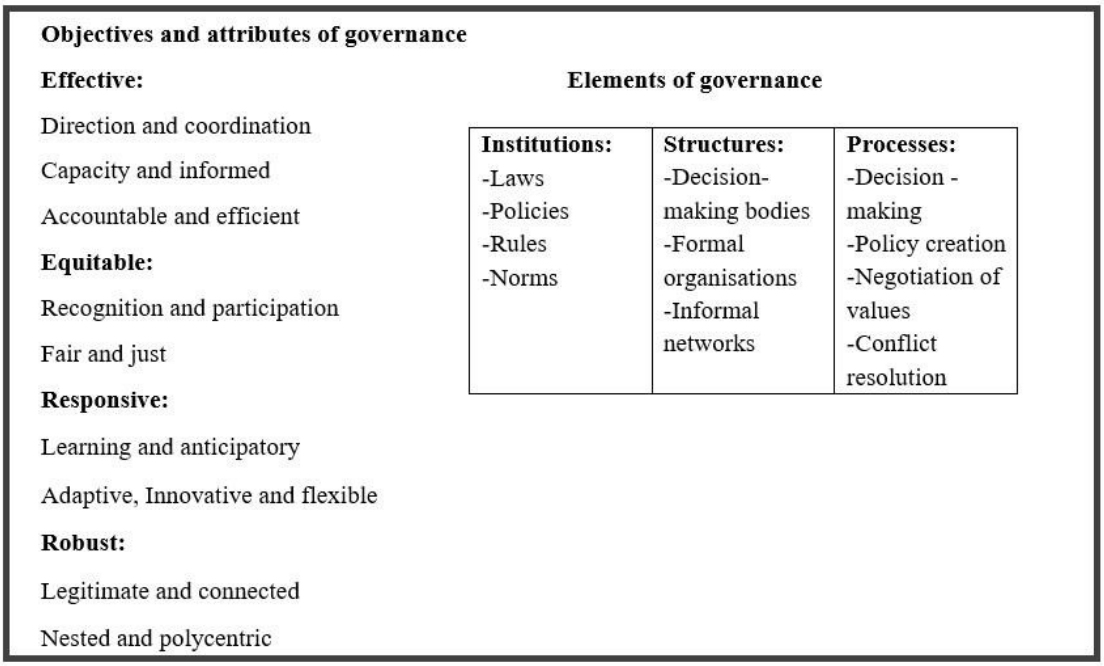


Figure 2.2: Environmental governance: A practical guide to design, evaluation, and analysis *(Adapted from Bennett and Satterfield, 2018).*

2.5.3. The Moral Economy Approach (MEA)

The MEA provides an ethical and moral perspective to economic actions and decisions within a specific context (Gotz, 2015; Sayer, 2015). A Moral Economy (ME) lens assists in justifying the reasoning and logic of economic outcomes by institutions, individuals, and society (Bolton and Laaser, 2013; Fouksman, 2020). Sayer (2015) claims that the MEA does not merely consider the economy as a mechanical instrument but rather it recognises the complex relationships in an economy between stakeholders, nature, and institutions. Sayer (2015) defines the ME as *"a way of studying the world, it examines and assesses the moral justifications of basic features of economic organization, it also examines and assesses the moral influences on, and implications, of economic activities, and how economic practices and relations are evaluated as fair, unfair, good, or bad"*. According to Gotz (2015) the conceptual origin of the MEA dates back to the eighteenth century and was utilised to assess moral situations, however the MEA was popularised by E.P. Thompsons 1971 article on the effects of market dynamics on the lack of rights and moral injustices experienced by impoverished communities in England (Gotz, 2015). Scott (1977) used the MEA to assess peasant politics, land issues and reciprocity

in South-East Asia and revealed that moral issues influence livelihood sustainability and rebellion protests in rural societies.

The conceptualisation of the moral economy in Africa often encompasses concepts such capitalism, labour dynamics and redistributive justice (Sugimura at al., 2008). The concept of the moral economy in Africa was made popular by Goran Hyden in 1980 as a hindrance towards attaining economic change in rural areas within Africa. Sugimura at al (2008) emphasised two major aspects of the African moral economy, first the rooted culture of reciprocity and secondly the right to subsistence or livelihood support Salverda et al., 2024). These are guiding moral principles in most African societies. In terms of labour dynamics and capitalism, African societies are accustomed to exploitation and demeaning work, with barriers to capitalist incentives and market accessibly (Salverda et al., 2024). However, accessing employment or any source of income generating activity by impoverished societies brings about a moral identity and significance in African society (Sugimura at al., 2008).

From an Afrocentric approach, Ndhlovu (2024) the concepts of lay morality and Ubuntu are not the same. However, both concepts are interrelated and can inform each other morally. Ubuntu is an Afrocentric approach to morality that emphasises human kindness and community togetherness through unity and shared humility. In comparison, lay morality which is rooted in the moral economy is an extensive socio-economic framework that guides communities and societies in creating, distributing, and regulating economic resources based on moral principles and justice (Molefe, 2025). Ubuntu can provide a moral foundation for a moral economy, focusing on unity, humility and shared responsibility. The moral economy can be used to implement an Ubuntu moral philosophy to contemporary challenges such as access to safe drinking water and arable land for communities, as well as food insecurity and access to employment opportunities (Ndhlovu, 2024; Molefe, 2025).

Similarly, Gotz (2015: 147) argued that using the MEA to describe the immoral oppression of impoverished communities as Thompson (1971) and Scott (1977) is limiting and there are diverse disciplines and contexts that will benefit from the MEA such as *"welfare, humanitarianism, and civil society"*, in the case of this study the MEA was applied in a local government context to assist in understanding the moral reasoning of neopatrimonial relationships between political elites and politically inclined comrades, especially in the environmental departments of the LM study sites. The lay morality perspective of the MEA by Sayer (2005) was most vital in this research, as it allowed me to conceptualise the moral reasoning of politically inclined, neopatrimonial relationships within a local municipal environment. Lay morality refers *"to how people should treat others and be treated by them, matters that are important for their subjective and objective well-being"* (Sanghera, 2016: 294). I utilised the MEA in this study to obtain a critical understanding and a sense of moral reasoning for neopatrimonialism in a local municipal context in SA, with particular reference to the municipal environmental departments.

Furthermore, I predominately adopted Sayers MEA perspective to justify the reasoning of why politically inclined and politically active communities in the municipal study sites were prioritised for access to environmental benefits and incentives, environmental service delivery provision and environmental interventions. Sayer (2015:5) mentioned that *"politics without ethics is directionless, while ethics without politics is ineffectual -Moral economy seeks to combine them"*, this quotation is relevant to my research, as it interlinks political dynamics with ethics and morality. I also applied an ME theoretical lens to critically discuss how factors such as poverty, the potential access to state resources, livelihood support, the addressment of past injustices and inequalities are significant reasoning for reciprocity and the exchange of political support and loyalty by comrades for access to economic resources and potential economic freedom from local municipal political elites. Using the MEA, I will provide evidence as to how and why politically inclined municipal recruitment, community opportunities and incentives as well as prioritisation can be beneficial at times from a moral standpoint.

In a South African context, there is limited research that utilised the MEA. A literature review revealed that most ME based research has been conducted in Africa and First World countries. Most of ME based studies were conducted in the disciplines of politics, sociology, psychology, economics, and Geography (see Beekers and Van Gool, 2012; Bolton and Laaser, 2013; Sayer, 2015; Hastings, 2016). In SA, the MEA was used in studies conducted by Van Sittert (2015) on political corruption during Apartheid in SA, on social issues such as Xenophobia (Hickel, 2014) and AIDS (Nattrass, 2004), as well as Fouksman (2020) on the morality of labour relations in the Gauteng province of SA. From the literature, it is evident that the use of a MEA to conceptualise and assess neopatrimonial and clientist relationships in the environmental department of LMs in SA is lacking and this research study will attempt to fill this literature deficiency.

2.5.4. Conclusion

This section provided literature on the background and current state of local governance and local EG, as well as political parties, contested local politics and factionalism in South African LMs. The next section focused on debates and literature around neopatrimonialism, clientelism, and corruption in South African local governance, as well as the influence of politics on professionalism in South African LMs. Thereafter, a description was provided of the combined theoretical framework that was utilised in the study. A background of each approach was provided with key definitions; examples of studies that have utilised the approaches and a detailed explanation of how each theoretical approach is applied to the research context. The combined theoretical framework used in this research is novel and has not been applied in a South African context to answer research questions focusing on politicised and contested environmental governance, power relations and neopatrimonial, as well as clientelist relationships in the environmental departments of a local municipality.

Chapter three

3. Research methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth description of the research philosophy and methodology applied in this research study that focused on contested local governance, politics and neopatrimonialism and its probable influence on effective local Environment Governance (EG) and environmental service provision within the two chosen municipal study sites: the Endumeni local municipality (ELM) and the uMzinyathi district municipality (UDM). The ELM and UDM are located in the North-West region of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa (SA). I utilised a pragmatic research philosophy in this study. A pragmatic methodology allowed for a flexible research approach that included diverse data collection techniques and strategies. The data collection process consisted of mainly qualitative data collection techniques that were combined with limited quantitative data. The qualitative method comprised of indepth key informant interviews, informal key-informant interviews, focus group discussions, municipal workshops, meetings, community-based environmental interventions, and daily structured and unstructured observations. I applied a Grounded Theory (GT) research strategy that resulted in continuous and rigorous data collection to the point of data saturation and theory formation. The quantitative method comprised of a community questionnaire survey. The quantitative and qualitative methods obtained data from diverse stakeholders that possessed valuable information on contested local governance, politics neopatrimonialism, environmental-based service delivery and EG.

The structure of this chapter consists of a discussion and description of the different components of the research methodology. This includes the research philosophy that was used as a methodological lens to structure the research methodology. The research strategy consisted of attributes from grounded theory. Furthermore, the application of an inductive and deductive research approach and the case study background of the municipal study sites. A discussion is also provided of the research choices, data collection techniques, procedures as well as fieldwork experiences and limitations.

3.2. Methods

The methodology section was structured using the research onion methodology model developed by (Saunders *et al.,* 2007*)*. As evident in the model, the research methodology in this study utilised pragmatism as a research philosophy, inductive and deductive research approaches, the implementation of a grounded theory research strategy and a mixed method research choice, as well as a cross-sectional research time horizon. I will explain each of the above chosen sections of the research onion model in detail and provide links to the study.

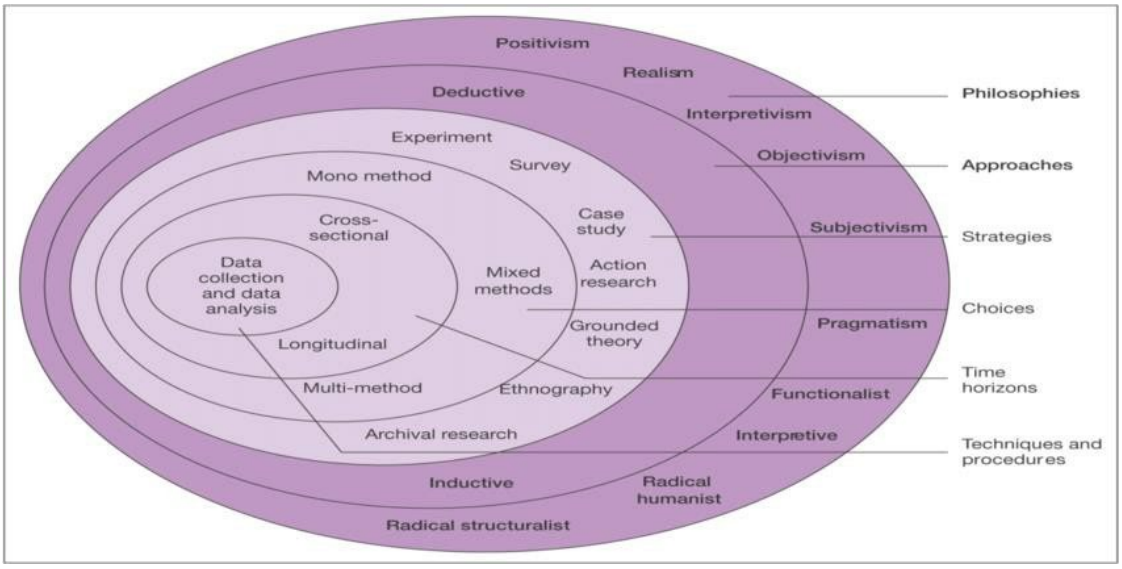


Figure 3.1: The research onion methodology diagram (*Adapted from Saunders et al., 2007*)

3.2.1. Research method philosophy -Pragmatism

The research philosophy chosen for this study is pragmatism. The research philosophy of pragmatism assesses and evaluates beliefs and theories in relation to the success and of their applicability and practicality- *"doing what works best for the research outcomes"* (Yvonne Feilzer, 2010; Rosiek, 2013; Morgan, 2014). Over time, researchers have changed their philosophical research assumptions to include a more integrative method of conducting research (Morgan, 2014). These researchers are known as pragmatists and adopt a triangulation approach, which consists of combined quantitative and qualitative research methods. Pragmatists assert that research questions are the most essential indicators that determine the research philosophy utilised in a study (Shusterman, 2016). Essentially, pragmatists utilise a combination of both positivist and interpretivist philosophies when conducting research. A pragmatic mindset allows for the integration of more than a single research strategy or approach when conducting a study. Pragmatists utilise the best-suited research methods and techniques to assist in answering the research questions of a study in the most effective manner (Morgan, 2014; Shusterman, 2016).

Scholars such as Morse (2016) and Walliman (2017) have also claimed that research questions require a combination of both positivist and interpretivist philosophies for achieving optimal research outcomes. This has inspired my choice of utilising pragmatism as a research philosophy to guide the research methodology design in this study, as it required the most applicable research techniques to be implemented in order to answer the research questions adequately. Pragmatists also assert that any concept is relevant in research, if it is successful in supporting a research question, aim or objective (Yvonne Feilzer, 2010; Rosiek, 2013). There are various other reasons as to why pragmatism was useful in this research such as encouraging the use of inductive and deductive research choices and a grounded theory research strategy.

The effectiveness of a pragmatic approach in this study was confirmed by answering the research questions and research problem using a mixed-method approach that consisted of both limited quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. A mixed-method approach assisted in obtaining rich, in-depth, and limited numerical data from diverse stakeholders within local and provincial government, the private sector environmental companies as well as other stakeholders involved in local municipal governance in South Africa, especially the uMzinyathi district region. A pragmatic approach provided flexibility to utilise diverse data collection techniques such as community questionnaire surveys, formal and informal key informant interviews, systematic and unsystematic observations, municipal meetings, workshops, and focus groups. These data collection techniques provided a variety of responses and interpretations from stakeholders regarding the research questions of this study. Another vital attribute of pragmatism is the development of practical solutions or strategies to solve a research problem (Yvonne Feilzer, 2010). The formation of practical solutions or strategies for this study were conducted using a mixed-methodology, diverse data collection techniques, flexible research strategies and approaches, as well as in-depth and continuous data analysis.

3.2.2. Research approach- Inductive and Deductive approaches

A combination of inductive and deductive approaches was utilised in the study. The research philosophy of pragmatism allows for the use of both inductive and deductive reasoning (Shusterman, 2016). Various studies such as Hammond, 2013; Tie *et al.,* 2019 and Morgan, 2020 acknowledged the linkages between pragmatism, inductive and deductive reasoning and grounded theory. The linkage is evident in the methodology structures of grounded theory that include iterative stages of data collection, hypothesis testing and verification, data analysis, theoretical sensitivity, and data refinement until a point of data saturation and theory formation (Tie *et al.,* 2019). A pragmatic approach to data collection is important for the analysis stages of grounded theory, as it allows for the application of diverse data collection techniques to obtain information from different sources (Morgan, 2020).

The combination of inductive and deductive reasoning resulted in a robust and detailed analysis of the data. At the initial stage of the study, I utilised deductive reasoning to apply and verify my preliminary hypothesis, opinions, and views of the research problem. The deductive approach is associated with a top-down mindset during the research process (Goswami, 2011). Deductive reasoning consists of developing a hypothesis that is linked to an initial perspective, theoretical or conceptual framework and formulating a research strategy for testing and verification of the initial hypothesis. The hypothesis can either be rejected or confirmed during testing and verification (Goswami, 2011). I initially assumed that environmental local governance and local environmental issues are not considered important by municipal officials and councils and that local contested politics is always associated with negative implications. I also regarded neopatrimonialism, clientism and partisan as barriers to local service delivery provision and effective local EG.

However, after testing the initial hypothesis by utilising different data collection techniques, I found that there are different dynamics and factors that required further inquiry, and an inductive approach was more suited to effectively investigate and analyse the research questions. I decided to apply grounded theory research strategy to assist in formulating a theory or conceptual framework that could present and explain the unexpected information from the different datasets collected. The inductive approach consists of conducting diverse data collection techniques and identifying recurring generalisations, codes, categories, and themes from the data (Bryman, 2012). I identified trends, patterns, and inconsistencies in the different datasets from the analysis process until data saturation and theoretical formation was obtained. Inductive reasoning is directly linked to the grounded theory research strategy. Inductive reasoning is associated with a bottom-up approach (Goswami, 2011; Bryman, 2012). I applied a bottom-up approach in my study when I obtained data from various stakeholders regarding local contested politics, governance, service delivery provision, environmental issues, the local green economy, community-based environmental interventions, and neopatrimonialism within local municipalities. I utilised this data to create a theoretical framework that can be applied to other local municipalities in South Africa when attempting to understand and explain the issues relating to the interconnectedness between local EG, contested politics, environmental service delivery and environmental issues.

3.2.3. Research strategy

3.2.3.1. The grounded theory strategy

The roots of Grounded Theory (GT) can be traced to the year 1965 by the work of Glaser and Strauss. They conducted research on terminally ill patients and established a constant comparative method and generated a theory of dying - *Awareness of Dying*. The constant comparative method became a vital attribute of GT by ensuring qualitative data was organised and analysed efficiently. Glaser and Strauss (1967) proved that GT and qualitative methodology could also determine and assess phenomenon in an unbiased and valid manner, just as quantitative methodology. Glaser and Strauss (1967) also believed that qualitative research is rigorous and comparative in nature. Several academics such as Strauss and Corbin (1997), and Clarke (2007) have contributed to the evolution and definition of traditional GT and Charmaz (2006) contributed to the establishment of constructivist GT. Glaser and Holton (2004: 12) described GT as *"a set of integrated conceptual hypotheses systematically generated to produce an inductive theory about a substantive area"*. Whereas Strauss and Corbin described (1998: 12) GT as *"theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analysed through the research process"*. Charmaz (2006: 187) defined GT as *"a method of conducting qualitative research that focuses on creating conceptual frameworks or theories through building inductive analysis from the data"*. I feel that Charmaz (2006) definition is most relevant and applicable for my research, as I generated a conceptual framework from the data analysis in my research.

The founding principle of GT is the application of an inductive empirical approach that was formed as a substitute to a deductive research approach. GT is a consistent, iterative process of data collection, coding, category formation and comparative analysis to a point of data saturation and theory formation. The GT strategy incorporates quantitative, positivist approaches with qualitative, interpretivist approaches in an attempt to investigate and analyse the social world more effectively. In contemporary research, GT is considered as the most successful and established empirical method. It is a holistic research strategy that includes and combines epistemological, methodological, and explanatory considerations that develop theory from the research data (Tie *et al.,* 2019). During the data collection and analysis process of a GT research strategy, a researcher must ensure that the GT stages are applied accurately. The GT stages I applied during data collection and analysis consisted of a framework (*see figure 3.2 overleaf*) developed by Tie et al (2019) that provides a recursive and iterative interrelationship between the processes, methods, and stages of theory generation in GT. I applied this GT framework because of its simplicity and applicability to my research.

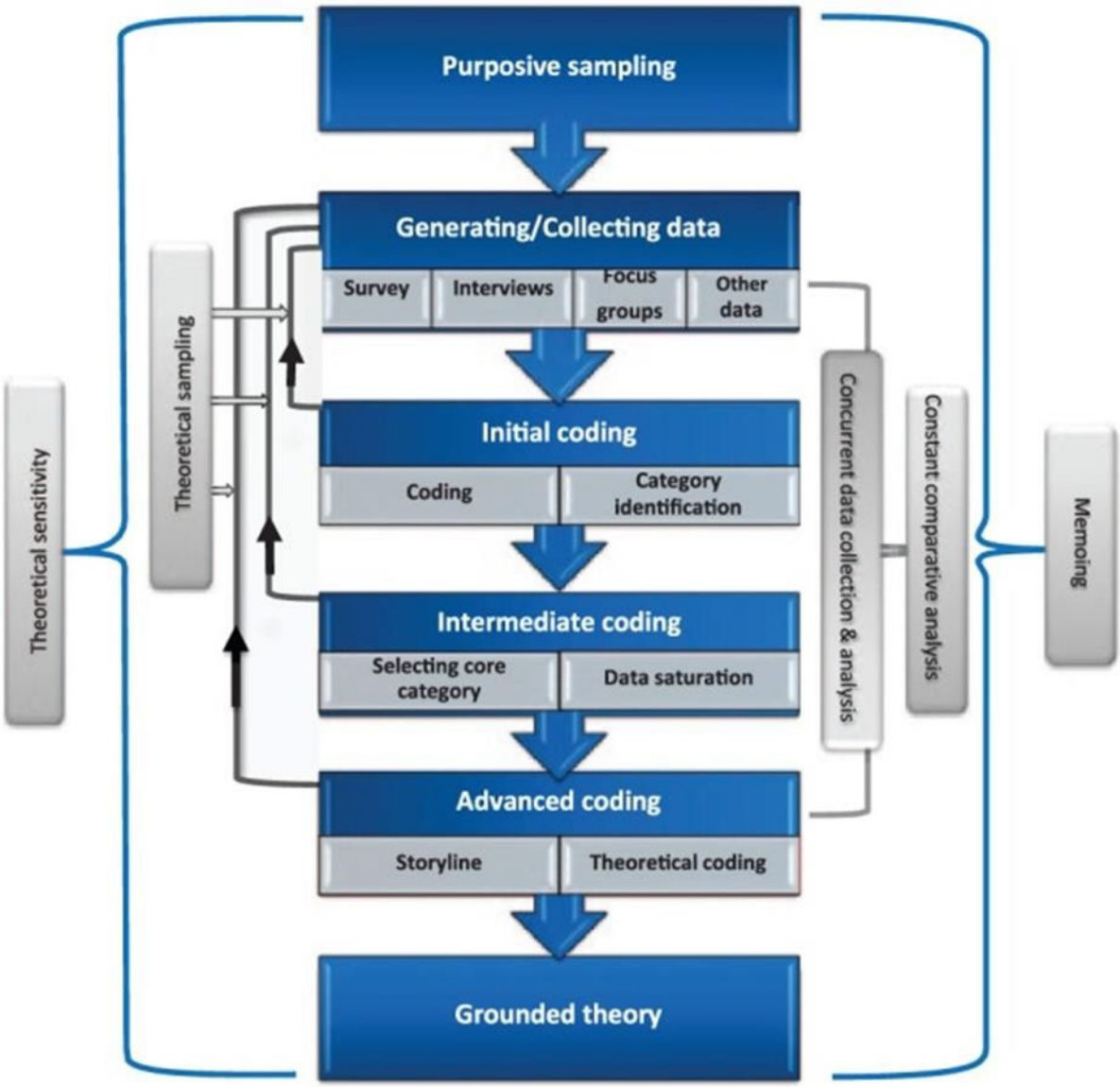


Figure 3.2: The Grounded theory research design framework *(Adapted from Tie et al., 2019)*

Purposive sampling: At the initial stage of the data collection process, I applied purposive sampling to guide the data collection process. According to Tie et al (2019), researchers utilise purposive sampling to select respondents that are best suited to answer the research question. The initial respondents are likely to suggest further respondents to the researcher. During this process simultaneous data collection and analysis occurred in my research. I used a recursive process to code and categorise data during all stages of data collection. Theoretical sampling also commenced from the initial dataset and continued as more respondents were sampled. Theoretical sampling is implemented as an interpretation and clarification tool during the data analysis stages to identify vital trends in the data (Tie *et al.,* 2019). The process of constant comparative analysis was also utilised during all stages of coding and category formation. I iteratively compared codes such as *"political contest, factions and political biasness"* to form recurring categories and themes from the data analysis. Tie et al (2019) claimed that a researcher consistently compares codes and categories from old and new data sets using an iterative method that consists of deductive, inductive, and abductive reasoning. The constant comparative method identifies

differences and consistencies in the data analysis; this process leads to data saturation and theory formation. The iterative method of comparative analysis ensures that GT is not merely a descriptive analysis.

Memoing: The art of memo writing is an essential analytical process in GT. Memos ensure that quality data is transcribed and assessed throughout the GT process. I formulated weekly memos from interviews with municipal workers, politicians and community members to store important data. Memos also assisted me in reflecting on previous data collected and in constructing a timeline of different pieces of information. I also used memos from stakeholder interviews and questionnaires to reflect on my ideas, thoughts and special events that occurred during the research process. Tie et al (2019) claimed that memos act as a storehouse of information that researchers can easily access when analyzing, coding and categorizing data during all stages of GT. Memos assisted me in identifying different and relevant directions, patterns, and inconsistencies in the datasets, as well as additional sources of data. Memos also proved important when I compared and separated codes and formed new categories and relationships from the data. Even though memos are largely informal notes of the data and perspectives from the researcher, memos assist considerably in promoting research momentum and constructing academic assets.

Data generation and collection: The GT strategy in this research consisted of a mixed-method data collection approach that consisted of qualitative and limited quantitative data. The qualitative data collection techniques included formal and informal in-depth key informant interviews, structured and unstructured observation, municipal and departmental meetings, focus groups and workshops, as well as grey data sources. The community questionnaire survey administered in the study contained both quantitative and qualitative data. Tie et al (2019) found that a research philosophy adopted by a researcher influences the manner in which the researcher interacts with participants, constructs datasets and analyses data. The research philosophy applied by the researcher will determine the final development and output of GT using different levels of coding and categorisation. In this research, I adopted a pragmatic research philosophy (*as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter*) and this influenced the data analysis process of the study by obtaining data from different sources, using different collection methods, and possessing an open-minded approach, as well as focusing on practical solutions to the issues identified.

Coding: The process of coding in GT consists of different, iterative stages that combine and refine data into categories that contribute to a final theoretical output. Coding requires analytical and critical skills that identify patterns, inconsistencies, and concepts in the data. According to Charmaz (2006) coding in GT is the bridge between data collection and theory development. There are different, iterative stages in the GT coding process, these stages differ according to the category of GT implemented by the researcher (*for example, traditional, constructivist, evolved*). I utilised the coding terminology developed by Birks and Mills (2015), as evident in *figure 3.2.*

Initial coding: I utilised the initial coding process to analysis the first qualitative and quantitative dataset in my research. Initial coding consists of carefully dissecting the data to identify initial similarities, patterns, and differences in the data. I generated as many codes as possible by grouping important and recurring words from the memos and initial dataset. According to Charmaz (2006) codes assist the researcher to identify specific psychological and social processes in the data, which is useful in forming categories and themes. During this stage the researcher also questions the data and links important information to the research questions, aims and objectives. The initial coding process allocates meaning to the data through the process of constant comparison between different incidents and occurrences in the data. The process of constant comparison in the initial dataset provided direction as to the issues of focus in the subsequent data collection stage. After I assessed the initial dataset, the theoretical sampling technique was applied to identify and integrate recurring codes into categories that contributed to theme formation and initial theory development. It is relevant to elaborate on the theoretical sampling technique in the next paragraph.

Theoretical sampling: is a sensitive and investigative technique in GT that allows the researcher to identify recurring ideas and construct patterns from different datasets (Tie *et al.,* 2019). Theoretical sampling encourages further data collection until a point of data saturation and confirmation, which leads to the development of theory that is embedded in that data. As indicated in figure 3.2, theoretical sampling is a vital technique of theory development in GT. Theoretical sampling is sometimes misinterpreted to be a population sampling process, however, it is a recursive process of developing theoretical categories from the data obtained until a theory is developed that is best suited to understand the data from the research. Data analysis is important for theoretical sampling, as it identifies relationships and highlights gaps in the data that triggers theoretical sampling and formation (Tie *et al.,* 2019). Theoretical sampling was used in my research when the issues of local politics and the misuse of power, as well as neopatrimonialism, were raised by respondents in my first data set. This directed me to focus on and obtain additional information from political leaders, councilors and government departments that assist and monitor the progress of LMs in SA such as COGTA and EDTEA. Furthermore, the initial data from municipal respondents on the local green economy and the transition to the green agenda provided links to obtaining additional information from environmental-based departments in SA and local private sector environmental companies. The above-mentioned directional links in the data analysis process is why the theoretical sampling technique is vital in GT.

Intermediate coding: After the initial coding process, I obtained data from additional respondents and compiled a second dataset. I utilised intermediate coding to analyse the second dataset. Intermediate coding strengthened the categories and patterns in the data from the initial coding phase (Tie *et al.,* 2019). The process of constant comparative analysis was applied again until core categories were formed, and theoretical data saturation was obtained. The intermediate coding process can span for more than two datasets depending on data saturation and theoretical formation. During this stage, theoretical sensitivity was also applied, I possessed the insight and ability to identify specific pieces of

data that were important for the research. Intermediate coding transforms the initial data into abstract ideas and themes that assist in theory emergence and building. Recurring codes and categories were combined and refined in the intermediate coding phase providing theoretical direction of the research. The refining of codes and categories during intermediate coding form core concepts and relationships in the data. According to Birks and Mill (2015), the representation of data using diagrams can assist in the intermediate coding stage by visually representing the interconnections, relationships, and dissimilarities in the data. The technique of diagramming visually assisted in questioning the data and identifying core causal issues that shaped the data. Once the intermediate coding stage was complete, the advanced coding stage commenced.

Advanced coding: consists of storyline and advanced theoretical coding techniques that assisted in the integration of data for the final GT output (Tie *et al.,* 2019). The advanced coding process was vital for final theory refining and integration. Advanced coding was highly explanatory and entailed the analysis of mature concepts and categories that were utilised to represent stories in the data. The stories were then reduced to form conceptual terms. The output of advanced coding was an interrelated conceptual framework instead of individual themes in the previous stages of coding. The storyline technique consisted of construction, theoretical integration, and presentation of research findings in a logical and coherent manner. Birks and Mills (2015) emphasised that a developed storyline provides a resilient framework for promoting explanatory power and the potential theoretical output of the GT research strategy. The storyline provides the thread that ties the core categories and concepts in the research.

Theoretical sensitivity: the process of theoretical sensitivity was utilised throughout the data analysis stage to identify significant data segments that were important for theory development in the research (Tie *et al.,* 2019). Strauss and Corbin (1997) stated that the GT strategy requires a combination of critical perspective and the skill of identifying specific data segments that are important for theoretical development. I applied analytical skills to enhance theoretical sensitivity in the data analysis stage by immersing myself in the datasets and focusing on theory development. After data saturation was obtained with a combination of extensive theoretical sensitivity and theoretical sampling, a conceptual framework was formulated from GT in this study.

3.2.4. Case study background

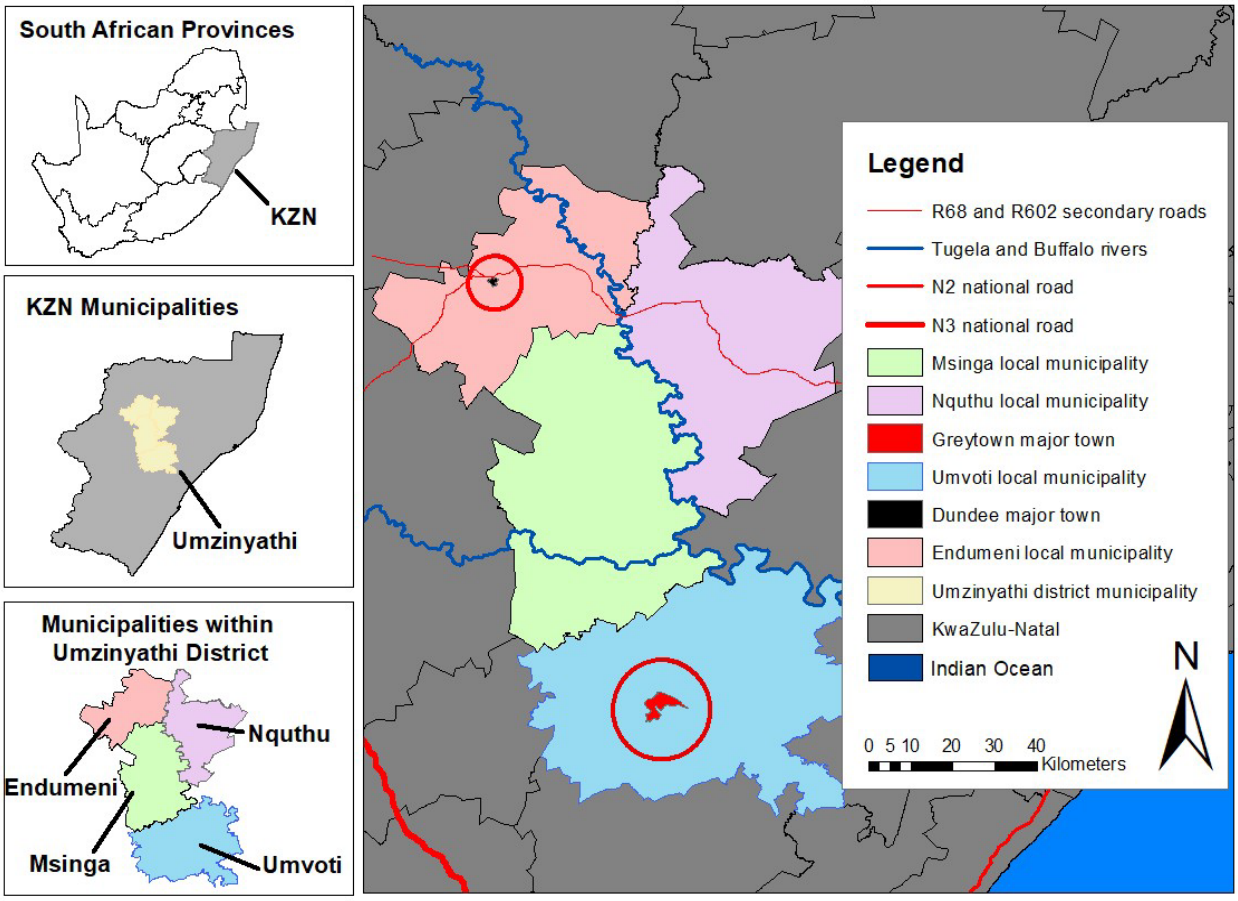


Figure 3.3: The study site map

3.2.4.1. Dundee, the uMzinyathi District Municipality (Nquthu, Msinga, Umvoti, Endumeni local municipalities)

KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Coordinates: Longitude -28° 08' 60.00" S
Latitude 30° 14' 60.00" E

Area: 8 651.9 square kilometers

Population: 554 883

The uMzinyathi District Municipality (UDM) is classified as a category C (District municipality) located in the North-West and central areas of the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province. The UDM is one of ten district municipalities in KZN. The UDM is surrounded by the iLembe municipality in the southeast, the Amajuba municipality in the north and the uMgungundlovu municipality in the south-west (IDP, 2019/20). There are four Local Municipalities (LMs) that form part of the UDM. The four LMs are Umvoti, Endumeni, Msinga and Nquthu. The center of the UDM is located near the N3 national road that joins Gauteng to Pietermaritzburg and Durban. The N3 route is important for the transportation of goods from and to the KZN province (IDP, 2019/20). The major towns in the UDM are Dundee, Nquthu,

Pomeroy and Greytown. The towns of Dundee and Greytown are responsible for the main economic and administrative activities. The seat of the UDM is located in Dundee (IDP, 2019/20). Dundee also accommodates all the major departmental and governmental headquarters for the district. The UDM is predominately rural populated with the activities of subsistence agriculture and stock farming being the main contributor to community livelihoods (IDP, 2019/20).

The UDM is regarded as one of the most impoverished districts in KZN with a high unemployment rate. There are grasslands located in the north of the district with an extensive agricultural sector that includes sheep, goat and cattle ranching as well as diverse vegetation farming such as maize, potatoes and soybeans. In contrast, the southern areas are dominated by extensive forestry production and small-scale sugar cane plantations, as well as fruit farming such as avocado, mangoes and kiwi (IDP, 2019/20). The UDM also possesses mineral deposits such as coal and metal. The mining of coal is conducted only within the Endumeni LM. Currently, there has been a major decline in mass mining activities in the Endumeni LM, as there is a lack of investment and coal supplies have been diminishing. However, investors have shown interest in small-scale mining that encourages SMME growth in the region (IDP, 2019/20). The town of Dundee is economic hub of the UDM and promotes diverse economic, tourism and agricultural activities. Tourism attractions that generate major revenue include the battlefields route of the Zulu kingdom, the Talana museum and Isandlwana- Rorkes drift battle. The topography of the UDM varies from grasslands, wetlands and deep river valleys to mountains, hills, and savanna. The topological diversity, especially in the Nqutu and Msinga areas, acts as barriers to infrastructure development (IDP, 2019/20).

The Umvoti Local Municipality (ULM) is classified as a category B municipality situated along the Eastern border of the UDM. The ULM is the most populated LM in the UDM and consists of five traditional authority areas located 50km away from the main town of Greytown. The central areas of the ULM are classified as high fertile, commercial farmland with low population density (IDP, 2019/20). There are numerous regional and provincial roads that pass through the ULM. The main economic sectors are community services and agriculture. The Nqutu Local Municipality (NLM) is classified as a category B municipality and is located along the North-Eastern border of the UDM. It is relatively low populated in comparison to its geographical area (IDP, 2019/20). Nqutu is the main town in the NLM and is an established administrative and commercial center for the municipality. The remaining geographical area of the municipality is predominately rural with expansive, fragmented settlements. The main roads into the municipality are the R68 and R33 that link Nqutu to Newcastle, Dundee, and Ulundi. There are many heritage and cultural activities and sites within the municipality, as well as potential for tourism income generation (IDP, 2019/20).

The Msinga Local Municipality (MLM) is classified as a category B municipality located in the South-western border of the UDM. Almost a third of the geographical area within the MLM is populated. The topography is predominately deep gullies and valleys that are shaped by the Buffalo and Tugela Rivers.

These river channels act as geographical barriers and isolate Msinga from the surrounding municipal areas (IDP, 2019/20). The main accessible road is the R33 that links Msinga to Pietermaritzburg, Dundee, Ladysmith, Nqutu and Kranskop. The MLM is predominately rural with at least 70% of communities traditionally governed. Much of the land is owned by the Ingonyama Trust and the remaining is commercial agricultural land located to the North-West of the main towns of Pomeroy and Tugela ferry (IDP, 2019/20). More than 95% of the population lives in rural, traditional areas. The main urban center is in Tugela ferry that accommodates the administrative and commercial service sectors of the municipality. The growing rural population in the MLM can be attributed to the lack of urban development in the municipality due to geographical barriers. The MLM has a resilient, high-valued, traditional culture that requires preservation for tourism income generations. The other main economic sectors are construction, agriculture, community services, trade, and transport (IDP, 2019/20).

3.2.4.2 Dundee, the Endumeni Local Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Coordinates: Latitude: -28° 09' 60.00" S
Longitude: 30° 13' 60.00" E

Area: 8 651.9 square kilometres

Population: 76 639

The Endumeni Local Municipality (ELM) is classified as a category B municipality located on the Northern border of the UDM. The ELM is situated 360km South-East of Johannesburg and 290km North of Durban. The ELM is surrounded by well-established rail, air and road infrastructure and is the geographically smallest of the four local municipalities in the UDM. The length of the ELM is 55km and the main roads that pass through the municipality are the R33, R621 and R602 (IDP, 2019/20). The main towns are Dundee, Glencoe and Wasbank. The core administrative and commercial service sectors are located in Dundee. The Biggarsberg mountain range is located in the ELM with the highest peak in the Wasbank area. The ELM is active in light-to-medium industries and provides a good standard of service delivery. Water supply is received from six dams and a major pipeline from the Buffalo River basin. The ELM also accommodates several departmental and regional government offices and is popular for its high standards of education and schooling facilities (IDP, 2019/20).

The Endumeni region has a large, fully serviced provincial hospital that services the UDM. There is also a stable labour supply and opportunities for local economic development in the agricultural, mining and commercial service sectors. The ELM has the smallest population from the other LMs in the UDM, but the largest economic activity and budget. The population is predominantly urbanised or situated on commercial farms (IDP, 2019/20). There are no tribal authorities within the seven Endumeni wards. Over 60% of the population is youth, hence the ELM is struggling with a huge percentage of youth unemployment. The urban settlements are located in Glencoe, Dundee and Wasbank. The township settlements are Sibongile and Sithembile. The remaining rural and commercial farm settlements are Malonjeni, Tayside, Uithoek, Burnside, KwaTelaphi and Jagersdrift (IDP, 2019/20).

According to Nel et al (2003), the town of Dundee in the ELM was a major contributor to the coal industry in SA in the 1900s. However, majority of the mines have closed, leaving an economic crisis for the local people in Dundee and neighboring towns such as Glencoe. Most industries and companies that supported the mining sector in the ELM have closed and there are also current environmental impacts that resulted from the extensive mining activities of the past (Nel *et al.,* 2003). Naidoo et al (2018) emphasised the negative consequences of mining activities on wetlands and water resources in the Dundee area. Mining rehabilitation requires careful environmental planning strategies by local government, politicians, the private sector, government departments and civil society (Naidoo *et al.,* 2018). The role of civil society in environmental issues within the ELM is lacking, however neighboring municipalities such as the Amajuba municipality in Newcastle and the uThukela municipality in Ladysmith have a more developed civil society sector that could also benefit the ELM with regards to managing critical environmental issues.

3.2.5. Sampling strategy

The municipal study sites were purposely chosen as samples after I identified that these municipalities were politically unstable, there were political contestations, a lack of effective service delivery and a lack of administration. Another important observation was that the municipal study sites also experienced issues in achieving a sustainable EG at the local scale. My exposure to the Endumeni municipal site assisted in identifying these vital issues. I then collaborated with my research supervisor, and we decided that it was a rare opportunity to obtain rich, in-depth data of the issues faced within these municipalities, as I had direct access to municipal stakeholders and exposure to the sampled environments. At the initial stage of data collection, a purposive, non-probability and convenient sample of municipal officials were chosen based on their roles within the municipalities and government departments and knowledge of the issues faced. I decided to sample supervisors, assistant managers, and senior managers from different departments within the municipalities. After the initial stage, snowball sampling was utilised to recruit a second batch of officials that were suggested by the initial sampled officials. The second batch of samples consisted of council officials and other managers not considered at the initial stage. A third batch of samples consisted of permanent and temporary municipal employees that were responsible for driving service delivery at the ground level. The temporary workers were contracted with the IDT, Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and Community Work Programme (CWP). I wanted to obtain data from all levels of the Endumeni and uMzinyathi municipal organogram.

Furthermore, I decided to purposely sample external stakeholders that were directly involved with the operations, administration, and the promotion of EG and the green economy of LMs. This included stakeholders from national and provincial government departments, the local private environmental sector, local environmental non-governmental organisations, local communities, government

institutions such as South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and political parties. I decided to interview as many respondents as possible, therefore I did not possess a precise plan of the number of respondents to be interviewed. The interviewing of the chosen stakeholders was an iterative sampling process until data saturation was achieved. I also obtained data from numerous municipal and departmental environmental, governance and service delivery-based meetings, forums, and workshops. I used structured and unstructured observation techniques to sample and obtain information from the municipal study sites on a daily basis. A community questionnaire survey was administered in 2 cycles within each of the 7 Endumeni local municipality wards using a stratified sampling technique. I divided each ward into five major communities or strata's and administered 10 questionnaires per community that totaled 50 questionnaires per ward. This sampling strategy was administered to 4 of the 7 wards. The remaining 3 wards were stratified into 10 major communities, and 100 questionnaires were administered. This was implemented because the three wards were all located in Dundee's township and did not have physical separation barriers. A final total of 600 respondents were probability sampled in two cycles of 300 questionnaires, each cycle consisted of different respondents from the same ward in order to obtain data saturation.

3.2.6. Research method/choices

3.2.6.1. Mixed methodology approach (Qualitative with limited quantitative data collection methods)

A mixed method or triangulation approach aims to integrate diverse research techniques to provide a more detailed and in-depth analysis of the data obtained during the data collection process. A mixed method approach is applicable to a pragmatic research philosophy and social science orientated studies (Walliman, 2017). According to Bryman (2012), in a research design, there are four main categories that a mixed methodology can be applied to:

1. Researcher based- This occurs when two or more researchers study the same research problem, aims and objectives using diverse or similar research methodologies.
2. Data based- The utilisation of two or more different sources of data and the combination of multiple datasets.
3. Method based- This is applied when two or more data collection techniques are utilised to obtain data on the same phenomena or dynamics in a study.
4. Theoretical based- This implemented when two or more theories or concepts are used to analyse data.

In this study, I utilised three categories of mixed-method approaches. This consisted of method, theoretical and data-based approaches. In terms of the method-based approach, I integrated both qualitative and quantitative research methods. I also combined different sources of data to assist in answering the research questions of the study. This included data from questionnaire surveys, interviews, observations, focus groups, meetings, workshops, and interventions that were utilised to

answer the same research questions. There was also a theoretical based approach that entailed the combination of different core concepts to form a conceptual framework in the study. A mixed-method approach was vital in this study, as it provided a detailed and in-depth analysis of the datasets collected. The datasets contained a combination of qualitative data from the interviews, observations, focus groups and community-based environmental interventions with limited quantitative data from the community questionnaire survey. According to Walliman (2017), a mixed methodology is most applicable and effective in social science research that incorporates social perceptions, interactions, and experiences with a pragmatic research philosophy.

A mixed-method approach is most suited for human geography research, especially when investigating and analysing dynamics associated with social interactions and community behaviour, as well as responses to community-based interventions (McKendrick, 2009). It also allowed for the integration of diverse data collection techniques that were best suited in answering the research questions, for example, both focus groups and questionnaire surveys can be utilised to obtain data on the same topic from respondents for comparative analysis (McKendrick, 2009). Mixed methodologies obtain detailed and unexpected data by using diverse research techniques and strategies on stakeholders that influence them to provide data in different ways and perspectives. An integrative approach also contributes to effective data testing, validity, and verification and this is vital for the output of the research findings (Walliman, 2017). There are also challenges faced in the application of mixed methodologies such as choosing the best suited qualitative or quantitative research technique and understanding how to implement it effectively. Data integration can also be a challenge, especially if researchers lack the knowledge of combining both qualitative and quantitative data to form datasets (Morse, 2016). However, when using a pragmatic approach, these challenges can be rectified, as I utilised the principles of pragmatism to include the most relevant and effective data collection techniques in my research. The diverse qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques utilised in the research will be explained in the following section.

3.2.7. Data collection techniques and procedures

3.2.7.1. In-depth formal and informal key informant interviews-(Qualitative)

Qualitative based research aims to prevent generalisation and simplification during data collection. A structured and predictive method of collecting data is considered insufficient and simplistic. Instead, an unstructured and explorative method is considered as more effective in collecting quality, in-depth data. Qualitative data collection techniques focus on obtaining data pertaining to social interactions, human experiences, and stakeholder perspectives (Bryman 2012). This proved evident in my research, as explorative and in-depth data was collected from diverse stakeholders involved in local governance, contested politics, environmental issues, service delivery and neopatrimonialism. The qualitative method provides an explorative dimension to a research problem by focusing on collecting information

from respondents within their social environment. This is beneficial for grounded theory research (Walliman, 2017).

According to Walliman (2017) a qualitative approach allows the researcher to investigate and understand the interactions and interconnections between stakeholders. This was evident in my research, as connections were identified and analysed between municipal officials and council members, departmental officials, private environmental companies, local communities and other key stakeholders. Qualitative techniques also allowed me to obtain emotional and in-depth data from stakeholders by administrating open-ended and follow-up questions in an unstructured and unexpected manner. This manner of administrating questions resulted in unexpected transparency and impulsive answering by stakeholders which proved vital for understanding the dynamics of local environmental governance and politics. One of the qualitative techniques I utilised was interviews. An interview is described as verbal interaction or communication between two or more individuals that aims to collect relevant information for research purposes (Bryman, 2012). During an interview, a researcher administers questions from a planned interview schedule that includes open and/or closed questions for the respondent to answer. Interview sessions require ethical consent from both parties and can be recorded or transcribed by the researcher depending on the permission provided by the respondent (McLeod, 2014).

In this study, I utilised both informal and formal key-informant interviews. The interviews were administered to all relevant stakeholders that I considered important in answering the research questions of the study. I ensured that stakeholders did not view the interview schedules before commencement of the interview session, as this changes the manner in which responses are provided. I also ensured that interviews were administered in a language that respondents understood, and questions were worded and phrased in a simple manner that respondents could understand. It is vital for a researcher to adapt the questioning style of interview questions to specific respondents. The questions can be phrased in a simple manner as long as the meaning of the questions are not compromised. The questions must also not be confusing and offensive (McLeod, 2014). Interviews can either be formal or informal. Formal interviews are administered in a structured manner; the researcher deviates slightly from the interview schedule depending on the quality of the responses received. Formal interviews are preferred for testing consistency in the data and are less time consuming to administer. However, in comparison to informal interviews, formal interviews lack depth and flexibility (Walliman, 2017).

Informal interviews allow for a convenient and flexible style of administering questions and are commonly known as discovery or casual interviews. Informal interviews provide researchers with the opportunity to have a casual conversation with relevant stakeholders without relying on formal, structured interview schedules. The conversion is free flowing, and questions are open-ended and may be directed towards topics that were not considered at the commencement of the interview (Morse, 2016). I also administered informal interviews with relevant stakeholders that provided valuable information for answering the research questions of the study. I felt that informal interviews were more

suited for municipal workers, community members and political leaders, as a casual environment ensured the effective interchange of information. The questions I administered were directed by the flow of the conversation during the interview. This process provided in-depth and unexpected data on different and related topics of interest. However, some criticisms of interviews must be considered by researchers such as time consumption for data analysis and interpretation, as well as the specific ethics, skills and techniques required when administering both formal and informal interviews (McLeod, 2014).

3.2.7.2. Unstructured and structured direct observation (Qualitative)

The observation data collection technique is vital when collecting empirical data on different research dynamics and phenomena using sensory attributes. A researcher can use physical senses to obtain data from different environmental and social spaces (Bryman, 2012; Walliman, 2017). The use of direct observation is applied within the natural setting of the participants (Morse, 2016). In this study, I utilised the social science method of obtaining direct observational data. This consisted of a structured observation schedule that was applied daily over the research timeframe in the Endumeni municipal environment and during the community based environmental interventions. I planned and implemented direct structured observation carefully in the municipal environment, attempting to record how municipal officials reacted to governance and political issues, as well as the daily service delivery operations and relationships with colleagues and the public. I implemented direct structured observation during community-based environmental interventions within the Endumeni community wards. I recorded how communities reacted and participated in the intervention and how the interventions were implemented, as well as the short- and long-term impacts on communities and the environment.

Direct unstructured observation was also applied to collect data from different stakeholders during municipal and departmental meetings and workshops, as well as daily unexpected and relevant information from officials and employees in the ELM. I did not compile an observation schedule for direct unstructured observation, as the data collected was unexpected and was not previously considered. I also obtained observational data from stakeholders during interviews such as responses to questions, appearance, and body language. The standard of service delivery within the ELM was also observed by conducting weekly inspections within communities by using a van provided by the ELM and also during the conduction of interviews. Fieldworkers were asked to record observed environmental, social, and service delivery issues in communities during interview sessions. There were also ethical issues I had to consider during observation such as researcher bias and participant awareness.

The observation data collection technique was first implemented during the initial development of quantitative natural science-based research and then evolved as a qualitative technique used by social scientists. In the natural sciences, observation is based on positivist principles and is structured in a systematic manner during data collection. A systematic behavioural checklist is utilised to collect

quantitative data (McKendrick, 2009). However, from an interpretivist perspective in social science research, qualitative data is collected, usually in an unstructured open manner that provides rich, in depth and explorative data (Walliman, 2017). In qualitative research, it is important to note that the observation technique is a systematic process and requires researchers to be sensitive and selective as the information collected can be overwhelming and difficult to analyse (Morgan, 2014).

3.2.7.3. Focus groups, meetings, and workshops (Qualitative)

According to Morse (2016) focus groups can be defined as a formal or informal discussion on a particular topic between a group of people that are usually pre-selected by the host individual or organisation. A focus group usually consists of between 7 to 12 stakeholders that provide their views and perspective on a central topic. The origin of focus groups can be traced back to a study in the United States of America conducted in 1941 by Merton and Lazarfeld on the effects of media on citizen participation in World War 2. Thereafter, focus groups have become a commonality in social science research, especially in the disciplines of Psychology and Anthropology (Breen, 2006). Most focus groups follow a specified agenda and minutes of the discussion are noted by a scribe. A researcher sets the topics and agenda of a focus group discussion in relation to answering the research questions of a study (Breen, 2006; Bryman, 2012). A moderator is responsible for directing the discussion flow in a focus group and for creating a comfortable, as well as interactive environment. The importance of focus groups is not directed towards obtaining a consensus of the topics discussed but to encourage stakeholders to participate and provide their perspectives and attitudes of the content discussed (Breen, 2006; Bryman, 2012).

According to Walliman (2017) the focus group technique is most suited for research problems that require multiple stakeholder responses. Focus groups can be conducted in diverse environments and range from informal to formal, this was evident in my research as I utilised a combination of twelve focus groups, meetings, and workshops. The focus groups consisted of discussions with community members, political leaders and departmental employees and were more informal. The meetings and workshops I participated in consisted of diverse stakeholders from the municipal study sites, government departments, local government council and the private environmental sector. I was responsible for moderating the focus groups, however for majority of the meetings and workshops I was a participant. The meetings and workshops were all based on environmental issues, service delivery and local governance and this was vital for my research. I conducted and participated in as many focus groups, meetings, and workshops as possible in order to obtain data saturation and theory formation for the research.

Breen (2006) has mentioned various advantages and disadvantages when implementing the focus group technique. The main advantages are the extraction of detailed and in-depth data from multiple stakeholders, including verbal and non-verbal data. The researcher is allowed the opportunity to obtain information on the perspectives and attitudes of stakeholders in a comfortable and interactive

environment that is conducive for an effective discussion. Stakeholders from all levels have the opportunity to share information that could lead to conflict identification and solution formation (Breen, 2006). However, the main disadvantages of focus groups are the dominant nature of certain stakeholders that may influence other stakeholders to contribute to the discussion. The risk of the focus group environment not been conducive for effective discussion such as the location and design of the room and the time of the discussion. Some stakeholders may also lack confidence, self-esteem, and communication skills to effectively contribute to the discussion (Breen, 2006). It is vital for the moderator of the focus group, meeting, or workshop to ensure all stakeholder requirements are met prior to commencement of the discussion and that all stakeholders have a fair opportunity for engagement and participation (Breen, 2006).

3.2.7.4. Participatory research- Community-based interventions (Qualitative)

The Participatory Research (PR) technique has been utilised since the 1940s by Kurt Lewin in the discipline of psychology. The application of PR consists of integrative stakeholder interactions and teamwork in understanding a challenging situation and changing it for the better (Baum *et al.,* 2006; MacDonald, 2012). In this research I applied PR within a community context to assist in improving the standard of environmental awareness interventions in local communities within the ELM. I applied the PR technique to communities and other relevant stakeholders from the ELM during community-based environmental interventions. The PR technique provided a stronger participatory dimension to the research by focusing on the views and feelings of community members. The local communities were provided with the opportunity to participate in the implementation and evaluation of the environmental interventions. The environmental interventions were analysed using a multi-stakeholder iterative process until a point of successful implementation and multiple stakeholder satisfaction. The PR technique provides numerous benefits for researchers such as obtaining democratic, in-depth information from stakeholders and assisting in rectifying community-based issues (Baum *et al.,* 2006). However, there are also challenges such as conflict generation between stakeholders and ensuring that all affected and interested stakeholders actively participate in the PR process (MacDonald, 2012).

3.2.7.5. The community questionnaire survey (Qualitative and Quantitative)

The quantitative data collection technique allows for objective and statistical data to be collected by the researcher. Quantitative techniques focus on attaining numerical and measured data from respondents. The data obtained must be analysed and interpreted in a numerical or statistical manner using percentages, formulas, graphs, software calculations and tables (Walliman, 2017). In the social sciences, quantitative data is mainly obtained from structured systematic observations questionnaires and surveys (Bryman, 2012). I compiled a community questionnaire survey that consisted of quantitative and qualitative based questions. The quantitative and qualitative questions provided numerical and in-depth explorative data on local governance, political issues, environmental issues, and service delivery

provision within the ELM. The community questionnaire survey was administered in two cycles to 300 respondents from the 7 ELM wards. A total of 600 questionnaires were administered.

In quantitative research the concept of generalisation is common in comparison to qualitative research that tends to critically analyse the data collected. Generalisations are concluded by quantitative variables when explaining and analysing different phenomena in quantitative research. The correlation between variables is vital in quantitative research (Bryman, 2012). A quantitative research design can be descriptive or experimental depending on the research questions of a study. An experimental design focuses on cause and effect in the data, and a descriptive design focuses on relationship between variables (Bryman, 2012; Walliman, 2017). In this study, I integrated attributes of a descriptive design to compare variables collected from the community respondents. I combined quantitative attributes such as structured and consistent questions with qualitative attributes such as open ended and explorative questions to form a robust community questionnaire. The quantitative data from the questionnaire was analysed using graphs and tables and qualitative data was coded, categorised, and assisted in forming recurring themes for data interpretation.

3.2.8. Research time horizons

3.2.8.1. Cross-sectional

I chose a cross-sectional time horizon for this study. The main reason for this is that the study was conducted within a three-year time frame and longitudinal studies are often conducted over a period of more than three years, as it aims to obtain data from the same participants over a continuous period of time (Saunders *et al.,* 2007). A longitudinal time horizon is suited for comparative and progressive studies, especially in the disciplines of sociology and psychology. In contrast, a cross-sectional time horizon is utilised to obtain data from a specific period of time from diverse stakeholders. This means that data is collected from a set timeframe in a study (Saunders *et al.,* 2007). I set the timeframe of three years for this study, as I felt that it was sufficient time for data saturation, theory formation and answering the research questions of this study. The cross-sectional time horizon is commonly applied to case study and survey research. However, it can also be applied to a grounded theory research strategy depending on the timeframe of data saturation and theory formation. The data obtained in a cross sectional timeframe is from respondents that possess diverse characteristics, attributes, and variables. The selected variables are dependent on the research questions, aims and objectives of a study (Saunders *et al.,* 2007). The benefits of a cross-sectional time horizon are efficient data validation and the disapproval of stakeholder assumptions during data analysis. There are also benefits associated with cost effectiveness and time efficiency, as well as utilising multiple datasets and variables to formulate new theories (Saunders *et al.,* 2007). Researchers must also consider limitations when choosing a time horizon such as analysing different datasets over a set period of time, the risk of insufficient stakeholder participation and the applicability of the most suited sampling technique within the stipulated timeframe

(Saunders *et al.,* 2007). The next section of the chapter will describe and explain the data collection process of the study.

3.3. The data collection process

3.3.1. Primary data

The primary data for the study was obtained from the following data collection techniques: In-depth formal and informal key informant interviews, structured and unstructured observation, community environmental interventions, focus groups, meetings, and workshops, as well as a community questionnaire survey (open and closed questions). The in-depth formal and informal key-informant interviews were administered to:

Stakeholder source:	**Number of stakeholders interviewed**
Senior, middle, and environmental management officials from the Endumeni LM and uMzinyathi DM.	30
General workers (permanent and temporary) from the Endumeni LM and uMzinyathi DM.	30
Councillors and other leadership stakeholders from the Endumeni LM and uMzinyathi DM.	20
Environmental management officials from the Nquthu and Umvoti local municipalities.	10
Officials from the uMzinyathi DM- Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA).	10
Officials from uMzinyathi DM- Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) and department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD).	5
Officials from the South African Local Government Association (SALGA).	4
Officials from the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA).	2
Officials from the national Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DFFE)	4

DFFE- Youth Community Outreach Programme workers- stationed in the Endumeni LM.	20
Private sector green businesses and local Environmental NGOs within the Endumeni LM.	4
Local political party leaders and members.	20
IDT and EPWP temporary workers.	20
IDT and EPWP temporary workers.	30

Table 3.1. The number of stakeholders that participated in the study

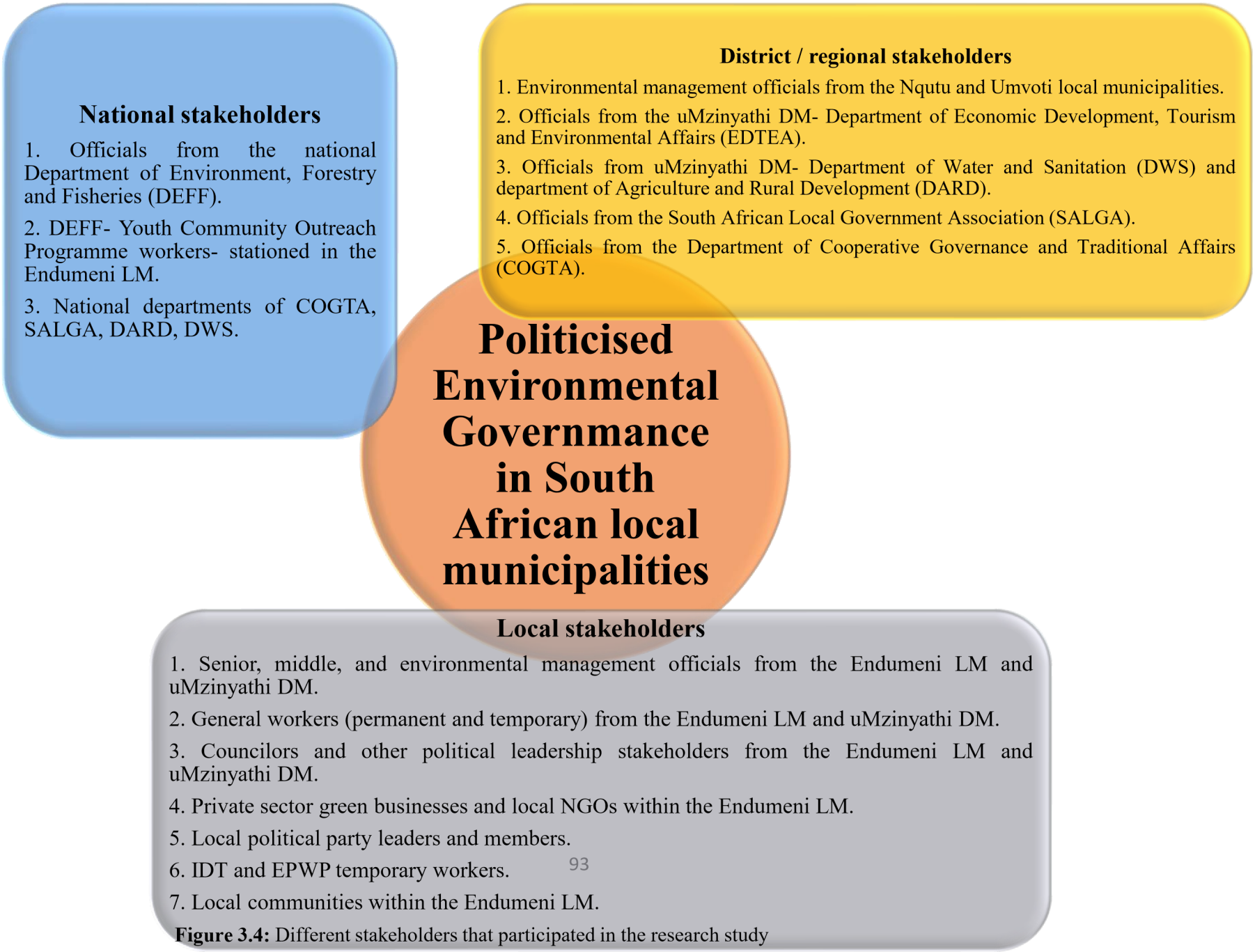


Figure 3.4: Different stakeholders that participated in the research study

The application of key informant interviews provided in-depth qualitative data for the research. The interviews provided the opportunity to obtain the experiences, views, and perspectives of respondents. Officials and councilors from the ELM and UDM provided information on contested local governance, local politics, the green agenda, service delivery and neopatrimonialism in local municipalities. Information on local environmental interventions and policies, local politics, environmental issues, and service delivery were obtained from government departmental officials from EDTEA, DWS, DARD, SALGA and COGTA. The local private green sector and Environmental NGOs provided information on business opportunities in the local private green sector, partnerships in environmental projects and perspectives on local environmental governance, politics, and environmental issues. The temporary IDT and EPWP workers supplied information on local municipal operations, environmental issues, local politics, and governance. The local political officials provided detailed information on the dynamics of local politics, power relations, local governance, and the importance of environmental issues in local municipalities and ward committees. The local community members provided their perspectives on local politics, governance, service delivery, environmental issues, and other socio-economic issues. The interviews were useful in sourcing in-depth and critical information on local politics, governance, and the environmental agenda from relevant stakeholders.

The utilisation of structured and unstructured observation was implemented throughout the data collection process. I was stationed within the ELM, therefore the observation technique was implemented effectively, as I was part of the study environment. I combined both structured and unstructured observation, the structured observation consisted of a schedule of issues I aimed to observe and collect data on in a structured manner. The schedule included aspects of municipal operations, relationships between officials and councilors, service delivery provision, environmental planning, workplace conflict and political influences. The unstructured observation was linked to the process of memoing, as I noted and captured information that was not part of the additional observation schedule. The unstructured observation included unexpected situations that occurred at the municipalities that was useful for the research. Data obtained from unstructured observation was vital as it provided aspects that I did not consider when compiling the structured observation schedule. The observation technique required the use of empirical and sensory qualities to collect information from the municipal study sites. During the interview sessions, focus groups, meetings, and workshops, I also utilised the observation technique to obtain information from different respondents such as body language and the manner in which they responded to political, governance and environmental issues.




Plate 3.1 and 3.2: The researcher conducting observations at a community-based intervention in the Sibongile community within the Endumeni Local Municipality, Dundee, KZN.

Furthermore, the implementation of focus groups with municipal and departmental officials provided an interactive space to discuss issues relating to the environmental agenda, municipal operations, and environmental service delivery provision. The focus groups were conducted on a monthly basis; I compiled the agenda for the focus group meetings and aimed to have recursive interactions with similar stakeholders to identify recurring issues or improvement in the environmental and service delivery challenges faced. The participants in the focus groups agreed to participate in study and possessed knowledge of the implications from the research. Focus groups discussions were also implemented with ward committee members, the private green sector and political party members. The participants were chosen based on their position and relevance to the research aims and objectives. The municipal and departmental environmental meetings and workshops were organised by EDTEA, DWS, SALGA, COGTA, UDM, ELM and DFFE officials. I attempted to attend as many meetings and workshops as possible to obtain information on how environmental issues are understood, the challenges faced, and solutions provided by different stakeholders. Attending these meetings and workshops was a rare opportunity to be exposed to government experts and officials and the manner in which they manage environmental and service delivery issues. I also had the opportunity to provide input from an academic perspective.



Plate 3.3: The researcher conducting a focus group discussion in the Sithembile community within the Endumeni Local Municipality, Dundee, KZN.





Plate 3.4 and 3.5: The researcher participating in community-based environmental interventions in different communities within the Endumeni Local Municipality, Dundee, KZN.

The community questionnaire survey was administered within all 7 wards of the Endumeni Local Municipality. I administered two questionnaire surveys to compare the responses from community members over a 1-year period. Both questionnaire surveys consisted of the same questions to identify if there were any changes in the responses. The questionnaire surveys were administered to the same respondents in both cycles. Thematic and numerical data were obtained from community members on the demographics and socio-economic issues faced, the standard of service delivery provision,

environmental issues, and the green economy, as well as their perspectives on the Endumeni council, management, local politics, and governance.

The community questionnaire survey consisted of the following six sections:

- Community demographics statistics and socio-economic issues.
- The respondents views on the standard of service delivery provision by the Endumeni LM.
- The respondents perspectives on environmental issues, environmental awareness, and the transition to the green economy.
- The respondents views on the Endumeni council and management.
- The respondents perceptions on local politics and governance in the Endumeni LM.
- Neopatrimonial and clientelist relationships in the municipalities.
- Possible solutions to the issues mentioned.

A total of 600 questionnaires were administered in 2 cycles to community members, this included, women, men of different ages. The number of questionnaires administered per Endumeni municipal ward were as follows:

- Ward 1- 50
- Ward 2 -30
- Ward 3 - 50
- Ward 4 - 30
- Ward 5 - 40
- Ward 6 - 50
- Ward 7 - 50

I obtained ethical consent and approval for the community questionnaire and interview schedules from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) ethics committee. It is important to note that children under the age of 18 were not allowed to participate in the study. I also administered a pilot test of the community questionnaire survey prior to administering it within the community wards. The pilot questionnaire test was administered to 25 random students from the local Majuba FET college. This was conducted to assess the effectiveness and applicability of the questionnaire, as well as how the pilot participants responded to the questions. The pilot test revealed that certain questions required rephrasing and clarity. After the corrections were completed, the community questionnaire was approved to be administered in the 7 community wards. There were 7 teams of fieldwork assistants that included a team leader and 2 additional fieldworkers. Grouping the fieldwork assistants in groups of 3 decreased incompetent biased actions during the administration of the questionnaires. The first cycle of questionnaires was administered in a 1-month duration in March 2020, and the second cycle was in November 2020. The fieldworker assistants agreed to conduct the community questionnaire and possessed knowledge of the local environment and community dynamics. The fieldworker assistants

were briefed about the research before administering the questionnaires and they attended weekly feedback meetings on the progress of the questionnaires and challenges faced during fieldwork.

The fieldwork assistants and I also took digital images of environmental issues and other relevant phenomena experienced within the community wards. The digital imagery provided a visual representation of the environmental issues faced by the communities. The main issues faced during administration of the questionnaires were related to illiteracy, as some of the respondents did not understand the questions asked or how to respond to them. The fieldwork assistants were briefed on how to ask difficult questions in a simple way for all respondents to understand and provide responses. The majority of community respondents communicated in Isizulu; therefore, most questionnaires were administered in Isizulu. All fieldwork assistants were proficient in both English and Isizulu. The consent form of the questionnaire was also translated and explained in Isizulu to ensure respondents understood the terms and conditions of the research. However, respondents were hesitant to sign the consent forms, as they were concerned about the information they provided and linkages to political parties. The stratified sampling technique ensured that each ward was equally sampled by focusing on different communities in the ward that covered a balanced geographical area. During the second cycle of questionnaires, the same respondents were sampled again to identify any changes or additions in the data obtain in the first cycle. The recurring sampling technique was important for the grounded theory research strategy for obtaining data saturation, theoretical sensitivity, and theoretical formation.



Plate 3.6 and 3.7: Fieldworkers administering questionnaires to respondents



Plate 3.8: The fieldwork team that administered community questionnaires in communities within the ELM

3.3.2. Secondary data

Secondary data was used to obtain contextual and theoretical literature and information for the research context, problem, and scope. I conducted a desktop study of relevant academics, peer reviewed journal articles, books, archival data sources, and review papers. I also collected numerous sources of grey literature such as newspaper articles, government surveys, annual reports, census information, policies and legislation pertaining to governance, politics, and the environmental agenda. At a local scale, I sourced municipal developmental, policy and environmental documents and legislation such as IDPs, Spatial Development Frameworks (SDFs), Environmental Management Frameworks (EMFs), Climate Change Response Strategies (CCRSs), environmental legislations, by-laws, budget, and planning documents. The combination of academic literature and grey data sources supplemented the study by providing a foundation for the literature review, assessing the effectiveness of governmental and departmental environmental policies, legislation, and developmental documents, as well as providing a theoretical background and current trends of politics in local South African governance. The secondary data sources also assisted in critically assessing the data obtained in the study.

The secondary data sources consisted of the following:

Academic literature and books on:

- Local municipal governance, local contested politics and power relations at an international and South African local scale.
- The factors of neopatrimonialism, clientism and political partisan in local municipalities.
- The transition to the green economy and environmental governance at the local scale.
- The green and brown environmental agendas on the local scale.
- Service delivery provision in local municipalities.
- Theoretical and conceptual frameworks on local municipal governance and local environmental governance.
- Grounded theory research methodology.

The grey data sources:

- United Nations Green Economy and local governance reports.
- Local municipal (Endumeni LM) and District municipal (uMzinyathi DM) environmental and developmental plans, strategies, policies, legislation and by-laws
- Archival data on previous municipal plans and policies, as well as local politics.
- Newspaper articles on local governance, politics, service delivery and environmental issues.
- South African political reports and documents.
- South African governmental and departmental reports, politics, plans and strategies pertaining to local governance, environmental management, service delivery and local economic development.
- Census data from statistics South Africa.
- Notes, minutes and agendas from municipal and departmental meetings, workshops, and forums.

3.4. Data analysis and interpretation

The quantitative data from the community questionnaire survey was analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 25). The output interpretation of the quantitative data in SPSS was in the form frequency and tally tables that were used to produce pie and bar graphs. These graphs presented numerical data as visual representations and comparisons. I also utilised Microsoft office programmes such as Word and Excel to create additional graphs and tables. The qualitative data from the interviews, observations, focus groups, meetings and workshops were analysed using the grounded

theory research framework developed by Tie, *et al.,* 2019, as mentioned in the grounded theory section of this chapter.

The qualitative data analysis consisted of the following stages:

- **Step one:** Initial coding – coding trends and patterns and category identification from data obtained from all stakeholders in the study.
  Step two: Intermediate coding – Selecting core categories and obtaining data saturation from data obtained from all stakeholders in the study.
- **Step three**: Advanced coding – Creating a storyline and advanced theoretical coding and community interventions.
- **Step four:** Grounded theory formation**.**

The grounded theory framework developed by Tie, *et al.,* 2019 incorporates other important aspects in the data analysis and coding stages such as memoing, theoretical sensitivity, theoretical sampling, constant comparative analysis, data saturation, concurrent data collection and analysis. These aspects were applied concurrently with the different coding and data analysis stages to form a grounded theory interpretation from the data. The data was analysed through mind maps, meeting minutes and qualitative comparison tables from the inputs of stakeholders. Microsoft excel and word were used to produce graphs and tables from the data.

3.5. Limitations, validity and reliability of the research techniques used in the study

This section focuses on the limitations and challenges faced during the application of qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. In terms of quantitive data, there was insufficient detail and depth regarding the perspectives and views of stakeholders. It also proved challenging to obtain secondary data for comparative analysis of the primary data obtained in the research (Morse, 2016). Quantitative data is statistical and numerical based; therefore, it may lack the ability to analyse and interpret complex and dynamics issues that require rigor and depth. Attempting to quantify and portray explorative data from stakeholders also proved challenging as the quantitive methodology comprised of closed ended and optional questions (Walliman, 2017). I also felt that quantitive data provided a one-dimensional analysis of the data obtained and a qualitative data was required to assist in answering the research questions of the study. Therefore, I opted for a mixed-method data collection technique to include both quantitative and qualitative data.

There are also numerous challenges associated with qualitative data collection techniques. The is usually a lack of standardisation and structure which leads to researcher bias, data misinterpretation and subjectivity (McLeod, 2014). This was apparent in all the qualitative data collection techniques utilised in the research. The precise measurement in qualitative data is lacking, as there is a weak relationship

between cause and effect (Walliman, 2017). This was evident during the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data from the interviews, observations, focus groups and community-based environmental interventions, as the data collected from stakeholders contained multiples perceptions and responses of local governance, politics, and environmental issues. Qualitative data is usually obtained from small groups of participants, and some researchers question the validity and reliability of this method (McLeod, 2014). Qualitative data can also be expensive to obtain and time consuming to analyse, this was apparent during the interview and focus group sessions, as well as the implementation of the community interventions. The qualitative analysis stages in the grounded theory strategy required a large amount of time and concentration to analyse and interpret for the purpose of data saturation and theory formation.

Furthermore, specific skills, knowledge and experience are required when collection qualitative and quantitative data. An experienced researcher may face challenges in obtaining this expertise, especially when applying a mixed-method approach (Bryman, 2012). I navigated these challenges by applying and implementing the research onion methodology framework that was suited to my research context. This comprised of a pragmatic research philosophy, inductive and deductive research approaches, the grounded theory research strategy, a mixed-method research choice and a cross-sectional time horizon.

3.6. Field experiences

There were numerous fieldwork experiences in my research such as being a part of a local municipal environment was a rewarding and unique experience for me. As a researcher placed within a politically contested local municipal environment provided the opportunity to be exposed to daily operations and administration of the ELM, as well as study the political influence of political leaders on municipal officials, workers, and the public. I obtained approval from the municipalities and collected detailed and in-depth information from the ELM. In most instances, researchers do not have the opportunity to obtain detailed information from a municipal environment. Researchers that are not part of a municipal environment only scratch the surface of information that could potentially be obtained. There are detailed, fragile dynamics that occur daily within a municipal environment and a researcher can only notice these occurrences if there is consistent exposure to the environment.

I was also presented with the opportunity to participate in numerous municipal and departmental meetings, forums, and workshops. This opportunity resulted in the collection of valuable data from different stakeholders and a first-hand experience of interacting with experts in the fields of local governance, service delivery and environmental management. I was also satisfied with the opportunity to provide my research input in these meetings and workshops. I was humbled by the manner used by government officials in managing service delivery and environmental issues, as all decisions were influenced by budget availability and political influence. It was also rewarding to participate in community-based environmental interventions, as I experienced the challenges of poverty, insufficient

service delivery and poor level of environmental management and awareness within communities. I was impressed with the teamwork and organisational skills displayed by stakeholders during all stages of the community-based environmental interventions, as this formed part of my grounded theory research strategy.

The administering of community questionnaires was a mixed emotional experience, as some respondents were cooperative and used the opportunity to express their views and perspectives on the issues included in the questionnaire. The respondents also claimed that interactions with the fieldworkers and the researcher provided awareness and clarity on issues pertaining to local governance, politics, and the environment. However, there were cases when some respondents were hostile and used the opportunity to complain about a lack of service delivery and ineffective governance. It was a problematic ordeal trying to make respondents understand that the research was not a politically motivated mechanism and was not directly linked to the ELM. Interviewing different stakeholders provided the opportunity to learn about their perspectives from different levels and mindsets. This was important because at times lower-level stakeholders such as general and temporary workers are excluded in the interview process. I also acquired knowledge from focus group discussions that comprised of stakeholders from different disciplines and sectors. The data collection and fieldwork process allowed me to utilise grounded theory to test different theories and create my own conceptual framework to understand the data obtained.

There were political challenges faced while been exposed to the municipal environment. I ensured that my data collection techniques did not offend political leaders by including offensive questions. Some municipal officials and workers were concerned about their job security and did not want to participate in the interviews and focus group discussions. Even though I was transparent about my research, I had to apply a conservative approach when collecting data, as local politics are surrounded by conflict between opposing and the same political parties. I made sure participants were comfortable in providing consent to be interviewed and that political leaders and municipal senior managers were informed about my research. Another major challenge was the Covid-19 pandemic that resulted in a national lockdown in South Africa on the 26th of March 2020. The restrictions and regulations of the lockdown impacted community-based data collection from March 2020 to November 2020. When the lockdown restrictions and regulations were eased, I commenced with further data collection. I felt it was most rewarding to be a part of local political discussions that allowed me to understand the fragile dynamics that influence political decisions and strategies, as well as how politicians apply tactics at a community level and within municipal operations and administration.

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter provided an in-depth explanation and description of the research methodology and municipal study sites utilised in the research. The research philosophy of pragmatism was explained, followed by inductive and deductive research approaches, the grounded theory strategy, as well as the mixed-method research choice and the cross-sectional time horizon. The justifications and limitations of the chosen research techniques were also provided and explained. I also described my fieldwork experiences during the research process. The next chapters four, five, six and seven will explore, describe, and discuss the analysis and interpretation of the research findings.

Chapter four

Paper one

Taking a back seat: The politicisation of municipal environmental governance in South Africa

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ABSTRACT: Local government (LG) in South Africa (SA) is mandated to provide adequate service delivery and to ensure environmental protection within municipal boundaries. Local Environmental Governance (EG) is influenced by the actions of municipal councils and political leadership resulting in politicised local EG. The ruling African National Congress (ANC) party in SA has been gradually losing political power since 1994 and levels of fraud, corruption and unprofessionalism in LG have increased and influenced EG. Limited scholars have attempted to examine the in-depth relationship between political dynamics, environmental issues, and local municipalities within the political-administrative interface in SA. To address this, we utilise a Political Ecology Approach (PEA) to assess the influence of political dynamics on local EG and the provision of environmental services in the political-administrative interface over a 20year timeframe in the uMzinyathi district and Endumeni local municipalities in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, SA. A high level of access was enabled by the first author's insider status, producing some rigorous, in-depth results. The findings revealed that political dynamics both enabled and impeded local EG and environmental service delivery. While mainstreaming and alignment to national policy was evident, EG interventions and environmental resources were often co-opted for political canvassing and incentivisation, or the relative prioritisation of EG was dependent on political mandates and interests. The research contributed towards a detailed understanding of how EG *'takes a back seat'* to political exigencies within a predominately fragile and under functioning LG sphere in SA.

Keywords: Politicised, environmental governance, political ecology, political administrative interface, local government

4.1. Introduction: Environmental governance

Environmental Governance (EG) sits at the centre of a range of different influences and pressures, and its operation is inherently political. Lemos and Agrawal (2006, 298) define EG as *"a set of regulatory processes, mechanisms and organisations through which political actors influence environmental actions and outcomes"*. Geopolitical dynamics such as international environmental treaties influence EG and environmental sustainability globally and nationally (Bodin 2017, Mitchell *et al.,* 2020), while environmental policies and legislation, informed by these same geopolitical dynamics, affects Local municipalities (LMs) (Gustafsson and Mignon 2020). LMs are vital for the implementation of EG principles and directly influence EG policies and strategies by implementing environmental interventions and providing environmental services in local communities (Odiyo 2022). LMs are mandated to transition towards environmental sustainability by promoting climate resilient local economies (Senosha 2017). However, local politics and power relations are also key influential factors as to whether the transition towards EG principles at a local municipal scale is achieved (Pasquini and Shearing 2014).

In SA, LG is mandated to provide environmental service delivery for citizens. LMs have the potential to implement environmental interventions, policies and strategies that can contribute towards progressive EG (Senosha 2017). Yet, Pasquini and Shearing (2014) and Olver (2018) emphasised that political tensions and dynamics, as well as contests for power and access to resources has become more apparent in South African LMs. Local EG is important in LMs and cannot be disregarded for numerous reasons such as the environment being directly linked to service delivery. Service delivery provision cannot function without environmental influence, for example waste management and water provision. The environmental sector is also one of the largest departments in LMs and therefore provides socioeconomic benefits such as temporary and permanent employment opportunities. The environmental sector provides funding opportunities for environmental based businesses such as green energy and recycling initiatives. There are also several environmental education and awareness workshops, skills development opportunities in LG. However, current literature (Olver 2018, Caldas 2022, Grest 2022) indicates that LMs are failing to manage and upgrade essential environmental-based infrastructure and the key contribution of this study is to highlight the consequences of side-lining EG and environmental issues in LG such as a loss of human and animal life, damage to infrastructure and livelihood instability.

Environmental issues in SA are directly influenced by the role and actions of LG and local political decisions (see Du Plessis 2010, Mngoma *et al.,* 2011, Hellberg 2014, Grest 2022 and Odiyo 2022). In contemporary South African LG, the African National Congress (ANC) has gradually been losing political power resulting from increased levels of fraud, corruption, and unprofessionalism. This has contributed to high rates of unemployment, poverty, and erratic municipal environmental service

provision (Reddy 2018). However, De Jager (2015) asserted that effective LG can contribute substantially to the attainment of environmental service delivery and EG objectives. Within this literature, there is limited scholarly research that goes beyond the normative understanding of politicised local EG in SA and identifies and discusses the detailed and closely knitted interactions, relationships and influence of local politics and local stakeholders in the political-administrative interface on EG and environmental service provision in SA.

To address this, we utilise a Political Ecology Approach (PEA) at the LM scale in SA. The PEA encompasses concepts such as governance, power, politics and environmental issues and assists in assessing research problems that focus on the interrelationship between environmental issues, politics, governance and power relations (Bryant 2015, Perreault *et al.,* 2015). In the context of this study, the PEA is utilised to investigate and analyse the interrelationship between local politics, power relations, EG at the political-administrative interface. The political-administrative interface is defined as the *"the relationship between the administrative and political components at the municipal level; it is this relationship which will largely determine whether policy and programs are successfully implemented"* (Reddy 2019, 243). Our municipal case study sites are the uMzinyathi District (UDM) and Endumeni local (ELM) municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), SA. Drawing on in-depth fieldwork of the first author, we demonstrate that stages of political influence and transitions in the ELM and UDM directly influenced the environmental sector over successive five-year temporal intervals.

The findings revealed that political dynamics and power relations both enabled and impeded local EG and environmental service delivery. While mainstreaming and alignment to national policy was evident, EG interventions and environmental resources were often co-opted for political canvassing and incentivisation, or the relative prioritisation of EG was dependent on political mandates and interests. The research contributed towards a unique understanding of the influence of political dynamics on local EG and how EG *'takes a back seat'* to political exigencies within a predominately fragile and under functioning LG sphere in SA. The research also suggests that the environmental sector represents a crucial arena within which to explore patronage and politicisation within municipal governance. The next section provides relevant literature, followed by the research context, methodology, findings, discussion and the conclusion along with suggestions for future research.

4.1.2. Geographies of local environmental governance

The origin of LG has been debated by academics and is dependent on the political history of a particular country (see Kersting *et al.,* 2009, Caldas *et al.,* 2022). The process of industrialisation increased demand for services and other municipal functions in local communities resulted in the development of local political structures and councils that were responsible for service delivery at the local scale (Caldas

et al., 2022). Over time there is clear consensus that LG is a crucial deciding factor in the implementation of effective EG and environmental service delivery (Lawhon and Patel 2013, Pasquini and Shearing 2014, Bennett and Satterfield 2018).

Analyses of municipal EG have highlighted different geographical distinctions. EG in LMs in the global north mainly viewed EG as an integrative process that involves numerous stakeholders and institutions (Mitchell *et al.,* 2020). EG in western countries is also usually implemented and guided by neo-liberal principles, focusing on the privatisation and commodification of environmental resources (Gustafsson and Mignon 2020). Picketts (2018) emphasised that politics must be closely intertwined with EG. In an African context, the literature on EG contends that EG is nascent. In the post-colonial context, for example, a study conducted in Zambia by Rodgers (2016) revealed that economic factors in LMs are prioritised over EG decisions and that additional research is required to assist in integrating environmental sustainability with economic benefits. Rodgers (2016) further claims that local EG is influenced negatively by a lack of environmental-based human capacity and a lack of implementation of environmental legislation. Similar findings were identified by Asongu and Odhiambo (2020) in subSaharan Africa.

The democratic ANC government in SA prioritises environmental issues in LG considerably (Du Plessis 2015). The environmental health injustices and environmental-service delivery provision became a core component of democratic local governance (Du Plessis 2015). Madumo (2015) asserted that LG in SA is centred on democratic principles. The concept of democratisation in LG is described as *"a process of creating democratic institutions and overall democratic citizenship rooted in a democratic political culture"* (De Jager 2015, 9). The process of democratisation in SA resulted in the broadening of environmental policy and environmental rights debates leading to the development of co-operative environmental governance (Mngoma *et al.,* 2011).

There is evidence of inroads in the attainment of a sustainable democratic culture in LG (De Visser 2010, Madumo 2015). Hlahla et al (2014) emphasised the popularity of a community developmentbased approach in SA that resulted in the *"greening"* of political decisions, addressing the injustices of the past, and attempting to meet the needs of impoverished communities through sustainable development and progressive EG. De Jager (2015) contends that democratic and developmental LG is an ongoing process, and some municipalities such as the Midvaal LM (see Kolisang 2019) and the Okhahlamba LM (see Asmal 2019) have demonstrated that LMs in SA are implementing their constitutional obligations. In pursuit of deepening democratic EG Leck and Crick (2014) suggest that collaborative decision-making and assistance between neighbouring municipalities is vital for promoting EG, which was evident in the alignment of environmental agendas between the Ugu district and eThekwini Metropolitan municipalities in KZN, SA.

However, there are also a number of challenges and impediments associated with attaining local EG that have been noted. These range from stakeholder fragmentation, a lack of human capacity and environmental-based knowledge, as well as ineffective environmental policy implementation and legislation enforcement in SA (Naidoo 2017) and a lack of environmental prioritisation (Roberts 2010). Political dynamics, contestation and objectives are acknowledged to be significant in their influence on EG in LMs (see Hellberg 2014, Du Plessis 2015, Grest 2022 and Odiyo 2022). De Visser (2010) and Reddy (2018) have shown that political influence can affect municipal administration and operations, as well as the interface and boundaries between politics and LG. Du Plessis (2015) and Reddy (2018) have highlighted fraud and corruption in South African LMs, while Olver (2017) emphasised that political power struggles in government institutions negatively influences environmental-based decision making by prioritising the environmental needs of the political elite. Reddy (2018) also highlighted political factors such as factionalism and state capture that have implications on LG and service delivery, where LM councils can prioritise political mandates over EG mandates (Pasquini and Shearing 2014).

Specifically, Pasquini et al (2015) found that political influence can trigger the process of environmental institutionalisation in LMs by allowing political champions the opportunity to promote EG in exchange for political benefits and political competition between opposing parties can result in the improvement of environmental management and environmental service delivery during elections. However, Grest (2022) and Odiyo (2022) cautioned that political contestations can impede environmental institutionalisation and hamper EG objectives when there are changes in political mandates in politically unstable LMs.

In an evaluative approach, Mngoma et al (2011) and Senosha (2017) and identified important characteristics of effective local EG such as institutions and law, participation, rights and representation, accountability, and transparency. In a more functional approach, Pasquini and Shearing (2014) identified four factors that contribute towards the progression of EG in politicised LMs: Firstly, functional external stakeholder networks, secondly, the existence of political champions, thirdly, internal social interactions and relationships within LMs and lastly, municipal incentives from engaging in and implementing environmental initiatives. Tangential to these approaches, we adopt a Political Ecology Approach (PEA) by utilising relevant concepts relating to politics, the environment, governance, and power relations (see Bryant 2015, Perreault *et al.,* 2015). Specifically, we interrogate the political ecology of EG within the political-administrative interface in SA. The application of a PEA resulted in the formation of a context specific political ecology diagram (see figure 4.1) to depict the interrelationship between local politics, EG, power relations, environmental and social inequalities, as well as budgetary constraints within the political-administrative interface of the municipalities. Figure

4.1 will be discussed in the findings section. The next section of the paper focuses on the research context and methodology.

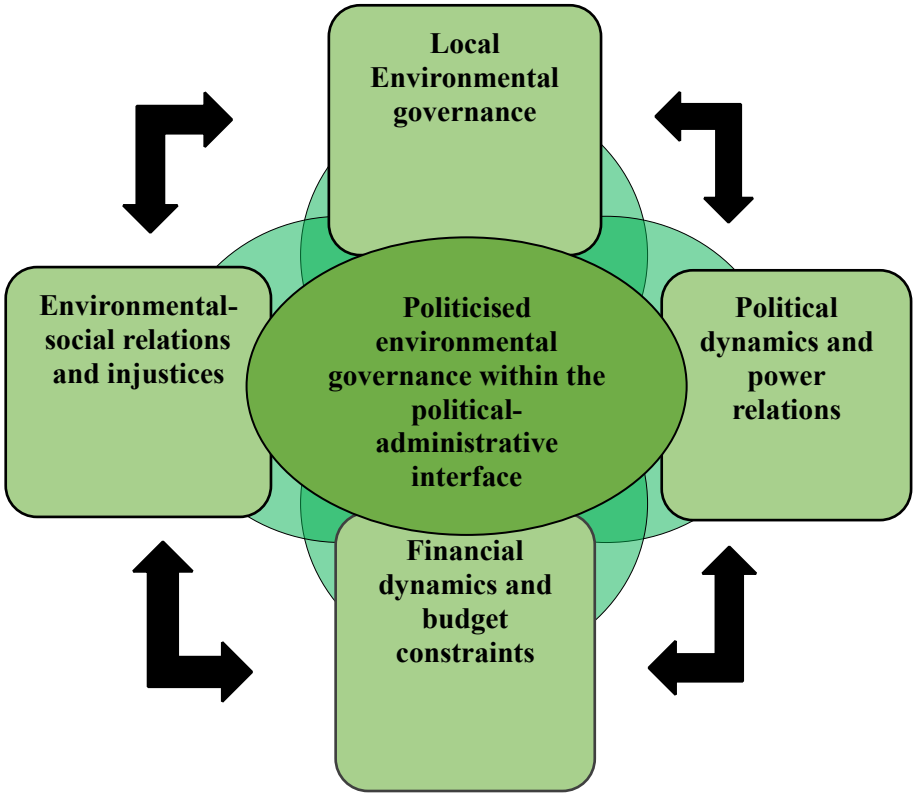


Figure 4.1. Politicised EG within the political-administrative interface in the Endumeni and uMzinyathi municipalities.

4.2. Context and methodology

LG in SA is the third sphere of government and is mandated by the South African constitution to provide service delivery within a municipal spatial boundary. LMs must adopt both the roles of a regulator and provider of environmental-based services within their municipal boundaries Kotze and Plessis (2015) and develop environmental by-laws that are aligned with provincial and national environmental legislation (Du Plessis 2010). The Municipal Systems Act of 2000 incorporates environmental management obligations in municipal institutional framework and developmental policies such as providing municipal services in a financially and environmentally sustainable manner (Du Plessis 2015). While the national government is responsible for developing the different spheres of government

in a country through the process of legislation and executive power, Picard and Mogale (2015) claim that local councils have executive and legislative powers to develop and implement local legislation, approve budgets and capital projects, and make decisions pertaining to Local Economic Development (LED), municipal operations, and community related issues.

Motubatse et al (2017) claimed that government institutions in SA such as the department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) have assisted LMs in improving operational and administration duties such as becoming financially responsible and sourcing qualified human resources. The focus of co-operative EG is to ensure all spheres of government are responsible for environmental protection and the socioenvironmental upliftment of communities (Muller 2018). However, according to Kotze and Plessis (2015) public environmental and service delivery issues are usually pushed back and forth between different spheres of government, claiming it is not within their jurisdiction.

The application and implementation of effective EG in LMs is complicated by the fact that it is largely dependent on political support and stability from councils, municipal managers, local communities, and other stakeholders. Contemporary LG in SA is comprised of numerous political coalitions and political instability, and this has a profound influence on EG and the environmental sector. SA is a politically diverse and contested country with several challenges experienced at the LG scale. After the 1994 democratic elections, the ANC governed the majority of LMs in SA. The ANC gradually lost political power in LMs from 1996 (58.02%) to 2021 (47.90%), as political change stemming from erratic service delivery provision and persistent post-apartheid socioeconomic issues such as uneven development and high unemployment. Over this period LG in SA has been critiqued for providing inadequate service delivery, resulting in violent community protests (see Dawson, 2014). Contemporary corruption and so-called *'state capture'* has impacted political leadership and administration in LMs. The result has been the increasing contestation for power in LMs between parties, and a shift from single party to coalition governance, complicating environmental decision making (Thakur and Nel, 2024). Even in politically stable LMs where councils maintain power for five-year cycles, this is usually inadequate in comparison to environmental changes that span decades and require consistent decision-making from stable councils (Lawhon and Patel 2013).

After an in-depth consideration of numerous LMs in KZN, we identified the ELM and UDM as applicable municipal case study sites to study the politicisation of Municipal environmental governance. One of the researchers exposure to the ELM and UDM as an intern in the environmental sector prior to commencement of the research, and a political party insider assisted in identifying political and EG dynamics. It was a rare opportunity to obtain in-depth data of the issues faced within these municipalities, as we had direct access to municipal stakeholders and exposure to the study sites.

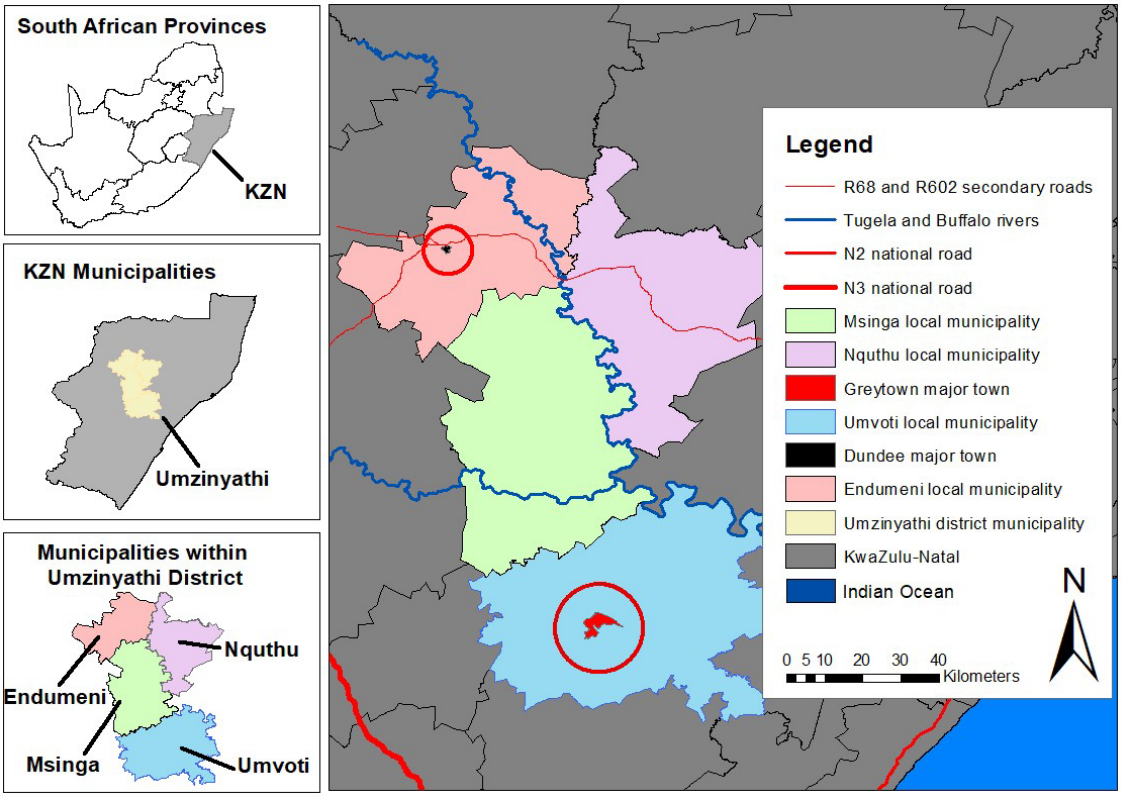


Figure 4.2. The study site map

The UDM is classified as a category C (District municipality) located in the North-West and central areas of the KZN province. The UDM is one of ten district municipalities in KZN. The UDM is surrounded by the iLembe municipality in the south-east, the Amajuba municipality in the north and the uMgungundlovu municipality in the south-west (IDP 2019/20). The UDM is regarded as one of the most impoverished districts in KZN with a high unemployment rate. The topological diversity, especially in the Nquthu and Msinga areas, act as barriers to infrastructure development (IDP 2019/20). The four LMs that form the UDM are Umvoti, Endumeni, Msinga and Nquthu.

This research has predominately focused on the Endumeni LM, a category B municipality. The ELM is geographically the smallest of the four LMs in the UDM and houses the towns of Dundee, Glencoe and Wasbank and has the largest economic activity and budget (IDP 2019/20). Key economic activities include established light to medium industries in the agricultural, mining, and commercial service sectors and relatively good standard of service delivery. The ELM has experienced several political contestations and instability in the last two decades, mainly from changing political leadership and from coalition to single-based councils. Over 60% of the population is youth, hence the ELM is struggling with a huge percentage of youth unemployment. The seat of the UDM is also located in Dundee as are

all the major departmental and governmental headquarters for the district (IDP 2019/20). The political leadership in the UDM has varied from the ANC in the past and now currently the IFP.

The research findings were obtained using a mixed method approach, consisting of non-statistical quantitative and qualitative methods. The qualitative methods comprised of in-depth formal and informal key informant interviews, unstructured and structured direct observation, focus groups, meetings, and workshops, as well as participatory observation in community-based interventions. The findings were obtained from various stakeholders such as municipal officials, government department officials, municipal councillors, politicians, ward committee members, the private sector, civil society, and targeted impoverished communities, as well as other essential stakeholders related to politicised EG and power relations within the study sites. A community questionnaire survey that was administered within all seven wards of the ELM. A total of 600 questionnaires were administered to community members to obtain an equal representation from all seven wards in the ELM. Community members were sampled using a stratified random sampling technique in two cycles. The next section of the paper focuses on the research findings.

4.3. Findings: A temporal analysis: Politicised environmental governance in the Endumeni and uMzinyathi municipalities

This section provides a discussion of the research findings that focus on politicised EG within the political-administrative interface that were influenced by political dynamics and power relations over four consecutive five-year periods from 2000 – 2020. As depicted in figure 4.1 previously, we identified blatant political interference and influence in environmental service delivery and EG within the municipal study sites, as indicated in the political dynamics and power relations box in figure 4.1. There was a lack of EG prioritisation in comparison to political mandates and a lack of budget for the municipal environmental departments, as demonstrated in the financial dynamics and budget constraints box in figure 4.1. Also apparent in figure 4.1 was the enabling and disabling influence of politics and power relations on local EG and environmental-social injustices in communities.

There was both formalisation and politicisation of EG in the municipalities. The formalisation achievements consisted of EG progression, environmental awareness, investment, the implementation of interventions, policy and legislation. The politicisation process consisted of the utilisation of environmental resources, interventions and environmental service delivery by the council and other stakeholders for political reasons. After the completion of the 2001 national local elections the UDM was formed consisting of four LMs - Endumeni (ELM), Umvoti, Msinga and Nquthu. The ELM and UDM was governed by a combination of the ANC, Democratic Alliance (DA) and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) political parties. The ELM and UDM experienced political instability within the last two

decades from 2000 to 2020. There were political contestations, a lack of effective service delivery and a lack of council leadership and municipal administration.

During the last two decades the ELM and UDM were governed interchangeably by the ANC and IFP during with a few occasions of an IFP, DA and Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) coalition council. This interchangeable governance and political leadership resulted in different ward councillors, ward committees and stakeholders that possessed political power for limited periods, creating a diverse and complex political and governance environment in the municipalities. It was also evident that the municipal study sites gradually progressed towards attaining EG principles however, there were challenges in achieving effective EG.

4.3.1. Lacking in priority: Environmental Governance from the year 2000 – 2005

EG during the early 2000s was largely non-existent in the UDM and ELM. According to numerous veteran municipal officials, *"the environmental sector of the ELM was placed in the community services department"* (Interview, 12 September 2019, Dundee, SA). The ELM and UDM did not consider EG as a priority and the only environmental considerations were the provision of environmental-based service delivery. This included refuse collection services, water provision, parks and gardens responsibilities such as the cutting of trees and grass and the occasional planting of trees. The ELM also administered an unregulated dumping site from the UDM that did not abide by environmental legislation and regulations. The lack of environmental considerations in the ELM and UDM indicated that EG was at a developing stage. Reddy (2018) and Caldas et al (2022) stated that the core focus of LG is to provide services to a particular geographical area demarcated under its jurisdiction. This was evident in the ELM and UDM, however environmental compliances were clearly lacking.

Environmental management priorities in the municipalities were absent and fragmented. The ELM and UDM councils did not prioritise environmental issues and budget limitations for the environmental sector were common. The presence of budget limitations and a lack of financial resources in LMs were also evident in a study conducted by (Madumo 2015). The planning and implementation of community-based environmental interventions were non-existent, as the ELM and UDM lacked human capacity with environmental qualifications and resources for implementing environmental interventions. Moti (2019) indicated that it is common for management positions to be occupied by incompetent, yet politically inclined individuals and the political governance structure of LMs is based on popularity, comrade loyalty and reciprocity in SA.

The lack of environmental prioritising indicated poor EG in the ELM and UDM. However, the formation of environmental legislation, policies and plans were at a developmental stage which

indicated improved EG. The ELM and UDM councillors approved the formation of basic environmental by-laws pertaining to waste management, environmental health, the maintenance of local parks, grass cutting and agriculture. However, there were no by-laws that included environmental conservation and preservation. The importance of environmental by-law formation was emphasised by (Du Plessis 2010). Du Plessis (2010) stated that environmental by-laws must be aligned with provincial and national environmental legislation. According to a former ELM councillor, *"municipal officials and council members lacked knowledge of environmental issues and were only focused on service delivery and political strategies"* (Interview, 10 June 2019, Dundee, SA). The ELM and UDMs Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) did not prioritise environmental issues and briefly included environmental service delivery issues. There was also a lack of environmental forums and stakeholder interaction during this period, indicating a lack of environmental knowledge and public participation in environmental issues.

4.3.2. Increasing stakeholder interaction: Environmental Governance from 2005 – 2010

The political structure of the ELM and UDM changed during this period, as the ANC claimed more municipal wards during the 2006 local elections followed by the IFP and DA in the ELM and UDM. The change in political leadership did not have a major influence on EG, as a former UDM councillor confirmed that environmental issues remained unprioritised, *"we focused on IDP projects in ANC- weak communities for future political support"* (Interview, 22 October 2019, Glencoe, SA). The councils also did not consider environmental management as a major budget priority. A limited budget was provided for environmental-based service delivery, and this excluded environmental awareness projects and interventions.

Roberts (2010) and Pasquini and Shearing (2014) found that LMs in SA are influenced by political mandates that are usually prioritised over EG mandates. Despite the lack of EG at the ELM and UDM, there were increased stakeholder interactions between environmental departmental stakeholders and the councils, indicating improved environmental collaboration. The UDM adopted more of a supportive role in guiding the ELM towards a more environmentally sustainable path*, "we decided to convene meetings with ELM officials to discuss environmental issues that affected both the ELM and UDM"*. (Interview, 10 April 2020, Dundee, SA). There was also environmental capacity support provided to the municipalities from government departmental stakeholders on environmental knowledge and funding opportunities in the environmental sector.

4.3.3. Improvising Environmental Governance from the year 2010 – 2015

There was a slight improvement towards implementing EG during this period. An ELM official stated that *"government departments pressurised the municipality to become environmentally compliant and create functioning environmental departments through environmental legislation and compliance mandates"* (Interview, 21 August 2020, Dundee, SA). The UDM and ELM also created disaster management and environmental planning departments. Mbulawa (2019) stated that LMs in SA are gradually abiding to compulsory national legislation, polices and strategies and this was also apparent in the municipal study sites. In 2014, the landfill site license of the ELM was reviewed and approved.

However, according to a former ELM councillor, *"unqualified, politically affiliated officials continued to be hired in environmental-based positions"* (Interview, 23 May 2021, Dundee, SA), indicating that cadre appointments in the environmental sector were still occurring. The findings indicated that environmental issues again took a back seat to political priorities such as the recruitment of comrades. A marginal amount of the municipal capital budget was invested in the environmental departments. The rate of municipal aging infrastructure outweighed capital budget investment and this had a detrimental impact on environmental service provision. The municipal environmental departments were dependent on financial assistance from government departments such as COGTA and SALGA. Motubatse et al (2017) also found that government institutions such as COGTA and SALGA have assisted LMs financially with infrastructural procurement.

The relevant stakeholders such as the local media encouraged environmental prioritisation. A former UDM councillor stated that, *"the local media, the private sector and civil society pressurised the municipalities to prioritise environmental issues"* (Interview, 10 June 2019, Dundee, SA). The prioritisation of EG in the municipalities resulted in the improvement of environmental-based by-laws and the completion of various environmental plans, strategies and local environmental policies such as Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs). However, there were challenges in the implementation and enforcement of municipal environmental policies, by-laws, and plans.

4.3.4. Progress and codification amidst political transition: 2015-2020:

During this period, the findings indicated that the municipalities made significant progress towards implementing a more resilient and effective EG agenda. In SA, local EG responsibilities are mandated by legislation Du Plessis (2015), for example, the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 includes environmental management obligations in the institutional framework and developmental policies of LMs. The municipalities attempted to integrate national environmental policies and principles with local

plans and strategies. In addition, the Local Environmental Government Support (LEGS) official was placed in the municipalities in 2016. The LEGS official assisted the municipalities in transitioning towards a more functional and compliant environmental agenda by conducting annual environmental analysis, reporting draft proposals on environmental activities and identifying environmental resources, sector plans and training. An ELM official confirmed that *"the municipalities received environmental capacity assistance from provincial departments to improve EG such as the LEGS official"* (Interview, 11 July 2022, Dundee, SA).

However, the findings revealed that the municipal environmental plans, strategies, and policies were not always implemented effectively. The major challenges for a lack of implementation were related to political, financial, and administrative constraints. In 2016, there was a political leadership change in the municipalities, the ANC was replaced by an IFP, DA and EFF coalition. A lack of environmental prioritisation continued under the new coalition council, demonstrating that local political parties have a similar environmental mindset that is influenced by regional and national party mandates. There were also legal and compliance challenges on EG in the municipal study sites. The LEGS official claimed that municipal environmental officials and councils developed environmental sector plans which *"collected dust on the shelves without been implemented nor reported on"*. This was despite the fact that the municipalities have a constitutional and legal mandate to ensure that these responsibilities are performed (Interview, 9 February 2022, Glencoe, SA).

The findings also revealed that most employees from the municipal study sites lacked environmental knowledge. In the PEA, the process of attaining environmental knowledge and participatory environmental education is prioritised. EG was influenced negatively by bureaucratic decisions made by the municipal council. A former ELM councillor claimed that *"the red tape process and bureaucracy at the municipalities is lengthy and frustrating for managers"* (Interview, 12 March 2022, Glencoe, SA). There was also political influence on environmental legislation and planning in the municipalities. The approval of environmental by-laws was a slow process with a lack of environmental by-law enforcement due to insufficient budget to recruit qualified environmental enforcement officials. Du Plessis (2010) cautioned against the lack of implementation and enforcement of municipal environmental by-laws due to a lack of human capacity. A UDM official claimed that *"the municipalities have severely understaffed environmental departments, and this negatively impacts EG"* (Interview, 21 June 2021, Dundee, SA).

The approval and initiation of environmental-based forums by the ELM and UDM councils were lacking. An ELM councillor claimed that *"approved environmental forums were largely unsustainable due to poor participation by relevant stakeholders, therefore it was a waste of time and resources"* (Interview, 25 June 2021, Dundee, SA). However, in accordance with democratic LG principles, a

council resolution was taken to include environmental management as a permanent agenda item in municipal planning and forums. It was apparent that during municipal LED forums, environmental issues *'took a back seat'* to socioeconomic and political issues such as council support for coal mining proposals that encouraged employment opportunities for comrades. The 2020 municipal financial year was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. An ELM official claimed that *"environmental-based workers were exposed to risks from Covid-19"* (Interview, 14 December 2020, Dundee, SA). An allegation for the misuse of environmental sector funds was provided by an ELM general worker, *"a portion of the municipalities Covid-19 relief fund was supposedly saved for the 2021 local elections"* (Interview, 6 January 2022, Dundee, SA), indicating that political issues were still prioritised during the pandemic.

4.3.5. Community perceptions on politicised EG in Endumeni

A community questionnaire was administered to respondents in the seven ELM wards and a question regarding the influence of politics on EG and environmental service delivery was enquired. Over 50% of respondents questioned in wards 1, 6 and 7 agreed that politics directly influences EG and environmental service delivery. The community respondents claim that municipal officials and councillors tend to motivate for comrades to obtain employment opportunities from the environmental sector, whereas the majority of respondents from wards 2, 3 and 4 that supported the ruling party claimed the politics had no influence on EG. De Visser (2010) and Reddy (2018) also emphasised the political influence on the administration and operations of LMs in SA. Some respondents stated that *"the rewarding of comrades is not fair; councillors only implement environmental interventions in specific communities that are favoured for political reasons"* (Interview, 6 March 2022, Dundee, SA).

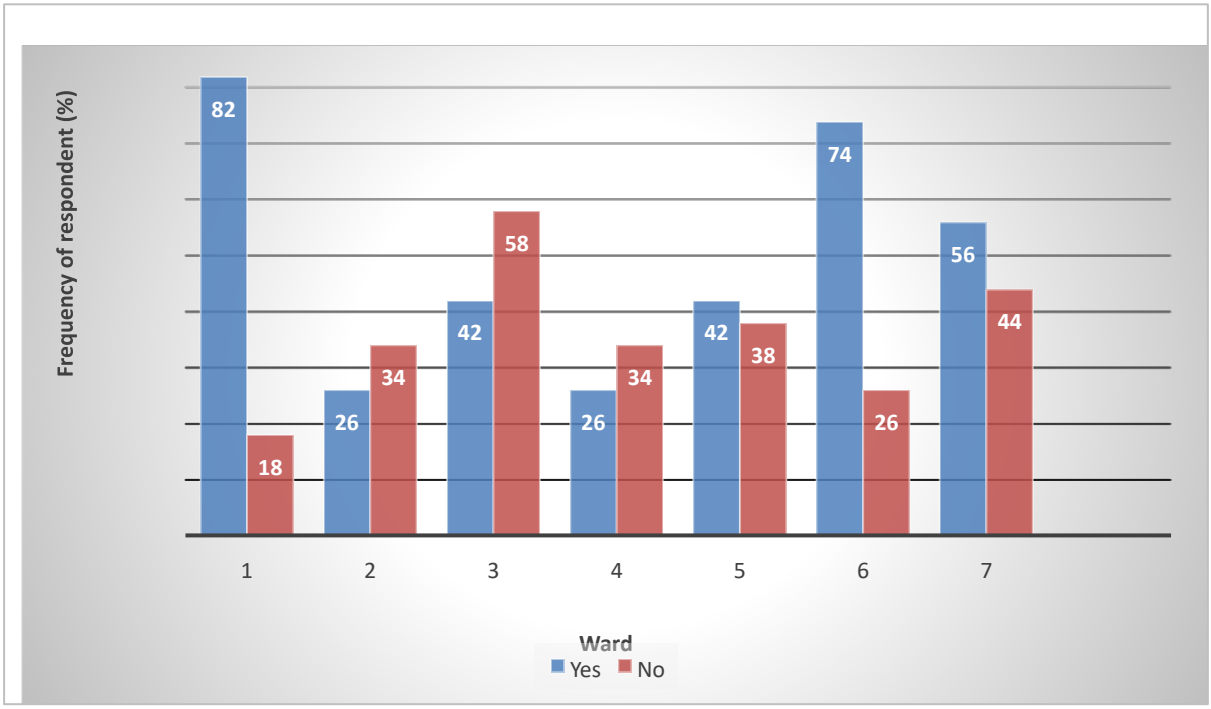


Figure 4.3. Political influence on EG and environmental service delivery in the Endumeni Local Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, 2020 (n=600)

Reddy (2018) also highlighted the negative impact of political factors such as factionalism, abuse of political power and state capture on EG and service delivery in SA. Community members mentioned that councillors and municipal officials *"simply don't care about the environment"* and *"we have not seen them involved in environmental interventions"* (Interview, 6 March 2022, Dundee, SA). Community members also complained about the ineffectiveness of councillors and municipal officials on environmental issues, *"nothing changes, people don't listen to them and continue to degrade the environment"* (Interview, 6 March 2022, Dundee, SA). Hellberg (2014) stated that municipal councils often utilise environmental resources and interventions to obtain political support from communities, this was also evident within the municipal study sites.

In March 2020, there were disparities in political party support between ELM and UDM environmental officials resulting in decision-making conflicts and difficulties in implementing environmental interventions collaboratively. Pasquini et al (2015) found that political contestations between municipal officials can impede environmental institutionalisation and hamper progressive EG when there are changes in political mandates and the discontinuation of environmental interventions in politically unstable LMs. Picketts (2018) and Olver (2018) emphasised the interrelationship between communities, politics and EG, claiming that politics must be closely intertwined with EG.

4.4. Discussion- EG at the political-administrative interface

An analysis was provided of the subtle progression made by the municipalities towards attaining EG and providing environmental services within the political-administrative interface. The political administrative interface in the municipalities often deprioritised EG commitments due to political mandates and interests. The study distinguished multiple ways in which EG was politicised, at times deprioritised and placed in the back seat to political priorities over the 20-year period. EG was shaped by broader political processes and power relations and utilised as a tool in political canvassing and incentivisation, as also evident in studies conducted by Mngoma et al (2011), Bodin (2017) Senosha (2017) and Reddy (2018) in SA and globally.

The novel political ecology diagram formulated in figure 4.1 depicted politicised EG dynamics within the political-administrative interface of the municipalities. We identified political influence in environmental service delivery and EG within the municipal study sites, as evident in studies conducted by Pasquini and Shearing (2014) and Olver (2018). There was a lack of EG prioritisation in comparison to political mandates and a lack of budget for the municipal environmental departments. There were also enabling and disabling influence of politics and power relations on local EG and socioenvironmental injustices in communities. Mukwedeya (2015) and Reddy (2018) also identified political conflict and power inequalities that resulted in unethical political structures and contestations in South African LMs.

As highlighted before, the research indicated how the environmental sector was used as a source of power to control the distribution of environmental incentives and opportunities as apparent in research conducted elsewhere by Mngoma et al (2011), Hellberg (2014), Pasquini et al (2015) and Houdet (2016). EG was only prioritised in certain instances such as to sustain political support in politically affiliated communities and as a source of political incentivisation, this trend has become normative in contemporary LG in SA. The councils politicised environmental meetings, workshops and only supported and attended environmental meetings and workshops when it suited a political agenda, indicating that the environmental sector is utilised as a political tool of persuasion for political control and power. The stability and understanding between the political-administrative interface in LMs are vital for the transition towards EG, however it seems as if the environmental sector and EG is likely to be controlled, dictated and prioritised erratically at the hands of political and power interests in South African LG.

4.5. Conclusion – Taking a back seat?

The study examined the sensitive interrelationship between local EG, politics, power relations and LG within the political-administrative interface by adopting a PEA. It was apparent that EG *'takes a back seat'* to political mandates and interests as expected, however, a unique outlook was also provided of

how the environmental sector is manipulated by political actors and was often utilised as a tool to obtain political support from communities. The study went beyond the normative understanding of politicised local EG and identified and discussed the detailed and closely knitted interactions, relationships and influences of local politics and local stakeholders in the political-administrative interface. There was progression towards the attainment of EG principles, yet EG interventions and resources were mainly used for political purposes such as for political persuasion.

The research contributed towards understanding how interactions within the political-administrative interface in LG within South Africa influences and shapes EG, environmental issues and environmental service provision. The environmental sector provided a unique arena to study the politicisation of municipal governance and patronage. The study also emphasised that politics is intertwined in EG decision making and planning that impacts socioeconomic issues in communities. Municipal service delivery cannot stand alone without the environment and the consequences of side-lining environmental issues in LG have numerous consequences such as a loss of human and animal life, damage to infrastructure and livelihood instability. We suggest that future research should focus on a comparison study of politicised EG in LMs from different geographic areas (rural and urban) in SA and globally with different budgetary and operational factors.

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Disclosure statement

This study is financially sponsored by the National Research Foundation of South Africa, and this may lead to certain content of the study been licenced to the National Research Foundation of South Africa. I have hereby disclosed these interests fully to Taylor & Francis and have a conflict resolution plan for any potential conflicts resulting from this agreement.

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Chapter five

Paper two

Alter-nation? factions, coalitions and environmental governance in the context of contested post-apartheid local state democratisation

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Abstract

Many African states have become electoral democracies, but others are still run by electoral authoritarian regimes, and/or exhibit procedural but not more substantive emancipatory extensions of rights and functions. In such contexts, alternation of power, or electoral turnover, has been recognised as a key signifier of successful democratisation. South Africa's post-apartheid democratic transition was widely lauded as a textbook case, yet declining support for the political incumbent, factionalism, the phenomena of *"state-capture*" and the decline of state-owned entities has raised questions about the promises and challenges of post-African National Congress (ANC) hegemony. Limited research in South Africa (SA) focuses on the influence of political contest — including alternation, coalition formation and factionalism on municipal Environmental Governance (EG). Accordingly, we provide an analysis of political contest in both single and coalition councils between 2016 and 2021 in the of the Endumeni Local (ELM) and uMzinyathi District (UDM) municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), SA, focusing on environmental governance implications. The study was theoretically framed by a broad Political Ecology Approach (PEA). A mixed-method research approach consisting of qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques was utilised. The findings revealed contested politics and instability in both single and coalition councils, regardless of who governs. and this predominantly constrained, but in few instances enabled EG. This complicates narratives of alternation and coalition politics and points to the broader and ongoing need for council policy reform, local council stability, municipal competence and accountability.

Keywords Alternation, Environmental governance, Political ecology, Local municipalities Democratisation

5.1. Situating Municipal Environmental Governance: Democratisation and Municipal Politics

Discussions of democratisation and the political legacy of struggle have been common in relation to the conceptualisation of post-liberation states in Southern Africa and beyond (Bereketeab and (Ed.), 2018). According to Jager and ed., 2015, 9), the concept of democratisation in LG can be described as *"a process of creating democratic institutions and overall democratic citizenship rooted in a democratic political culture"*, while democratic transition refers to stages of state-society-institutional change from authoritarian to more democratic politics and formations. These stages in Southern Africa could be conceptualised as place-specific trajectories and social transformations, shaped and constrained by histories of settler colonialism and the anti-colonial nationalist movements that fought against them, where a range of issues are contested; these include political representation, institutional development and regime incumbency (Kotze, 2018). In this light, many African states have become electoral democracies, but others are still run by electoral authoritarian regimes (Lindberg, 2006), and/or exhibit procedural but not more substantive emancipatory extensions of rights and functions (Croucher, 2002). In such contexts, alternation of power, or electoral turnover between incumbents and opposition, has been recognised as a key signifier of successful democratisation (Lindberg, 2006), but one which has been taken for granted and received limited empirical research (Kotze, 2018).

South Africa's post-apartheid democratic transition was widely lauded as a textbook case (Croucher, 2002), yet declining support for the political incumbent, factionalism,[4] state-capture and the decline of state-owned entities has raised questions about the promises and challenges of post-African National Congress (ANC) hegemony (Grootes, 2023). There is currently a political *"coalition moment"* in SA,[5] a stage of transition from single to coalition councils in LG (Justesen & Schulz Herzenberg, 2018), adding further complexity to a LG milieu where political contest and factionalism are common (Nzo, 2019; Olver, 2018). There are some indications that smaller political parties can have decisive power in coalition formation (Roodt, 2022), and some level of coalition pessimism, given experiences so far in major metropolitans (Grootes, 2023). Yet despite emerging analysis of the kinds of *"coalition governance"* that arise (see Bradshaw & Breakfast, 2019; De Vos, 2021; Roodt, 2022), there is little analysis of alternation and coalition governments and the effect they have on local EG. This is what we will seek to address in this paper.

[4] Zariski (1960:33) conceptualises factionalism as "any intra-party combination, clique, or grouping whose members share a sense of common identity and common purpose and are organized to act collectively — as a distinct bloc within the party – to achieve their goals".

[5] Rancière (2014) describes a political moment as political actions that are inclusive of community interests and that inspire radical political change and transition of political authority and influence.

Municipal governance and its politics are crucial in the context of post-liberation state formation (Kotze, 2018). The Department of Environmental Affairs (2004: 54) defined EG as *"the processes of decision-making involved in controlling and managing the environment and natural resources"*. We explore governance at the local level within the political-administrative interface of both local and district municipalities.[6] Other actors play key roles, including the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), the departments of Environmental Affairs (DEA) and Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), as well as civil society actors and citizens groups (though the latter two are not significantly featured in the case study). We provide an analysis and discussion of both coalition and single council contest in the Endumeni Local Municipality (ELM) and the uMzinyathi District Municipality (UDM) in KZN, SA from 2016 to 2021. We utilise a broad Political Ecology (PE) approach to examine the fragile and contested political environment within the ruling party and between opposition parties that tussle for political control over the council, municipal operations and municipal resources. We demonstrate that in the context of alternation, both single party and coalition councils in LG experience political contest and instability, regardless of who governs. This influence is predominantly negative for local EG, but in some instances can facilitate it.

The findings emphasise the importance of alternation as a political moment and complicate the narrative that coalition governments are by their very nature problematic, even as we critique them. Rather we point to a broader and ongoing need for council policy reform, local council stability (of both single and coalition councils), municipal competence and accountability to take advantage of this moment for the civic good going forward. The paper commences with a literature review; thereafter, the research context and methodology, followed by the research findings, discussion and conclusion.

5.2. Political Parties, Coalition Councils and Factionalism in Municipal Environmental Governance

Political parties are vital in LG globally and influence service delivery and EG to a significant degree, as their mandates determine administration, operations, competence and leadership structures in LMs (see Copus & Erlingsson, 2012; Sampe, 2021). There are a range of studies that illustrate this, including, amongst others, studies conducted by Copus and Erlingsson (2012) in England, Mei and Wang (2017) in China, Bucchianeri (2020) in North America and Sampe (2021) in Indonesia. The literature that covers post-apartheid municipal change is diverse, and this section details some of the key dynamics that have been identified.

[6] According to SALGA (2023), a Local Municipality (LM) can be described as a geographical area that is demarcated by the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDA) of SA and a District Municipality (DM) is a combined demarcation of between four to six LMs.

According to Kotzé (2015), the political culture in post-apartheid SA is multifaceted and the South African constitution encourages a political culture based on human rights and equality. The implementation of a democratic culture is important for political parties to ensure political interest from the public (De Jager & Steenekamp, 2016). However, De Jager and Steenekamp (2016) suggest that two attributes of the sociopolitical environment are particularly salient; first, that identities have been formed from the Apartheid legacy — where the political culture and political awareness develops from the mindset and beliefs of an individual and shape their expectation of governance and secondly, socioeconomic issues affecting impoverished communities such as inequality and poverty remain prevalent. What arises from this is that political socialisation is influenced by opportunities to escape poverty and provide financial sustainability in return for political loyalty on the one hand (De Jager & Steenekamp, 2016), while on the other hand democratic political fatigue occurs with declining quality of governance (see Olver (2017) discussion of this dynamic in the ANC). This is acknowledged to precipitate significant shifts in the political landscape, which have significant effects (Koekemoer, 2017) and while the ANC *"continues to derive power from its role as the party of national liberation, pluralistic party competition is deepening"* (Paret, 2014, 421).

At a local level, democratic LG is supported by the majority of South Africans (Chikulo, 2013), but in a post-apartheid context and a shifting political landscape evidencing declining ANC support, there are a range of issues that affect LG. As with state formation at the national level, it might be understood that local state formation occurs amidst the hybridity of South African post-apartheid formation (see Thakur & Nel, 2021) and articulated with democratic developmentalism, as well as with the Apartheid legacy and newer neopatrimonial tendencies within the state. Regarding municipal politics, this context precipitates forms of coalition governance, factionalism, contestation and in some cases political violence as contestation of municipal politics increases. We cover the available literature on these in turn.

Several studies have documented the challenges associated with both single and coalition councils in SA and their impacts on service delivery and municipal operations (see Mokgosi *et al.,* 2017, Phadi *et al.,* 2018, De Vos, 2021 and Joshua *et al.,* 2022). Present cases of coalitions have indicated fragmented leadership, mistrust and political contest leading to erratic service delivery and LMs placed under administration, hence the focus on LG council coalitions in this study. Council coalitions provide an opportunity for different parties in SA to negotiate and form collective political mandates. Bradshaw and Breakfast (2019) suggested that contested coalitions implement a conflict management and power sharing approach to ensure coalition sustainability. Khumalo and Netswera (2020) claim that coalitions can potentially govern effectively depending on party mandates and political incentives. However, Joshua et al (2022) claim that party differences impact coalition sustainability resulting in inadequate

service delivery. De Vos (2021) critiqued the South African constitution and municipal legislation for possessing inadequate procedures and legislation for coalition councils.

Factions arise from power struggles between party members to obtain resources and political authority of a certain area (Mukwedeya, 2016). Studies conducted globally on factions in LG have confirmed that power struggles over resources and decision making are common not only in SA but also on a global scale indicating the political contest and factions are prevalent in LG throughout the world (see Mei & Wang, 2017 and Bucchianeri, 2020). In SA, the ANC party has a history of factionalism (Olver, 2017). Mukwedeya (2015) and Olver (2018) revealed how intraparty factionalism in the ANC structures negatively influenced local EG. Intraparty factionalism occurs within the same political party and interparty factionalism occurs between two or more political parties (Kotze, 2018). Political elites in SA possess authority of choosing election candidates for local council positions, this process leads to intraparty factions based on personal party preferences (Kotze, 2018). Gatekeeper politics has also become prevalent in LG, where political leaders in authoritative positions dictate the access to and distribution of state resources that contribute to crony capitalism and the rise of intraparty factions (Beresford, 2015). Reddy (2018) emphasised that LMs governed by faction-based councils prioritise political mandates over service delivery and environmental priorities.

When the instrumental benefits of a democracy are not achieved, protest action is common, especially in informal and township settlements in SA (Dawson, 2014). Onwuegbuchulam (2021) emphasised that political violence is also experienced in local communities between supporters of different political parties, especially during election campaigns. Political violence also occurs within the same political party through internal political factions (Cooper, 2015). The political killings of political leaders and influential community politicians have also increased and are linked to political power struggles and access to state opportunities, as well as changing political leadership structures (Onwuegbuchulam, 2021).

Finally, in democratic SA, there is evidence that political dynamics impact environmental health issues in townships and informal settlements. For instance, Olver (2018) found that environmental issues were not prioritised in communities and there were environmental injustices from factional battles within the Nelson Mandela Bay council. Nzo (2019:3) also identified political conflict between local councilors and regional ANC leadership in the Kalahari LM, *"there are tensions between representing the interests of the ANC regional party, national government priorities and communities"*. According to Bruce (2014) and Olver (2017), local councilors are forced to abide by the rules of powerful elites in the private sector or face the consequences of replacement, as there are power structures beyond the council administration that decide political power structures in LG.

The use of the PEA in local politicised EG studies in SA is lacking; however, there are studies that have utilised aspects of the PEA such as political conflict, power struggles and environmental injustices (see Pasquini & Shearing, 2014; Olver, 2018). We utilised the PEA as a theoretical lens to address the literature deficiency and provide an in-depth analysis of how local contested politics and power dynamics influence local EG in SA. Environmental politics is a sub-discipline of the PEA and in this research focuses on how LG and communities interact politically with the environment. With an understanding of this literature in mind, we turn specifically to municipal EG in our case study context.

5.3. Context and Methodology

SA is a politically diverse country with a history of political contest and factionalist tendencies, and while the ANC has maintained its hegemony, pluralistic party competition has deepened (Paret, 2014). Since the 1994 democratic elections, the

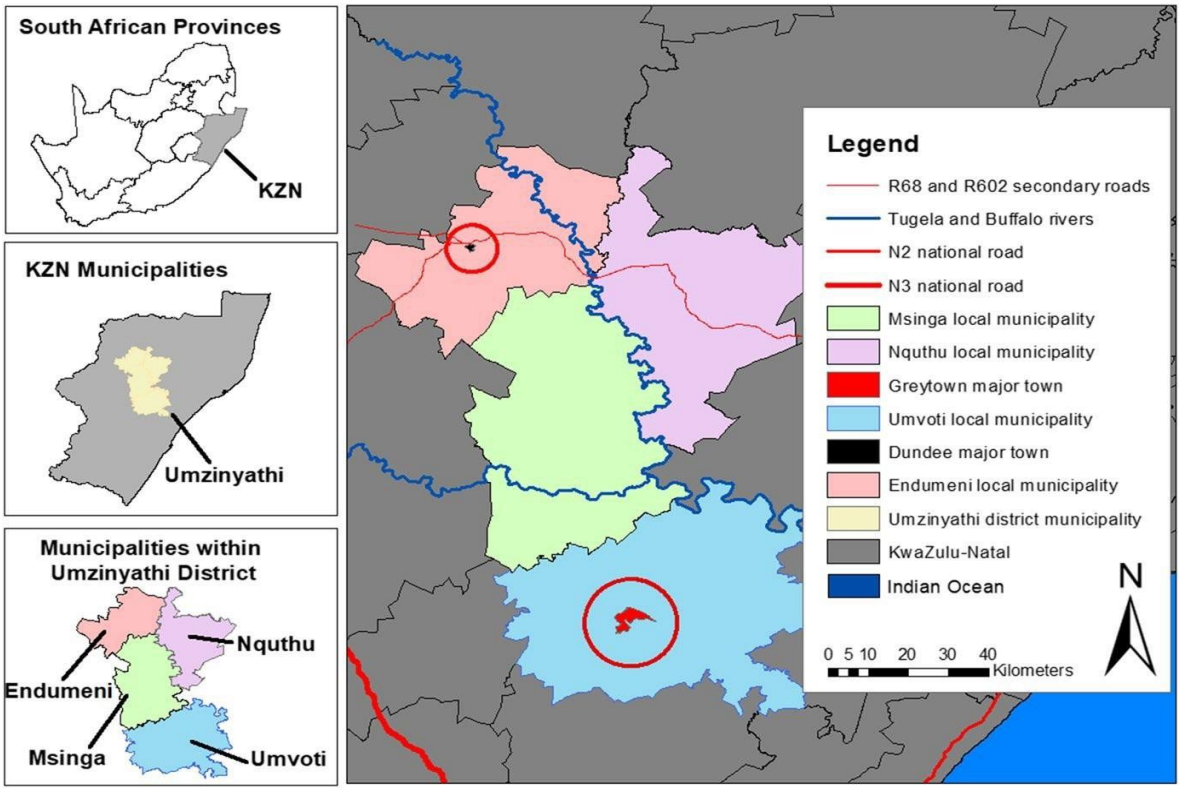


Figure 5.1: The study site map

ANC had governed the majority of LMs in SA, even though factionalism increased, especially in the KZN province (De Jager 2015). Contemporary South African politics is embroiled with contest and factionalism between and within political parties. Intra and inter party factions are apparent in all scales of government in SA, ranging from the national level between party leaders, to regional factional battles between opposition parties and both intra and inter party factions at the local scale for council positions (Olver, 2018). The rise in political contest in the KZN province during the last decade has resulted in

increased cases of political killings and assassinations between and within political parties for political and municipal leadership positions (De Haas, 2016; Kotze, 2018). Therefore, the chosen municipal case study sites are located in KZN and have also experienced instances of political contests, factionalism and alleged assassination attempts.

After declines in ANC support in the 2016 and 2021 local elections, there was an associated increase in coalition councils. Local council coalitions have been described as *"marriages of inconvenience"* (Booysen and (Ed.), 2021,1) and are relatively new to LG in SA. Major political parties in SA are now applying numerous coalition strategies and alliances with different minority parties to suit their political agenda such as voting for minority party councillors to hold positions of responsibility in councils and creating new and often temporary alliances (Grootes, 2023). Jager and ed. (2015) asserted that smaller political parties in SA influence decision-making and collaboration in coalition councils. Turning to the case study municipalities, a contested municipal politics exemplifies tensions faced elsewhere in the country at the current juncture (Figure 5.1).

The UDM is a district municipality located in the North-West of the KZN province in SA. The four LMs in the UDM are the Umvoti, Endumeni, Msinga and Nquthu LMs. The major towns are Dundee and Greytown and the main economic and administrative activities are tourism and agriculture. The seat of the UDM is located in Dundee (IDP 2019/20). Dundee also accommodates all the major departmental and governmental headquarters for the district. The UDM is predominately rural populated with agriculture being the main contributor to community livelihoods. The UDM is regarded as one of the most impoverished DMs in KZN with diverse socioeconomic issues. The topography of the UDM varies from grasslands, wetlands and deep river valleys to mountains, hills and savanna (IDP 2019/20). The main towns are Dundee, Glencoe and Wasbank. The ELM accommodates several departmental and regional government offices and is popular for its high standards of education and schooling facilities (IDP 2019/20). The population is predominantly urbanised or situated on commercial farms. Over 60% of the population is youth with the majority of youth in a state of economic inactiveness, hence the ELM is struggling with a huge percentage of youth unemployment (IDP 2019/20).

During different election periods from 2000 to 2021, the ELM and UDM were governed interchangeably by the ANC and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) with few instances of an IFP, Democratic Alliance (DA) and Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) coalition council. This interchangeable governance and political leadership contributed towards political contest and factions, as different ward councillors, ward committees and stakeholders abided to different political mandates. There have been previous instances of intra and inter party factions in the ELM and UDM that resulted in collapsed councils and the municipalities been placed under administration, impacting EG by contributing towards a lack of decision making and the misuse of environmental resources. Currently, after the 2021

local elections, the ELM is governed by an IFP, DA and Abantu Batho Congress (ABC) coalition and most of the council seats in the UDM belong to the IFP.

The research methodology was directed by a pragmatic research philosophy. A pragmatic methodology allowed for a flexible research approach that included diverse data collection techniques and strategies. We utilised both inductive and deductive research approaches and a mixed method approach that included both qualitative and non-statistical quantitative methods. The qualitative methods consisted of unstructured and structured direct observation, focus groups, meetings and workshops, as well as in-depth formal and informal key informant interviews and community-based interventions. The quantitative method comprised of a community questionnaire survey that was administered to a total of 600 respondents within all seven wards of the ELM. The community questionnaire was administered using a stratified sampling technique.

The research findings were obtained from diverse stakeholders that possessed valuable information on contested local governance, environmental-based service delivery and EG. We applied purposive and snowball sampling to choose relevant stakeholders as municipal officials, government department officials, municipal councillors, politicians, ward committee members, the private sector, civil society and targeted impoverished communities. We applied a Grounded Theory (GT) research strategy that resulted in continuous and rigorous data collection to the point of data saturation and theory formation. Data saturation was achieved by implementing a recursive sampling process for stakeholder interviews. Secondary data was also obtained and integrated for a contextual and theoretical perspective of the research problem. The research findings were presented and analysed thematically using a GT approach, graphs and thematic coding.

5.4.Politically contested EG in the Endumeni and uMzinyathi Municipalities

In this section, we identify and discuss the effects of political contest and instability on local EG with the study sites.

5.4.1. The hostile emergence of political contest (2016–2019)

During the period between 2016 and 2019, the municipalities experienced political contestations between political parties, and this influenced EG-based decision making, and access to environmental resources and interventions, as well as environmental budget availability and the procurement of environmental based resources and services. In the 2016 South African LG elections, the political parties of the IFP, DA and the EFF formed a coalition council in the UDM and ELM. This was unprecedented as the ANC consistently governed the UDM and ELM after the Apartheid regime.

According to ELM and UDM officials, *"the IFP, DA and EFF coalition resulted in political and leadership conflict in both the ELM and UDM councils"* (Interview, 15 March 2022, Dundee, SA). The coalition council was fragmented, and council meetings were disrupted by disagreements and a lack of consensus between councillors. The main reason for the disruption of council meetings was that even though the ANC councillors were outnumbered in the ELM and UDM councils*, "they opposed the decisions made by the coalition"* (Interview, 8 April 2022, Dundee, SA) The councils' disagreements and political instability largely influenced EG and municipal operations negatively, as consensus on capital and operational budget, procurement and resource allocations could not be achieved.

In 2017, the ELM was placed under administration by the department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) after there was a case of attempted murder and political in-fighting within the council. An ELM official emphasised that *"when there is political conflict in a municipality, all local forums and war rooms are impacted and environmental issues are not discussed, only political strategies"* (Interview, 21 June 2021, Dundee, SA) According to an ELM official, *"the former mayor of the ELM was accused of plotting to assassinate the former speaker, as they belonged to the same party and the reasoning behind the accused assassination was alleged to be dodgy tender contracts"* (Interview, 12 May 2020, Dundee, SA). Bruce (2014) and Reddy (2018) found that fraud and corruption allegations in South African LMs resulted in decreased community trust in LG. This was similar in the ELM, as communities were striking, municipal operations were affected, and municipal employees were left under-resourced with fragmented leadership. An ELM official claimed that *"a contested municipal environment results in a backlog of service delivery and this impacts communities severely"* (Interview, 12 June 2020, Dundee, SA).

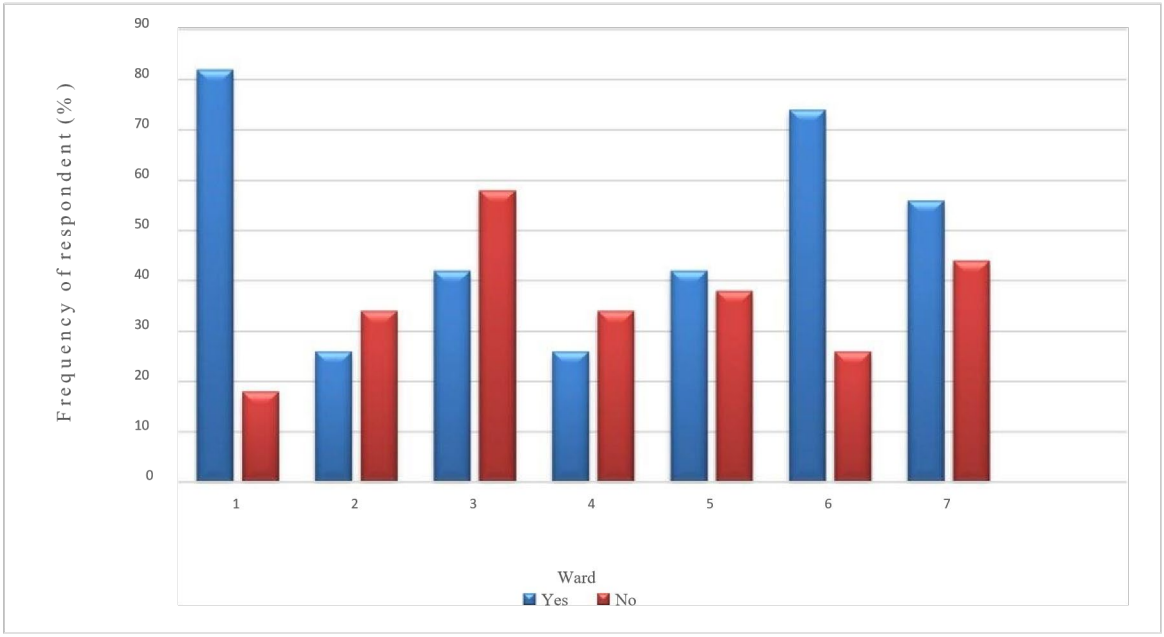


Figure 5.2: Contested council influence on EG in the Endumeni municipality, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, 2020.

The accused murder plot and in-fighting between the mayor and speaker resulted in the suspension of their party memberships and the ELM council was forced to elect a new speaker and mayor in 2018. The appointments of the new mayor and speaker were infested with internal betrayal by a councillor that belonged to the coalition council and voted against the mandate of his political party. An ELM official stated that *"the councillor voted for the speakers position from the opposing party in exchange for the position of mayor"* (Interview, 5 February 2021, Dundee, SA). This angered his political party, and the new mayor was reprimanded, his political membership was suspended, and he was removed from the mayor's position. Kotze (2018) also found that the choosing of council positions in LMs leads to intraparty factions based on personal preferences within the party.

The constant power struggle between different political parties in the municipal councils impacted EG mandates such as delays in environmental service delivery. The contested political power struggle within the municipal councils also impacted on the procurement of resources, the approval of environmental interventions and the recruitment of qualified environmental staff. The severity of this situation was emphasised by an ELM official, *"when there is political conflict, decision making and approvals are neglected, not only for the environmental department but other departments within the municipality"* (Interview, 12 November 2020, Dundee, SA). Olver (2018) also highlighted the deprioritising of environmental responsibilities by council instability.

The findings in Figure 5.2 indicated that majority of community respondents from wards (1,5,6,7) agreed that political contest in the council influences EG within their wards. The respondents claim, *"that council decision-making and the work ethic of officials impacted environmental issues"* (Interview, 23 June 2020, Dundee, SA). Some respondents also complained that *"political bias from councillors exists in certain areas of the wards that are purposively exposed to environmental interventions more than opposition areas"* (Interview, 23 June 2020, Dundee, SA). Most community respondents from wards 2, 3 and 5, felt that the council and municipal officials have no direct influence on EG, claiming *"that even when the council and officials provide environmental awareness, some of us do not listen and continue to degrade the environment"* (Interview, 23 June 2020, Dundee, SA). The respondents also emphasised that *"the environment is used as a political campaigning tool between contested parties, and this causes conflict within the community"* (Interview, 23 June 2020, Dundee, SA).

The political contest between community supporters from opposing parties also influenced EG in the municipalities. An ELM official stated that *"community members that supported different political parties practiced unsustainable environmental practices by illegally dumping and burning waste, as well as damaging community parks and gardens"* (Interview, 24 August 2020, Dundee, SA). It was also evident that the coalition council approved environmental interventions for their governing wards and neglected wards governed by the opposition resulting in community conflict. An ELM official claimed that *"environmental interventions were converted into campaigning tools by the local politicians to obtain additional political support resulting in community conflict"* (Interview, 24 August 2020, Dundee, SA). Onwuegbuchulam (2021) also identified political contest in local communities between supporters of different parties, especially during election campaigns.

5.4.2. The political transition in 2019 to 2020: from coalition to single governance in the ELM

The political transition in the ELM commenced at the beginning of 2019 after the former ELM mayor was suspended and a by-election was planned for ELM ward 3. An ELM councillor stated, *"the former mayor decided to defy orders by the IFP and acted on personal interests, which led to the termination of his membership"* (Interview, 19 August 2021, Dundee, SA). The ward 3 by-election took place in May 2019, and the ANC won the ward. The ward 3 council seat stabilised the ELM, positively impacting on the broader service delivery and environmental priorities of the ELM. An ELM official claimed that *"the new council adopted a different list of priorities that focused more on EG issues"* (Interview, 19 August 2021, Dundee, SA). The ANC governed 7 of the 13 ELM council seats. However, another byelection in ward 7 of the ELM was confirmed when a DA councillor opted to resign and relocate for personal reasons.

The ward 7 by-election was conducted in June 2019. The ANC won again. An ANC official stated that *"the ANC implemented numerous strategies to win ward 7"* (Interview, 8 September 2021, Dundee, SA). An alleged politically motivated plan was implemented by ANC councillors that focused on environmental interventions in ward 7. An ANC politician stated that *"the by-election was intensely contested by three major political rival parties- The ANC, DA and IFP and the ANC won ward 7 by over 600 votes"* (Interview, 8 September 2021, Dundee, SA). This resulted in a change of the ELM council structure. The ANC now controlled 8 of the 13 ELM council seats and COGTA decided to place the municipality off administration. After the ELM coalition administration was weakened in 2019, the ANC administration allegedly implemented a *"purge"* of all unlawful and unqualified employees that were hired by the previous administration as this was alleged to be affecting the standard of service delivery and EG in the ELM. A sense of political stability was restored, and the council could make decisions on EG issues. However, the ELM council still consisted of IFP, DA and EFF councillors.

5.4.3. Internal political contestations in 2020—The cracks within the ruling party in Endumeni

The initial governance by the ANC council in the ELM seemed promising, however, in 2020 cracks in the administration were apparent and a factional battle occurred within the ANC council. An ELM official stated, *"the faction consisted of two sides, the mayors' allies, and the speakers allies"* (Interview, 8 September 2021, Dundee, SA). Studies conducted by Mukwedeya (2015) and Olver (2018) revealed how intraparty factionalism in ANC structures negatively influences local EG in SA. The ANC council in the ELM engaged in contested political battles for resources and power. Mukwedeya (2016) also found that factions arise from power struggles between party members to obtain resources and political authority of a certain area.

The ANC council gradually shifted their priorities towards a more power-hungry mindset that focused more on the control over municipal resources, incentives and opportunities. There were disagreements in the ANC council over the privatisation of the ELM landfill site. It was alleged that the ruling party faction wanted to award the landfill site contract based on their political agenda. An ELM official claimed that internal factions within the ruling party affected the environmental sector as *"funds were channelled into political mandates instead of environmental priorities"* (Interview, 12 September 2021, Dundee, SA). There was also tension in the municipal workplace between workers from the ruling party, as stated by an ELM official, *"the current council is not good, they are not employing enough permanent workers, they are misusing the budget"* (Interview, 12 September 2021, Dundee, SA).

The use of environmental resources for political reasons was also apparent in the ELM. The ANC councillors provided opportunities for specific community members such as employment opportunities

for community members from the mayor's ward. This led to protest action by community members from the deputy mayors ward and even threats to burn municipal buildings, *"this is unfair, we will burn the municipality, they are playing with us"* (Interview, 4 March 2021, Dundee, SA). It was also evident that certain comrades were angered by temporary employment opportunities, *"I worked hard for the ANC, yet other comrades are rewarded"* (Interview, 4 March 2021, Dundee, SA). The intraparty factions in the ELM resulted in workplace disobedience and an increased workload for workers that supported different political factions. It seemed as if factionalism acted as a cancer within the ANC and conflict arose for political power that had knock-on implications on EG in the ELM.

5.4.4. The political transition in 2021: from single back to coalition governance in the ELM

The 2021 local elections resulted in most KZN LMs governed solely by the IFP or an IFP led coalition council. The ANC failed to regain council leadership in the ELM, as an IFP, DA and ABC coalition council formed the leadership structure. A former ANC councillor claimed that infighting and intraparty factions in the local ANC branches resulted in the opposition parties taking control of the municipality, "we must blame ourselves, we could not agree, comrades fought during election meetings" (Interview, 10 December 2021, Dundee, SA). An ANC member emphasised that factions are dividing the party and contributing to the loss of elections, "we need to work together, fighting for power and control must stop" (Interview, 10 December 2021, Dundee, SA).

The new coalition council in the ELM has been stable and there are currently no instances of political contestation or instability. Presently, EG is prioritised by the new council, a newly elected councillor stated, *"people must learn to live in a clean and healthy environment, we want Endumeni to be an environmentally friendly municipality"* (Interview, 9 January 2022, Dundee, SA). This seems promising, however judging from the actions of previous coalitions, the occurrence of political contest and instability is likely to occur again as recently evident in numerous coalition councils in SA (see Booysen and (Ed.)., 2021, Roodt, 2022).

5.4.5. The effects of contested local politics on EG in Endumeni and uMzinyathi

We now list and discuss five EG factors that were impacted by contested local politics and factionalism in the ELM and UDM during 2016–2021.

5.4.5.1. The political contest between different councils and the prioritising of environmental services for specific community wards

The different political agendas between the UDM and ELM resulted in conflict between the councils and administrations of the municipalities. The conflict affected environmental service delivery and EG,

as there is a fragile working relationship and political rivalry between the councils. An ELM official claimed that *"information about environmental interventions is rarely provided to the ELM by the UDM"* (Interview, 11 March 2021, Dundee, SA). The municipalities implemented collaborative environmental interventions in the past and there was conflict between officials and councillors regarding the recruitment of politically inclined employees and the location of environmental interventions.

The municipalities adopted different political mandates and priorities. A relevant example of political contest in the municipalities was the shortage of water in the ELM. An ELM official claimed that this was caused by *"the municipalities not agreeing to political ideologies"* (Interview, 11 March 2021, Dundee, SA). The UDM only assisted communities that supported their ruling party. This may seem unethical; however, as stated by an ELM official *"if it is your family member or if you are in that situation, it seems ethical"* (Interview, 11 March 2021, Dundee, SA). The factors of political support and geographical location were influential factors in communities receiving environmental services from the municipalities, these aspects of the PEA were also identified by Krupa and Burch (2011) and Hansen (2014).

The municipalities often serviced communities that were politically loyal and provided inadequate environmental services to opposition governed communities. A UDM official stated, *"the services offered in politically loyal communities ensures that community members are satisfied, and their votes were meaningful to the council"* (Interview, 13 March 2021, Dundee, SA). The timeframe of environmental service provision in community wards also varied depending on the political leadership of the wards. An ELM official claimed that *"the political strategy of withholding environmental services is applied to punish the opposition communities for voting for the opposition"* (Interview, 13 March 2021, Dundee, SA). It was also apparent that councillors directly instructed municipal officials to provide services within their wards. In most instances, municipal officials were hired by councillors, therefore they were expected to abide by council instructions and ensure community complaints are attended to timeously. An ELM official stated that *"officials connected to the council perform the role of municipal soldiers that are controlled by councillor preferences"* (Interview, 13 March 2021, Dundee, SA).

5.4.5.2. The implementation of environmental interventions in favoured communities that supported the ruling party

Environmental interventions were more frequently implemented in communities that were governed by the ruling party as a reward for their support. The municipal councils were involved in planning and implementing environmental interventions. An ELM official emphasised that *"the council supports sector-funded interventions because they get to be in the forefront of recruitment and planning stages*

of the interventions" (Interview, 14 March 2021, Dundee, SA). The environmental department managers from the municipalities were forced to target certain locations within communities for the implementation of environmental interventions. An ELM official stated that *"the ruling council and community members were seen wearing political attire and councillors claimed that environmental interventions are coordinated by the ruling political party"* (Interview, 13 March 2021, Dundee, SA). However, the environmental interventions were initiated by external stakeholders. This occurrence created tension between communities as interventions were not fairly and equally implemented in all communities. The incentives and opportunities from environmental interventions such as employment opportunities were also prioritised for community members that supported the ruling party.

5.4.5.3. Environmental contestations between council members and municipal officials that support different political factions

The municipal councils and officials faced challenges in environmental-based decision-making due to different factions in the municipalities. In 2020, the ANC possessed majority of the council seats in the ELM and attempted to recruit municipal workers that supported the ANC. The municipal workers that were hired by the previous opposition council proved difficult to work and disobeyed instructions from the ANC council. An ELM official stated that *"the council controls the municipal officials like puppets because of job security and access to municipal benefits"* (Interview, 28 April 2021, Dundee, SA). An ELM official claimed that the council allegedly *"disapproved additional budget for his department because he supports a different faction"* (Interview, 28 April 2021, Dundee, SA), indicating that political differences contribute to budget accessibility. The occurrence of contested political dynamics between the council and officials also contributed to environmental service delivery delays and a lack of environmental resource procurement.

The municipalities are responsible for different sectors of environmental service delivery, for example the UDM is mandated to manage water and sanitation facilities, and the ELM is responsible for refuse removal. There is usually a lack of communication between the councils and managers from the municipalities. An ELM official emphasised that *"environmental service responsibilities between the councils and officials are usually fragmented and lacking"* (Interview, 28 April 2021, Dundee, SA). There are continuous service delivery accusations between the municipalities, and this is common between district and LMs that are governed by different political parties in SA and globally (see Bawa, 2011; Pasquini & Shearing, 2014; Mukwedeya, 2016; Olver, 2018).

5.4.5.4. Labour dynamics and insufficient resources in a contested political environment

There were several instances of labour challenges and insufficient environmental resources in the municipalities. An ELM official stated that it is challenging to achieve environmental service delivery

and EG goals because of *"political in-fighting and conflict"* (Interview, 28 April 2021, Dundee, SA). A UDM official complained that there was a lack of general workers and machinery to complete duties in the environmental sector, *"especially during periods of political contest and council instability"* (Interview, 28 April 2021, Dundee, SA). The municipalities were reliant on external stakeholders for funding environmental resources. The councils welcomed environmental-based interventions from external stakeholders but controlled the recruitment of workers and the distribution of environmental resources. This places severe pressure on environmental officials to perform within a resource deficient and politically contested workplace environment.

There were also political contestations between permanent municipal workers in the municipalities. The political tension between municipal workers impacted daily operations, as disagreements and unequal distribution of tasks were common in the environmental department of the municipalities. Municipal workers brought political issues into the workplace, impacting environmental service delivery, as confirmed by an ELM official, *"workers participate in political duties and take leave to campaign, and this impacts service delivery provision"*. (Interview, 28 April 2021, Dundee, SA). The officials favoured general workers that supported their political party or faction and would allegedly target workers that belonged to another political party or faction. The councils also attempted to suspend and remove opposition officials and allegedly lured workers into providing implicating information, *"councillors approached us and offered better salaries if we provided information about certain officials"* (Interview, 28 April 2021, Dundee, SA). Nzo (2019) also found that factional mandates are implemented when political leadership changes and this results in the removal of permanent municipal workers that were recruited by the previous council or dominant faction.

5.4.5.5. Political priorities over EG mandates in a contested political environment

Both municipal councils prioritised political related activities ahead of environmental issues. The municipal budget for the environmental departments was usually decreased to accommodate salaries and political events, especially during political contests. The contested political rivalries in the municipalities also influenced environmental-based procurement and it was challenging to address environmental issues effectively within a contested political environment. The municipal managers and officials continuously changed. This was confirmed by an ELM official stating that *"government environmental departments struggled to form partnerships with municipal stakeholders in a politically contested environment"* (Interview, 28 April 2021, Dundee, SA). A politically unstable municipal environment was challenging for external stakeholders to establish proper functioning environmental interventions and to assist the municipalities in attaining effective EG, as political mandates were often prioritised. An experienced municipal official provided a bleak reality of the political climate in LG, *"it doesn't matter about which party governs, they all have the same culture and mindset – win power,*

govern efficiently for a year or two then become corrupt" (Interview, 28 April 2021, Dundee, SA). Hopefully there will be a more positive reality of LG in the near future in SA.

5.5. Discussion: Local political contestations and the future implications on local EG in SA

The findings revealed that significant political moments from coalition to single councils and political contestations disproportionally influenced EG. The occurrence of political council contests, factional power battles and community injustices were directly linked to the access to environmental resources, services and opportunities. The application of a broad PEA assisted in providing a linkage and understanding between the environment, politics and LG. The findings indicated that the occurrence of contested local councils and factionalism was ostensibly normative in the municipal study sites and there were consequential influences on EG. In both municipalities, environmental opportunities and environmental services were utilised by the councils as a political resource to reward community supporters and punish opposition supporters. Political contestations in the municipalities disproportionally influenced EG and environmental service delivery, indicating that even within a political and coalition moment in SA, it does not matter who governs, both coalition and single councils experience political instability, contest and factionalism.

These findings complicate the narrative that coalition governments are by their very nature problematic, even as we critique them. The findings also suggested that in a context of continued post-Apartheid local state formation, democratisation plays out in the context of increasing political contestation and factionalism that negatively affects/constrains progress towards achieving effective and consistent EG. We point to a broader and ongoing need for council policy reform, local council stability (of both single and coalition councils), municipal competence and accountability to take advantage of this moment for the civic good going forward. Specifically, until more horizontal, community led arrangements are fostered, the substitution of faltering coalitions for single party governance will now significantly alter top-down governance arrangement and hinder the progress towards local state democratisation and EG.

The contested council battles and factionalist relationships also both enabled and restricted the implementation of environmental policies, strategies and interventions. Jager and ed. (2015) and Olver (2018) emphasised that the South African constitution prioritises environmental health and service delivery, however certain community wards in the ELM and UDM were only prioritised for environmental services. This mindset is common in most municipalities in SA, as political parties use environmental services and environmental resources as persuasion tools in times of contest and instability. There was a vicious cycle of different councils obtaining political and administrative power, abusing state resources and not facing accountable / legal actions.

The study provided an understanding towards the role of political contest and political moments on local state formation and democratisation as well as the effects on local EG in SA, especially with the increasing transition towards coalition councils, as evident in studies conducted by Mokgosi et al (2017), Bradshaw and Breakfast (2019) and De Vos (2021). There have been attempts by political parties such as the DA and IFP to strengthen coalition agreements in LG through democratic alliances, however time will only reveal the effectiveness of such democratic-based coalition agreements (see Roodt, 2022). The findings are applicable to LMs globally in assessing how political contestations and factionalist tendencies enable or restrict the progression towards environmental sustainability at the local scale within a democratic state.

Similar findings were also evident in democratic states in both the global north and south such as India (Panneerselvam, 2021), Brazil (Figueiredo, 2023), Belgium (De Winter, 2019) and the USA (Bucchianeri, 2020). The presence of coalition governments is more common in democratic states and as democracy expands throughout the world, and while alternation and opposition victories must be recognised as an expression of both freedom and fairness of electoral democracy, more substantive gains and outcomes can be slow to mature (Lindberg, 2006).

While SA does not reflect trends of electoral authoritarianism (Kotze, 2018), regime change (turnover) may not necessarily translate into change in regime type. This is relevant because coalition governments are predicted to become more common in Africa. The recurring pattern of coalitions globally indicate initial political instability and contest between political parties and extensive negotiation and power sharing strategies in alternating power situations. However, stringent coalition policies and regulations are assisting in promoting coalition sustainability for established democratic states, especially in the global north and it is here that SA and other developing states are lacking, especially at the local level, of which requires urgent government intervention.

5.6. Conclusion— Does It Matter Who Governs?

There was a hostile emergence of political contest and instability in the ELM and UDM that affected EG and the provision of environmental services. The current political moment in SA has shifted LG towards a transition to coalition-based LG. Within the study sites, the coalition council was in a state of contest, and this destabilised municipal operations. However, even with a shift from a coalition council to a single council, intra-party factions within the ruling party also destabilised operations at the ELM. After the 2021 local elections, the ELM council was comprised of another coalition and there are still signs of contest, indicating that it does not matter who governs, political contest occurred within both

coalition and single councils and policy and legislation on coalition agreements are currently not effective in SA. We suggest that council legislation and policies require review and amendments in SA, especially regarding the formation of power distribution within coalition councils.

The findings are important for understanding the current alternating power structure in South African LG and provides a theoretical foundation, as well as a better understanding of coalition councils in LMs, especially in the local environmental sector. The paper provides a theoretical contribution towards understanding the influence of alternation, coalitions, council instability and factionalism on local EG. With the upcoming 2024 LG elections nearing in SA, this paper provides policy makers, consultants, civil society, the public and private sectors a crucial understanding and insight of the sensitive dynamics associated with power alternation in both coalition and single council contest and the consequences on local EG.

The study contributed towards a novel understanding of the effects of political moments, alternation and council contest on local state formation, democratisation and EG in SA. On a broader context, the study focused on understanding the effects of political contestations on local EG through empirical research and can be applied and compared to LMs globally. We suggest research be conducted on the influence of contested councils, alternation of power and factionalism on EG in other LMs globally, as well as the identification and discussion of EG differences and similarities between LMs from the global south and north. We also recommend a comparison study of LMs that experience political contest from diverse geographical regions in SA and globally to better understand the implications and influence of alternating coalition and single councils on a local state formation, democratisation and
EG.

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Data Availability The data utilized for this paper is available at request from the authors.

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Chapter six

Paper three

"We are political soldiers of the council" – The moral economy of neopatrimonialism and 'cadre deployment' in municipal environmental governance in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa

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ABSTRACT: Political dynamics and power relations are intertwined with Local Governance (LG) operations in both the global North and South. A characteristic of political influence is the occurrence of cadre deployment through the process of Neopatrimonialism of which has implications on state-party relations. In South Africa (SA) political parties such as the African National Congress (ANC) often practice and support neopatrimonialism, especially in Local Municipalities (LMs). Neopatrimonial relationships impact LMs by influencing political leadership, the access to resources and the recruitment of human capital. Neopatrimonialism also affects local Environmental Governance (EG) by impacting environmental service provision, environmental-based opportunities and recruitment. There is insufficient research in SA that focuses on the influence of neopatrimonial relationships on local EG. We examine and discuss neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment between the political elite and municipal officials in the Endumeni local and uMzinyathi district municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), SA. We apply aspects from a utilitarian Moral Economy Approach (MEA) to present a non-normative moral perspective of neopatrimonial relationships and cadre deployment. A mixed-methods approach was utilised. The findings revealed that neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment often influenced local EG negatively, however, neopatrimonial relationships were sometimes enabling of environmental governance and justified by respondents from a utilitarian redistribution standpoint based on providing livelihood support to competent and impoverished cadres from the majority of the previously disadvantaged people of SA. Rather than liberal notions that neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment represent mere moral failings or underdeveloped citizenship, a moral economy approach suggests that, in contrast to 'grand' corruption, petty forms of patronage are embedded in moral economies of survival and relationships of 'nested dependence' that are more structural – persisting across political party orders and supported by their respective voters.

Key words: Neopatrimonialism, environmental governance, cadre, political elites, moral economy

6.1. Introduction

Neopatrimonial relationships between political elites and political cadres have impacted numerous government systems globally by influencing political leadership and governance decisions (Von Soest 2010, Lodge 2014, Swanepoel 2022). Hicken (2011) and Nzo (2019) described neopatrimonial relationships as political elites utilising and exchanging state resources with comrades and general members of the public for political support to maintain political rule and authority. Francisco (2010,1) described neopatrimonialism as *"the vertical distribution of resources that gave rise to patron-client networks based around a powerful individual or party"*. Neopatrimonialism is related to patronage politics, the control of and access to power and authority, corruption and the incentivisation of comrades. Neopatrimonial relationships impact Local Government (LG) globally (see Moti 2019, Demmelhuber *et al.,* 2020, Izquierdo-Brichs 2021). Neopatrimonialism also influences the local Environmental Governance (EG) by impacting environmental service provision, access to environmental opportunities and recruitment (Benit-Gbaffou 2011, Olver 2017, Nzo 2019). Neopatrimonialism encompasses the concepts of patronage, corruption, clientelism and professionalism (Lodge 2014).

The occurrence of neopatrimonialism in South African LG is entrenched in LG and party politics literature. Some scholars debate that neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment is detrimental to LG (see Von Soest 2010, Lodge 2014 and Nzo 2019) whilst (Sebudubudu 2008 and Benit-Gbaffou 2011 and Mlambo 2023) claim that neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment in LG is inevitable based on the consequences of Apartheid-based labour dynamics and skills shortages. Mlambo (2023,6) describes cadre deployment as *"the appointment by a government governing party of a loyalist member(s) in an organization and bringing that institution under the party's control rather than the state".* The African National Congress (ANC) adopted the cadre deployment policy as a model to tactically appoint loyal party members in employment positions to implement policies and political mandates of the party (Tshishonga 2014). Cadre deployment does not always result in effective service delivery and professionalism in the public sector, especially when incompetent cadres are appointed (Swanepoel 2022, Zulu *et al.,* 2022). Within the last decade competency, transparency and effectiveness in South African LG have decreased, with some scholars such as Kaizer (2022) and Mlambo (2023) attributing this to the abuse of the cadre deployment policy by the ANC and even some political parties such as the Democratic alliance (DA) calling for the illegality of cadre deployment in parliament.

Current literature in SA indicates research conducted on cadre deployment and neopatrimonialism in LG (see Kaizer 2022, Swanepoel 2022, Zulu *et al.,* 2022 and Mlambo 2023) however, there is insufficient research that focuses exclusively on the influence of neopatrimonial relationships and cadre deployment on local EG in SA. We utilise aspects from the Moral Economy Approach (MEA) (Sayer 2015) to present a moral perspective of neopatrimonial relationships in municipal EG. ME approaches

in African studies have explored the 'embedded character of everyday economic realities' and highlight the importance of analysing *"the prevailing moral interpretations, expectations, and contestations concerning forms of economic distribution and redistribution in particular ethnographic settings on the continent"* (Salverda *et al.,* 2024, 125). This has included examination of the entire range of (subjectively) 'good' to 'bad' economic practices; including the morals of what some might call immoral, bad actors (Wiegratz 2016), yet study of political character of a given moral economy remains very limited (Wiegratz 2016).

This paper thus focuses on neopatrimonial relationships between the political elite such as councillors and municipal officials in the environmental departments, as well as politically affiliated communities in the Endumeni Local Municipality (ELM) and the uMzinyathi District Municipality (UDM), KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), SA. Based on the PhD research of the first author we focus not on forms of 'grand' corruption and 'state capture', which have been dealt with elsewhere (see Du Toit, 2024) but on 'everyday' forms of patronage and dependence in the environmental sector, which is central to the allocation of short-term labour 'work opportunities' through government programs such as the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). Whilst political economy and political ecology theories are effective at pinpointing how organised crime occurs in LG, and other extant literature demonstrates the negative effects of neopatrimonialism in the municipal workplace a ME approach can uncover what occurs at the LM scale.

The argument of the paper is that current literature indicates that local municipal-based neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment predominately influence local EG, environmental service provision and workplace professionalism negatively in SA. However, we attempt to go beyond the normative and reveal that neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment are sometimes morally logical from a utilitarian redistributive standpoint based on sustaining livelihoods and accessing economic opportunities for cadres belonging to the impoverished and previously disadvantaged majority in SA. The next section provides relevant background literature, followed by the research context and methodology. We then present and discuss the research findings and conclusion.

6.2. Debates around the political influence of neopatrimonialism, clientelism, corruption and professionalism on local governance

According to Masenya (2017) and Izquierdo-Brichs (2021) neopatrimonialism is a contemporary form of a traditional patrimonial system. Lodge (2014) stated that neopatrimonial relations are entrenched in the state system through interactions between public officials and clients. In African countries there are three indicators of a neopatrimonial system: the concentration of political power, the immoral use of state resources and organised clientelism (Moti 2019). The concentration of political power refers to

individualistic dominance and control of state policies and politics, as well as the appointment of cadres to public positions. The state patron remains in power for a long time and must serve the cadres in the neopatrimonial system (Kaizer 2022). In Africa, there is frequent rotation of the political elite of one political party in the neopatrimonial system to prevent political power from reaching opposition parties. This tightly locked neopatrimonial system allows the ruling party to extend its clientelist network (Moti 2019).

There are two factors that characterise a neopatrimonial state. Firstly, all levels of government must practice neopatrimonialism and secondly, neopatrimonialism must be entrenched in the historical background of a state (Von Soest 2010). Both factors are prevalent in SA. Tsheola (2014) claimed that SA has become a neopatrimonial state by possessing the characteristics of neopatrimonialism, the same as most African countries. Lodge (2014) asserted that neopatrimonialism is entrenched in the philosophy of the ruling ANC party in SA, stating that neopatrimonial networks in the ANC always existed because of party culture preferences. Von Soest (2010) stated that a long presential term with frequent cabinet changes indicates power concentration of a functional neopatrimonial system. Masenya (2017) emphasised that state resources are unevenly distributed, as comrades are incentivised and rewarded by having access to state resources such as public sector contracts and employment opportunities. However, Nzo (2019) argued that occasionally there is resistance against neopatrimonial practices and political power struggles by local councillors as evident in the Kalahari LM in SA.

The concept of clientelism forms part of neopatrimonialism and is apparent in both democratic and autocratic states (Hicken 2011). Hicken (2011) emphasised that through clientelist relationships the political elite usually possess control over state resources and impoverished communities are left with limited resources. There are also increased levels of corruption associated with clientism and fragile public trust in democratic principles (Bruce 2014). Moti (2019) asserted that clientelism in African states consists of the rewarding of public resources and employment opportunities to comrades for their political loyalty and commitment to the ruling party. Sadie et al (2016) found that clientelist relationships are more apparent within impoverished communities, as most affluent communities do not require livelihood incentives from political leaders.

Several scholars such as Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2004), Hicken (2011) and Benit-Gbaffou (2011) highlighted the link between local democracy and clientelism in SA. Beresford (2015) viewed clientelism negatively at the local scale, however, Anciano (2017) argued that clientelist relationships in SA contributes towards achieving democratic principles, this occurs when non-incentivised clients hold patrons accountable by providing transparency on clientelist relationships to the media and other forms of accountability platforms. Benit-Gbaffou (2011, 2) argued that *"clientelism is not per se antidemocratic, some forms allow for local and immediate accountability of politicians"*. Clientelist

incentives also allow marginalised and impoverished communities access to employment opportunities to sustain livelihoods (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith 2004, Stokes 2011).

The ANC political party in SA is considered to promote clientelist relationships with a recent increase in political violence and intra-party assassinations (see Reddy 2018). Bawa (2011) found that clientelism is rife during local elections, as political parties utilise resources, incentives, and increased service delivery provision in communities for the exchange of political support. The rise of socioeconomic inequality in SA has encouraged clientelist relationships among the poor and rich, for the rich to maintain economic freedom and for the poor to access much needed state resources and opportunities in the hope of escaping poverty (Benit-Gbaffou 2011).

Patronage is common in state institutions and influences political decisions and outcomes (Mamogale 2017). In a patronage relationship the political actor possesses a position of authority in the state, whereas in clientelism, the political actor might not have a position in the state office (Hicken 2011). Patronage relationships are also linked to state capture; this occurs when state officials trade state resources and opportunities to private sector tycoons (Hicken 2011). A relevant example of state capture and patronage networks was the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality (NMBMM) in SA (see Olver 2017). Mukwedeya (2016) asserted that contestations for limited patronage opportunities enhances factionalist tendencies. The rise of patronage networks in LG has impacted service delivery provision and effective EG, as Dawson (2014, 518), described, *"the state is not understood as a bureaucratic dispenser of public goods on the basis of rights but as a relational system of reciprocal dependence and obligation"*.

Patronage networks in LG influences environmental issues (see Nelson and Agrawal 2008, Mukwedeya 2016). Mamogale (2017) claimed that patronage increases dependency of the poor on state and political actors, in the hope of receiving incentives for sustained loyalty and support. Community dependency results in the concentration of political power and control over local administration and governance through the process of vote-buying. Baral (2023) found that culturally approved patronage and 'nested distribution' function together as a two-way form of redistribution in Uganda between patrons and cadres indicating that patronage is rooted in African cultural norms. Toral (2021) asserted that when officials are recruited through patronage networks in the public sector, then officials are obliged to provide effective public services to communities as this reflects the ruling party's ability to govern. However, patronage networks are strongly associated with fraud and corruption in LG (Masenya 2017, Olver 2018).

The increase in corruption in the South African public sector has impacted governance in LMs (see Pillay 2004, Bruce 2014, Olver 2018). Pillay (2004, 586) emphasised that *"SA's complex political*

design is a contributing factor to the rise of corruption", as political strategies are reliant on neopatrimonial and clientelist relationships. The South African government established anti-corruption legislation and politicians have pledged to eradicate corrupt activities from the public sector. However, corruption remains apparent, especially in LMs (Bruce 2014). Bruce (2014) stated that corruption must be viewed from a moral economy perspective, as there are deep and underlying factors such as escaping extreme poverty that encourages corrupt activities by impoverished community members. Contrastingly, Wilson (2016) and Masenya (2017) argued that corruption only benefits the wealthy and political elite.

The political-administration interface in LMs is a space where politicians interact with and influence municipal administration and officials (De Visser 2009, Cameron 2010). The political-administration interface determines the level of professionalism and service delivery in LMs, as politicians usually instruct municipal officials on service delivery priority areas in communities. Municipal officials are recruited based on their political background and networks and rarely on merit and expertise (De Visser 2009). This recruitment strategy undermines professionalism and ethics in LMs and has been evident in most ANC governed LMs in SA (see Mohale 2018, Masuku and Jili 2019, Mngomezulu 2020). Mafunisa (2001, 324) emphasised that, *"South African municipalities need managers who are competent and loyal in their work"*, indicating that politically influenced recruitment is detrimental to professionalism in the public sector.

Professional and ethical behaviour in LMs is crucial for providing effective environmental services and achieving EG (Mafunisa 2001, Cameron 2010, Kroukamp and Cloete 2018). Numerous studies have revealed political, financial, organisational, and intellectual challenges to professional and ethical behavior in LG (see Masuku and Jili 2019). Cameron (2010) stated that municipal recruitment in SA must be conducted using a merit system, as there is less political influence in the recruitment process. Kariuki and Reddy (2019) stated that effective professionalism in LMs requires accountability, competency, institutional support and the implementation of performance and monitoring systems in LMs.

6.2.1. Theoretical framing- The Moral Economy Approach (MEA)

The MEA provides an ethical and moral perspective to economic actions and decisions within a specific context (Sayer 2015). Thompson (1971) focused on the moral expectations, reasoning and preferences of impoverished communities relating to economic order, relationships, practices and terms of exchange that maintain social order and limit conflict and unrest. The MEA assists in explaining the reasoning and logic of economic outcomes by institutions, individuals, and society (Fouksman 2020). Sayer (2015) claims that the MEA does not merely consider the economy as a mechanical instrument but

rather it is utilised to understand the complex relationships in an economy between stakeholders and institutions. Within African studies, moral economy has been used in various ways, ranging from the exploration of the legitimacy of illicit practices such as corruption, fraud or theft (Turner, 2004) to understanding redistributive and dependency dynamics of impoverished people with individuals in power and control of resources (Salverda *et al.,* 2024). Ferguson (2013) terms declarations of dependence, where impoverished communities depend on hierarchal subordination to access resources and opportunities to maintain and support livelihoods.

In a South African context, there is limited research that utilised the MEA in the context of local politics and local EG. The MEA and utilitarian morality are applicable in this study as it is linked to theories of distributive justice and inequality (Knight 2014, Salverda *et al.,* 2024). Utilitarianism is common among welfare economists and is often applied in democratic states such as SA. Utilitarianism in political theory is described as making decisions that benefit the majority and decisions that have the least consequences (Miller and Dagger 2006). We applied the MEA from a utilitarian perspective to a LG context to assist in understanding the logical reasoning of neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment between political elites and cadres, especially in the environmental departments of the LMs. We go beyond the normative conceptualisation of ME and delve into the complexities of neopatrimonial relationships within a politicised LG environment.

We applied Sayers (2015) MEA perspective to explain the reasoning of why cadres in the municipal study sites were prioritised for access to economic and environmental-based benefits, incentives and environmental service delivery provision. Sayer (2015:5) mentioned that *"politics without ethics is directionless, while ethics without politics is ineffectual -moral economy seeks to combine them",* this is relevant to our research, as it interlinks political dynamics and economic opportunities in the environmental sector with ethics and morality. We also applied the MEA to discuss how factors such as poverty, the access to state resources, livelihood support, past injustices and inequalities are reasons for reciprocity and the exchange of political support by cadres for access to economic opportunities from local municipal political elites. We adopt Sayers (2015) MEA perspective to comprehend why politically inclined municipal recruitment, community opportunities and incentives can be beneficial at times from a moral utilitarian standpoint, as the majority of cadres belong to the previously disadvantaged population in SA.

6.3. Context and methodology

SA is a democratic state that possesses numerous political parties (De Visser 2009). South African political parties have a rich history of patronage and neopatrimonial relationships (Sebudubudu 2008). In the post-Apartheid era, the ANC currently governs majority of LMs in SA. The ANC is renowned

for practicing neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment, especially at the LG scale (Swanepoel 2022, Mlambo 2023). Several scholars have confirmed that the ANC and other political parties in SA, usually maintain political power by rewarding comrades for their political support and loyalty (Sebudubudu 2008, Reddy 2018, Olver 2018). The majority of LMs in SA have underperformed financially, provided erratic service delivery and have experienced political instability leading to local municipal councils been placed under administration (Reddy 2018). During the last two decades, there has been a gradual decrease in the ANCs dominance in LG, resulting from cases of corruption, state capture, political contest and neopatrimonialism (Olver 2018). The influence of neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment on EG and environmental service provision is not adequately documented in SA. After a preliminary assessment of suitable municipal study sites, the ELM and UDM were chosen as applicable sites for the study, as there were alleged instances of neopatrimonialism, especially in the environmental sector.

The governing leadership of the municipalities consists of a council that includes a mayor, speaker, ward councillors and Proportional Representation (PR) councillors. The organisational and administrational structures are responsible for municipal operations. The political climate in the study sites differed within the last two decades from 2000 to 2020 from periods of political instability to political stability. The UDM and ELM were governed by the ANC and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) during different election periods. There were alleged cases of neopatrimonialism between different political periods and different councils in the municipalities. The municipal officials and most community members in the UDM and ELM have rationalised and accepted neopatrimonial relationships in LG. The political duties of comrades in a neopatrimonial relationship in the study sites are consistent attendance of political meetings, political party loyalty, abiding to political mandates, assisting fellow comrades, canvassing and campaigning during elections, as well as using personal resources for the benefit of the party. The duties of political elites in the study sites were to reward comrades with employment opportunities, access to resources and other income generating incentives.

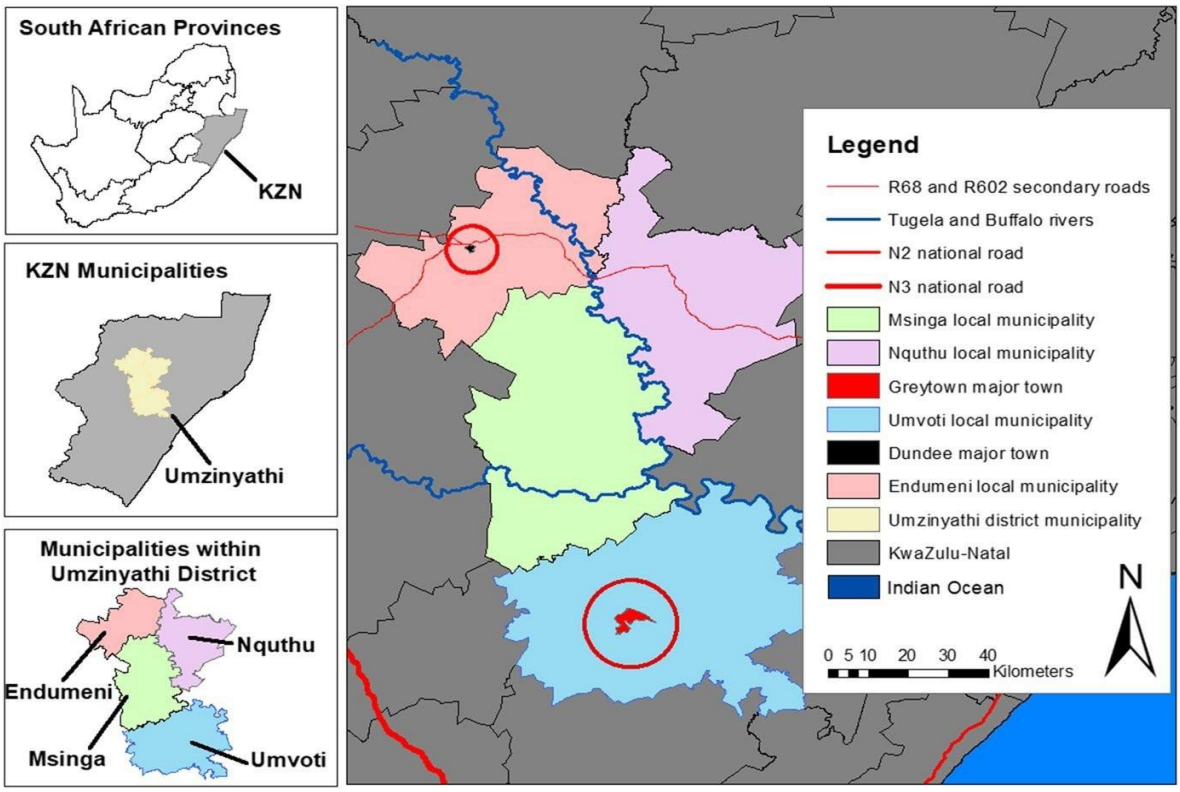


Figure 6.1. The study site map

The UDM is a category C (District municipality) located in the KZN province of SA. The UDM is one of ten district municipalities in KZN. The four LMs within the UDM are Endumeni, Umvoti, Msinga and Nquthu. The governing seat of the UDM is located in Dundee. The towns of Greytown and Dundee consist of the main economic and administrative activities (IDP 2019/20). The UDM is largely rural, populated with activities such as agriculture and stock farming being the main contributor to community livelihoods (IDP 2019/20). The UDM is regarded as one of the most impoverished districts in KZN with a high rate of unemployment. The UDM also possesses mineral deposits such as coal and metal. However, there is a lack of investment and coal supplies have been diminishing (IDP 2019/20).

The ELM is a category B LM located on the northern border of the UDM. The ELM is the geographically smallest of the four LMs in the UDM. The main towns are Dundee and Glencoe. The core administrative and commercial service sectors in the ELM are located in Dundee (IDP 2019/20). The ELM is active in light to medium industries. The ELM accommodates several departmental and regional government offices and possesses high standards of education and schooling facilities (IDP 2019/20). There are opportunities in the agricultural, mining and commercial service sectors. The ELM has the smallest population from the other LMs in the UDM, but the largest economic activity and municipal budget. Majority of the ELM is urbanised and there are no tribal authorities (IDP 2019/20).

We utilised a pragmatic research methodology that consisted of both deductive and inductive research approaches, as well as a mixed method approach. The findings were obtained from non-statistical quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The quantitative method consisted of a community questionnaire and the qualitative method comprised of in-depth informal and formal key informant interviews, workshops, focus groups, meetings, unstructured and structured direct observation, as well as community-based interventions. The research findings were obtained from numerous stakeholders such as government department officials, municipal officials, municipal councillors, the private sector, civil society, politicians, ward committee members and community members. The sampling strategy for interviews consisted of purposive, non-probability and convenient sampling. The stakeholders were interviewed in a recursive manner until data saturation was achieved. The community questionnaire survey was administered using stratified sampling. We also integrated secondary data to provide a contextual and theoretical dimension to the research. The findings were analysed and illustrated using graphs and thematic coding. The next section of the paper focuses on the research findings.

6.4. The influence of neopatrimonial relationships in the Endumeni and uMzinyathi municipalities.

This section of the paper provides a discussion of five major challenges associated with neopatrimonial relationships and cadre deployment on EG and environmental service delivery within the UDM and ELM.

6.4.1.1. Employment and labour dynamics in the environmental department of the municipalities:

Neopatrimonial relationships influenced employment and labour related issues in the municipal case study sites. There was evidence of cadre recruitment, clientelism and patronage networks. In the municipal environmental department, neopatrimonialism was linked to the hiring of inexperienced and unqualified cadres for both permanent and temporary posts, *"as officials were usually incompetent, lacked environmental management experience and are protected by political officials in power"* (Interview, 10 June 2019, Dundee, SA). Lodge (2014) asserted that neopatrimonial relationships are entrenched in the state system through interactions between public officials and clients.

In November 2019, the ELM ANC council hired two comrades in managerial positions in the environmental department as a reward for a by-election victory. By placing comrades in managerial positions, the council attempted to guarantee their participation in future political campaigns and elections. One of the comrades did not have an environmental qualification, however the managerial position was still awarded to the comrade, *"an ELM councillor told me, I worked hard during the byelection, so I must choose which job I want"* (Interview, 2 May 2020, Dundee, SA), this indicated

that an unqualified candidate was awarded an environmental management position. A department official stated that *"I support environmental management in local government, however, cadre appointments are often short of relevant environmental qualifications needed for local EG"* (Interview, 10 June 2021, Dundee, SA).

Neopatrimonial relationships also affected politically neutral employees in the municipalities. An ELM official revealed that she possessed 10 years' working experience in the same position without being considered for higher municipal employment posts and skills development workshops. The official does not support a political party, *"I stay away from politics, it's just not who I am"* (Interview, 12 April 2020, Dundee, SA). The ELM official mentioned how politically biased the employment process is by providing an example of a management position that was awarded to a candidate based on their political affiliation. The official was told that if she wanted a promotion, she must join a political party, *"my colleague said I must join any political party in order to be rewarded"* (Interview, 12 April 2020, Dundee, SA). This example illustrates that when a municipal employee is not politically active then a stagnant and unrewarding workplace environment seems imminent.

Mafunisa (2001) claimed that municipal recruitment in SA is conducted using a spoils system. The spoils system is associated with clientelist and neopatrimonial recruiting of comrades that are often incompetent to conduct municipal duties effectively. An ELM official also claimed that *"employees that support opposition parties are sometimes targeted because of their political affiliations"* (Interview, 14 April 2020, Dundee, SA). The council identifies and combines all minor breaches of conduct by opposition affiliated employees and then uses this to suspend them and make space for their candidates. De Visser (2009) emphasised that municipal officials in SA are usually recruited based on their political background and rarely on merit and expertise. A UDM official claimed that *"municipal politics is a risky game, but one that either pays off or gets you terminated"* (Interview, 23 March 2020, Dundee, SA). A former councillor mentioned that the breach of employee conduct by comrades were ignored by senior managers and council, however *"misconduct is noted, remembered and enforced if the comrade changes their political support to an opposition party"* (Interview, 12 April 2020, Dundee, SA).

We emphasise that neopatrimonial relationships do not always guarantee long term, sustainable municipal employment, this includes employment in municipal environmental departments. From the research findings, it was evident that there are potentially four types / categories of employees that work at a municipality in SA. All four categories of employees are influenced by neopatrimonial dynamics:

Type 1: Employees that are directly involved in municipal politics and are rewarded with neopatrimonial incentives.

Type 2: Employees that do not participate in municipal politics and do not support neopatrimonialism.

Type 3: Employees that were recruited by previous ruling political parties and are now targeted by the current ruling political party.

Type 4: Employees that utilise incentivisation / bribery to maintain employment or for additional opportunities regardless of the political party in power.

6.4.1.2. The procurement of municipal environmental resources and services:

The procurement of municipal environmental resources and services in the municipalities were influenced by neopatrimonial-based decisions and relationships between private companies, the council and municipal officials. A UDM official stated, *"the awarding of procurement contracts is not always awarded to the cheapest service provider"* (Interview, 6 June 2020, Dundee, SA). There is a rotation of service providers that are allegedly favoured by the councils and municipal officials. Managers from local private sector companies made allegations of SCM procurement irregularities and bribery in the municipalities.

The neopatrimonial relationships effected the environmental departments of the municipalities. The environmental compliance audits were delayed by neopatrimonial negotiations between municipal officials and potential service providers. This resulted in compliance inaccuracies and incompetence, as neopatrimonial-based service providers were usually prioritised over competent and professional environmental service providers. The occurrence of patronage networks and the irregular awarding of municipal tenders was also apparent in a study conducted by Olver (2017).

According to ELM officials major private sector businesses in the ELM allegedly invested financial resources in election campaigns in order to secure municipal tenders. Reddy (2018) claimed that the ANCs current track record in LG is appalling and corruption is rife, especially regarding public sector contracts and tenders. An ELM official explained that SCM processes are not always followed when short-listing suitable and competent service providers for environmental-based resources. There were also instances of incorrect and low quality environmental-based materials supplied to the ELM, yet *"the materials were accepted, and the payment was approved for politically inclined service providers"* (Interview, 12 April 2020, Dundee, SA).

6.4.1.3. Favouritism and biasness of cadres:

There were favouritism and biasness of cadre appointments in the municipal environmental departments. The access to environmental skills development workshops was predominately reserved

for cadres. An ELM official that supports an opposition party claimed, *"I have not been a part of any environmental-based training workshops"* (Interview, 2 August 2020, Dundee, SA), indicating that neopatrimonial appointments are prioritised for environmental skills development opportunities in the ELM. The existence of favouritism and biasness was also evident in senior management posts in the ELM. For instance, a supervisor that was not politically inclined acted in a senior management position for a number of years and was qualified for the position, however, when the permanent position was advertised, a comrade was awarded the position based on political contribution and loyalty. This resulted in a negative impact within the environmental department of the ELM, as general workers were not managed effectively by the new manager and preferred the supervisor, *"we prefer the previous manager not a politician that considers himself a manager"* (Interview, 12 April 2020, Dundee, SA).

Mohale (2018), Masuku and Jili (2019) and Mngomezulu (2020) also revealed that the recruitment of municipal officials is based on their political background and rarely on merit and expertise. In workplace conflict situations, comrades are favoured over workers that support opposition parties. An ELM official stated that there were two cases of misconduct by politically inclined workers that were *"swept under the mat by the ELM council"* (Interview, 26 November 2020, Dundee, SA), the first was an attempted stabbing incident of a municipal worker and second was a refuse truck accident. In both instances the workers appeared to be incompetent and contravened municipal labour laws, however the council was biased and chose not to suspend the workers as they were vital comrades within their wards. Municipal general workers also intentionally disregard supervisor instructions and become less productive based on which political party their supervisor belongs to.

6.4.1.4. Professionalism and work ethic in the environmental departments of the municipalities:

A professional and ethical working environment in LMs is critical for promoting EG (De Visser 2009, Cameron 2010). Sinclair (1993, 910) defined professionalism as *"being competent, efficient, masterly and qualified"*. In the municipalities, neopatrimonial recruitment of cadres resulted in a contested and unprofessional working environment, as certain councillors in the municipalities were nominated through political ties in the regional leadership. The employees that supported the same political party worked cohesively together with occasional conflicts, whilst in most instances employees that supported different political parties failed to work effectively together due to different political preferences, *"I cannot work with him, he is not a comrade"* (Interview, 12 April 2020, Dundee, SA). The politically affiliated employees placed in positions of power and authority such as managers and supervisors were responsible for minimal work duties as opposed to employees that supported opposition parties, *"I am treated unfairly just because I don't support the ANC or IFP"* (Interview, 16 April 2020, Dundee, SA).

Neopatrimonial recruitment influenced employee motivation and professionalism, as there was an imbalance between work ethic and efficiency. In most instances, politically affiliated employees radiate a sense of invincibility in the workplace and are rarely reprimanded for a lack of work ethic. An ELM official stated that *"the opposition officials were forced to comply with council instructions or face disciplinary procedures and possibly be replaced with comrades"* (Interview, 5 May 2020, Dundee, SA). The employees from opposition parties were demotivated to perform their duties effectively and were also rarely considered for promotions, *"even if I work hard, I will not be considered for a promotion"* (Interview, 12 April 2020, Dundee, SA). For example, a drivers post in the ELM was awarded to an external candidate instead of an experienced worker because of political reasons. The newly appointed, inexperienced driver was involved in an accident and was protected by senior officials and the council claiming the accident was a mechanical failure, *"I had to lie about what actually happened because I didn't want to get into trouble with the council"* (Interview, 12 April 2020, Dundee, SA).

Temporary contract workers in the ELM environmental department were chosen by councillors and not managers, impacting work ethic. The temporary workers were hostile and unprofessional towards managers. Pillay (2004, 586) asserted that *"SA's complex political design is a contributing factor to the rise of corruption"*, as political mandates dictate neopatrimonial and clientelist recruitment. The contracts of competent temporary workers that support opposition parties were not renewed based on neopatrimonial relationships in the ruling party, *"no matter how hard you work, if you not with the right political party, you will never get permanent employment in the municipality"* (Interview, 16 September 2020, Dundee, SA).

6.4.1.5. Using municipal environmental opportunities for political gain and vote-buying:

The use of municipal environmental opportunities through neopatrimonial relationships for political gain and vote-buying was evident in both municipalities. The councils utilised causal labour contracts to reward comrades for their political support through voting. The majority of unskilled comrades were awarded with temporary employment opportunities with the hope of permanent employment, *"when my contract ends, I want the councillor to make a plan for me, I want to be permanent"* (Interview, 12 April 2020, Dundee, SA). The councils also interacted with environmental managers for recruitment opportunities in the environmental sector, *"I notify the council of environmental projects and wait for their recruitment list"* (Interview, 21 April 2020, Dundee, SA).

The process of council recruitment impacts EG by often recruiting incompetent workers that voted for them, *"most of the workers don't even like the environment, they just work to get paid"* (Interview, 22

April 2020, Dundee, SA). Mukwedeya (2016) found that patronage networks for voting support in LG also influenced the access to the economic opportunities in the environmental sector. The exchange of municipal-based economic opportunities from the environmental sector for political support and vote buying resulted in negative implications. For instance, the council utilised temporary contracts to reward comrades. However, when the contracts ended, opposition comrades were given preference to contract appointments, resulting in internal conflict within the ruling party. According to an ELM official, *"this is a constant cycle depending on the number of wards won and the power the ruling party has in the municipality"* (Interview, 6 July 2021, Dundee, SA). The next section of the paper focuses on the potential benefits of neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment in the environmental sector of the ELM from a moral economy perspective.

6.4.2. The moral economy of neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment: the potential benefits in the environmental sector of the Endumeni Local Municipality (ELM)

We utilise insights of Sayer's (2015) perspective of Moral Economy (ME) as a guide to discuss the potential benefits of neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment in LG, focusing on the environmental sector of the ELM. We utilise Sayer's (2015) ME perspective to conceptualise the moral reasoning (*from a De facto standpoint-not in accordance with the law of SA*) of politically inclined, neopatrimonial relationships in the ELM. In the ELM, neopatrimonial relationships were not only apparent within one political party, but also among different political parties. We provide a discussion of six morally logical reasons as to why neopatrimonial relationships between local municipal political elites and impoverished, politically active communities and municipal employees have the potential to sustain livelihoods and promote EG on a LG scale in SA.

6.4.2.1. The recruitment of competent, qualified, and experienced cadres in the municipal environmental department:

Neopatrimonial recruitment is not always associated with incompetent, unqualified and inexperienced cadres. At times, competent, qualified, and experienced cadres are recruited for municipal appointment positions (Stokes 2011). The qualified cadres are capable of fulfilling their employment and political duties, as stated by an ELM official *"I complete my work and political duties effectively and I have the correct qualifications for the job"* (Interview, 18 April 2020, Dundee, SA). From a ME perspective, the neopatrimonial relationships between municipal political elites and competent and qualified cadres provided employment and income generation benefits for cadres that would have been likely unemployed if not for neopatrimonial networks. In this instance, neopatrimonialism has contributed to the employment of comrades that have earned tertiary qualifications and are competent to work in a municipal environment, *"if I didn't join the ANC, I would be sitting at home with my honours degree"* (Interview, 19 February 2020, Dundee, SA). There have also been cases of qualified cadres in senior

management positions in the ELM that have contributed positively to EG, *"I ensure all environmental requirements and compliances by the municipality are endured to"* (Interview, 17 April 2020, Dundee, SA).

We emphasise that neopatrimonial relationships do not always guarantee long-term, sustainable municipal employment. For sustainable employment or recruitment of a competent cadre to occur even under changing political conditions, a municipal employee must have a balance of relevant qualifications, political participation, neopatrimonial consideration and sufficient experience, as well as work ethic. The ratio below was formulated from the research findings after analyzing respondent questionnaire and interview responses and indicates the ratio estimates between factors that often result in sustainable employment or recruitment of a competent cadre in South African LMs. The formula below contributes to theoretical building and helps us understand the process of municipal cadre deployment in LG.

Education (relevant qualifications) (20%) + Politically active and neopatrimonial consideration by political elites (40%) + Sufficient experience and work ethic (20%) + Availability of municipal budget and placement opportunities (20%)
= Sustainable LM employment / recruitment of a competent cadre (100%)

6.4.2.2. Builds long-term political relationships:

Neopatrimonial relationships fostered long term and stable relationships between clients and patrons in the ELM. The occurrence of long term neopatrimonial relationships are important for EG in LMs, as decisions are regularly agreed upon in a politically stable environment. It was evident that municipal employees that supported the same political party were likely to function collaboratively *"my teammates and I support the same political party, and we work well together"* (Interview, 7 March 2021, Dundee, SA). A stable political climate can be achieved from long term reciprocity between clients and patrons in LMs, as Dawson (2014, 518), described, *"the state is not understood as a bureaucratic dispenser of public goods on the basis of rights but as a relational system of reciprocal dependence and obligation"*. Neopatrimonial relationships were sometimes affected by distrust and disloyalty from political factions, however sustainable reciprocal neopatrimonial relationships presented benefits for the environmental sector of the ELM by promoting teamwork between cadres resulting in potentially better standards of LG.

6.4.2.3. Provides benefits for local politically inclined communities:

Neopatrimonial relationships in the ELM provided assistance towards livelihood support in politically inclined communities by providing access to income generation and employment opportunities. Similarly, Stokes (2011) found that neopatrimonial incentives provide improvised communities with

access to employment and developmental state opportunities to sustain livelihoods. The ELM prioritised temporary and permanent employment opportunities for comrades from impoverished, politically loyal communities. A ward committee member claimed that *"councillors possess a recruitment database of unemployed comrades and when there are municipal employment opportunities, this database is used"* (Interview, 17 April 2020, Dundee, SA). The comrades utilised wages and salaries to support families and gradually transition out of poverty, *"I will always be loyal to the ANC, they gave me a job so now I can support my family"* (Interview, 3 March 2021, Dundee, SA).

Neopatrimonial relationships in the ELM provided access to diverse community-based environmental benefits such as access to environmental interventions and access to income generating opportunities from the environmental sector. An ELM official claimed that *"communities that supported the ruling council usually received a higher standard of environmental-based services"* (Interview, 22 March 2021, Dundee, SA). The environmental benefits were utilised as neopatrimonial incentives for both affluent and impoverished communities in exchange for political support. The environmental-based incentivisation provided much needed environmental benefits for communities in return for political support, thus both the client and patron were satisfied, *"I was employed because of politics, or else my family and I would be starving"* (Interview, 9 October 2022, Dundee, SA). Benit-Gbaffou (2011) also found that neopatrimonial relationships contributed to the upliftment of low-income residents by providing income generating opportunities.

The ELM is faced with numerous youth development challenges such as high unemployment and poverty. Neopatrimonial relationships contributed towards youth income generating activities. This occurred when youth comrades were active in political elections and campaigns and were rewarded for their political commitment to the ruling party. The ELM council initiated a youth development department that provided opportunities to impoverished youth. An ELM official stated, *"that opportunities are reserved for politically active youth and the council choses youth candidates their based on their preference"* (Interview, 25 November 2021, Dundee, SA).

6.4.2.4. Political support and stable EG:

Neopatrimonial relationships contributed to the formation of sustainable political support and stable governance between patrons and clients. A politically stable environment was vital for promoting EG through the process of consistent and integrative decision-making between environmental officials and the council. In 2014, the ELM was governed by the ANC and according to a former ELM councillor, the ANC leadership relies on neopatrimonial relationships to maintain political power, *"we have always rewarded loyal comrades with jobs and provided ANC strong communities with environmental*

services" (Interview, 3 March 2021, Dundee, SA). Toral (2021) emphasised that politically affiliated officials are obliged to provide effective public services to communities as this reflects the ruling party's ability to govern.

In 2016, the ELM was governed by a coalition council that failed to make decisions, as conflicts occurred from different political agendas, *"the councillors from different parties always argued, that's why environmental service provision was mediocre"* (Interview, 7 March 2021, Dundee, SA). Neopatrimonial relationships among the ruling party and loyal supporters provided a platform for effective governance, however, this became problematic when internal factions developed within the ruling party that led to conflict over neopatrimonial incentives for comrades.

A contested council in the ELM was less likely to make effective EG decisions for the environmental department. An ELM official claimed, *"there was no consensus on environmental decision making, as the council was too busy arguing with each other"* (Interview, 22 May 2021, Dundee, SA). A stable ELM council ensured consistent environmental service provision and environmental compliances by approving environmental budgets timeously. The neopatrimonial relationships between the ELM council and cadres created a stable working environment as workers were duty bound to abide to council instructions and perform work duties effectively.

The ELM made progress towards achieving EG objectives under the administration of a single council. The managers and workers that supported the same political party functioned collaboratively, *"we work well together because the ruling party gave us jobs"* (Interview, 3 March 2021, Dundee, SA). Kroukamp and Cloete (2018) acknowledged neopatrimonial recruited in LG in SA, however they advised for the prioritisation of skills development interventions and skills audits for municipal officials to improve service delivery in LMs. Kariuki and Reddy (2019) also emphasised the importance of implementing performance management, monitoring and evaluation systems in LMs to improve professionalism and service delivery. The ELM council implemented environmental interventions and provided environmental services in politically inclined communities, *"the council agreed to invest in environmental resources and interventions, as long as it was used as a political tool"* (Interview, 6 March 2021, Dundee, SA). From an ME perspective, EG objectives were still achieved and impoverished comrades were exposed to numerous income generation opportunities from the environmental sector.

6.4.2.5. Promotes professionalism in the municipal workplace environment:

In certain situations, neopatrimonial relationships promoted workplace professionalism in the ELM. The municipal officials were more likely to have a better working relationship with colleagues and

councillors that supported the same political party, *"I work better with the council because they are my comrades"* (Interview, 11 May 2021, Dundee, SA). According to an ELM official the council recruit cadres in managerial positions to provide efficient environmental services in politically loyal communities, *"the council approves my funding requests and allows me to possess authority in exchange for ensuring environmental services are provided to certain communities"* (Interview, 3 March 2021, Dundee, SA). Neopatrimonial recruited officials performed their work duties effectively to impress the council, *"we are political soldiers of the council, we must show appreciation to the council for hiring us"* (Interview, 7 January 2021, Dundee, SA). De Visser (2009) and Cameron (2010) emphasised that the political-administration interface determines the level of professionalism and service delivery in LMs, as politicians usually prioritise politically inclined communities for service delivery provision by working closely with cadres.

6.4.2.6. Provides environmental-based procurement opportunities for local SMMEs:

Neopatrimonial relationships in the ELM presented opportunities for local businesses from the procurement of environmental resources and by offering environmental-based services. The local businesses in the ELM were more likely to be considered by the SCM department for municipal tender contracts, *"we choose local businesses because development must occur within the municipality"* (Interview, 3 March 2021, Dundee, SA). The ELM council promoted the awarding of tenders to local businesses, and this decision was often associated with corruption. However, the council agreed on a *'local gets preference'* policy for procurement. In the environmental sector, local businesses were prioritised, however environmental auditing and compliances services were outsourced to external specialist service providers, *"sometimes businesses from other areas are outsourced for environmental services"* (Interview, 23 March 2021, Dundee, SA).

6.5. Discussion- "We are political Soldiers of the council": The Moral Economy of nested distribution and cadre deployment

In the commencement of the findings section, we identified and discussed five impacts resulting from neopatrimonial relationships towards achieving EG in the ELM. The impacts consisted of human capital recruitment and labour dynamics, the procurement of environmental-based resources and services, cadre biasness and ineffective workplace professionalism, as well as the use of municipal environmental opportunities for political gain. Neopatrimonial relationships are usually associated with fraud, votebuying, and corruption, however, the research findings indicated that neopatrimonialism can be morally logical when impoverished comrades are assisted with sustaining their livelihoods, *"I struggled for years, but after joining the ANC, I received employment"* (Interview, 23 July 2021, Dundee, SA). Additionally, Olver (2017) also emphasised that impoverished communities benefit from political and

neopatrimonial relations with economic and non-economic incentives such as political favours, job security and protection to obtain middle class status and approve their livelihoods.

Benit-Gbaffou (2011), Wiegratz (2016) and Izquierdo-Brichs (2021) asserted that socioeconomic inequality in Africa and globally have encouraged neopatrimonial relationships among the poor and rich, for the poor to access state resources in the hope of escaping poverty and the rich to maintain economic freedom and political power. This was also evident in the study. This paper provides an African perspective of the moral economy approach, building on the work of scholars such as Wiegratz (2016) and Jennische (2024) that focused on global influences of capitalism and neoliberal tendencies in African contexts where poverty and the disadvantaged are directly influenced by accessing neoliberal economic opportunities, however this research focuses more on local cadres and local political actors on the local state in SA and provides a broader understand and nuancing of neopatrimonial influences on local EG in SA

But an MEA allows us to delve further beyond evaluation of costs and benefits to understand the mutual obligations and responsibilities that render such practices possible (Scott, 1977). The findings indicated that community perceptions on neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment differed based on political affiliations, but not to radical degrees. Communities that supported the ruling party favoured neopatrimonialism more than communities that supported the opposition, but both were broadly in benefits that derive from reciprocal relations of dependence, and neopatrimonial relationships and cadre deployment occurred under different political parties within the municipal study sites, indicating cross cutting political relationships. This prevalence and persistence must be taken seriously. Rather than liberal conceptions of a deficit in democratic citizenship or a moral failing, or further that forms of dependence themselves are the antithesis of freedom in (neo)liberal economy (given the lack of freedom of South Africa's apartheid past) we see that *"rather than striving to escape, cast off, or struggle against relations of hierarchical subordination… [people] put extraordinary energies into seeking them out"* (Fergson, 2013, 94).

In the study sites, poverty and unemployment are rife, and neopatrimonial relationships in LG provide income generating opportunities, especially from the environmental sector. This can be viewed from a moral and utilitarian perspective as a form of redistributive justice, as also evident in research conducted by (Salverda *et al.,* 2024). As Baral (2023) puts it, culturally approved patronage and 'nested distribution' function to create forms of redistribution at the same time as the upwards submission of subjects. For this reason, relations of dependence are persistent and structural in KZN, as Gorden's (2008) research has shown, where projects to build democratic citizenship came up against entrenched

expectations about hierarchical leadership and attachment to the traditional authority and the systems of subordination and dependence they entail.

Context and structural conditions are central to understandings of nested relationships of obligation and dependence and have a long historical precedent in Southern Africa. Ferguson (2023, 225) shows that the Ngoni Snowball State, while violent, was not violent in its ends, but rather focused on incorporating new social segments in a lineage model and rapidly expanding system. This was a form of political logic that was broadly characteristic of many precolonial Southern African societies with ample land but where political power derived from controlling 'wealth in people'. While not democratic in the contemporary sense, these systems afforded significant benefits and levels of mobility to incorporate peoples, as well as exit options that could function as checks on the power of chiefs and kings from subordinate populations (Idem, 225).

Similar relationships of dependence have persisted through the colonial and apartheid periods, and from what people-scarce to 'people abundant' systems (Ferguson, 2013). Seekings and Nattress (2005) have shown that from the late apartheid period onwards, South African economic growth has been paired with rising unemployment, and many are now relatively permanently locked out of the labour market. This is what Sassen (2014) has theorised elsewhere as 'expulsions'. In such conditions relations of dependence can secure access to resources and provide redistributive functions, and along with the distributive opportunities of the informal economy are key to survival (Ferguson, 2013).

The research also provided a deeper understanding of the relationships between cadres and the political party, demonstrating that neopatrimonialism is more than just vote-buying, but a process of subjectification and the creation of cadres themselves. For Ferguson (2013, 226) declarations of dependence are not only about structuring society, but about creating persons, and not as liberal, transacting individuals, but as nodes in systems of relationships. The study also identified the ripple effect within neopatrimonialism relationships, as influential cadres were awarded with economic and non-economic opportunities for political loyalty and cadres in return were politically influential on family, friends and the local community.

Furthermore, while cadres provided political support to the parties, they can also question party policies that were not progressive from a utilitarian perspective that did not consider other impoverished cadres. In this sense, it is not just that neopatrimonialism is simply anti-democratic nor linear, but as Baral (2023) and other have shown, is a two way process of dependence and obligation, and where elites are seen to be keeping disproportionate shares, operating through the 'politics of the belly' and 'eating the money' they are seen as immoral (Ferguson, 2013), which may in part have contributed to the alternation

of party power in the municipalities and the decline in ANC hegemony overall. In any event, the practice of nested distribution within the municipalities seems to be persistent and here to stay.

6.6. Conclusion

The existing literature (Swanepoel 2022, Zulu *et al.,* 2022, Mlambo 2023) indicated that the occurrence of cadre deployment in South African LMs is currently normalised according to political party mandates, especially in the ANC and contrastingly opposed by opposition parties such as the DA. Nevertheless, competent and merit-based cadre and non-cadre deployment are both vital for municipal workplace competence and service delivery provision, especially in the local environmental sector. In the study, neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment both enabled and constrained local EG. The political mandates of the ELM council impacted cadre deployment and neopatrimonial relationships as certain cadres were targeted and employed based on their political influence. This is largely the normative process of human capital procurement in South African LG and is a well-researched area of study. However, the recent national elections have resulted in a national government coalition or union government that could strongly act against cadre deployment and neopatrimonialism in all levels of government.

This paper focused on neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment in the environmental departments of two LMs in SA. We identified five major impacts associated with neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment on local EG. We applied a moral economy approach through the lens of utilitarian morality to provide an understanding of how neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment result in potential economic opportunities for impoverished and previously disadvantaged cadres from the local environmental sector. This research contributed towards an in-depth understanding of the challenges associated with neopatrimonialism on local EG in SA.

The findings also highlighted the complex, transitional nature of political theory in SA and point towards a multifaceted and tricky integration of neopatrimonialism in coalitions, of which requires further research enquiry. The findings are applicable to other LMs globally that experience similar neopatrimonial and cadre deployment dynamics in municipal environmental departments. We suggest for future research to be conducted on the influence of neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment on EG in other municipalities in SA and globally, especially with the recent union-based coalition government in SA.

A functional public sector in SA is important for effective and efficient governance and the process of cadre deployment should be revised to focus more on impoverished and previously disadvantaged cadres that are competent, possess the relevant skills and experience, as well as the reviewing of political

mandates that are merit driven when acquiring human capital in LG. We provided a unique perspective of utilitarian moral economy in LG that also focused on smaller cadre appointments such as the EPWP, general workers and interns in the environmental sector. The environmental sector in LG is responsible for large numbers of temporary cadre appointments and the MEA provided a unique perspective to explore this.

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Chapter 7

Paper 4

The application of a Practical Environmental Governance Framework in politicised and neopatrimonial local government relations: the case of Endumeni and uMzinyathi municipalities in South Africa

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ABSTRACT: Local municipalities (LMs) are important stakeholders in facilitating Environmental Governance (EG). Various global institutions have encouraged LMs to become environmentally sustainable and to promote EG. LMs globally are gradually implementing EG principles under a myriad of challenges such as political instability, budgetary constraints and municipal incompetence. Limited research in South Africa (SA) focuses on whether EG is achievable within a politicised and neopatrimonial-based environment, especially within South Africa's dual economy and democratic state that often experiences radical political transitions. Using the Practical Environmental Governance framework (PEGF) as an evaluative and conceptual lens, we assess and evaluate practical EG in the Endumeni local and uMzinyathi district municipalities in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province of SA. The research methodology consisted of a mixed method approach. The findings revealed that numerous political and neopatrimonial dynamics such as political interests, political labour mandates and political council instability affected the transition and sustainability towards achieving effective, equitable, responsive and robust local EG. We propose that EG principles be prioritised and robustly institutionalised into LG policy development and strategic planning tools by local councils and municipal administrations in the hope of achieving sustainable local EG in SA and globally.

Keywords: Environmental governance; local municipalities; politicised; Practical Environmental Governance framework; local councils.

7.1. Introduction

Local municipalities (LMs) are vital stakeholders in transitioning towards effective Environmental Governance (EG) (Lawhon and Patel 2013, Gustafsson and Mignon and Caldas *et al.,* 2022). LMs globally have gradually progressed towards collective governance and integrative stakeholder engagement to improve EG. The promotion of EG principles globally is implemented through environmental conservation and protection policies and agreements such as the Kyoto protocol and the Paris agreement (Bodin 2017). The concept of Environmental Governance (EG) focuses on environmental sustainability and environmental ethics. The Department of Environmental Affairs in South Africa (SA) defines EG as *"the processes of decision-making involved in controlling and managing the environment and natural resources"* (DEA 2004, 54).

The evaluation of local EG in the western countries is well documented (see Bodin 2017, Picketts 2018, Gustafsson and Mignon 2020, bulkeley 2022). However, neopatrimonial aspects and influence on the practical implementation and evaluation of EG in LG is lacking. The Practical Environmental Governance framework (PEGF) created by Bennett and Satterfield (2018) as an implementative and conceptual approach to assess and evaluate practical EG. The PEGF consists of four categories of EG assessment, this includes effective, equitable, responsive, and robust EG with secondary attributes. The current literature indicates that the PEGF has not been applied in other EG contexts.

The evaluation of local EG within the context of neopatrimonialism in the Global South such as South Africa (SA) is of increasing importance (Musango *et al.,* 2014, Odiyo *et al.,* 2022). The South African constitution prioritises EG and environmental sustainability (Kotze and Plessis 2015). SA faces numerous challenges in transitioning towards a sustainable development path. At a local scale, the commitment to effective EG may not be sustained or comprehensible by LMs in policy development and strategic planning documents (Grest 2022). It is also important to evaluate the impact of local contested politics and governance on the local environmental sector in SA (Hellberg 2014, Reddy 2018).

Contemporary EG evaluation literature in SA focuses on the evaluation of environmental policies and legislation (Mubanga and Kwarteng 2020) and the evaluation of EG systems and stakeholder collaboration (Falayi 2023), whilst attempts were made to explore the influence of political dynamics on sustainable local EG in SA (see Musango *et al.,* 2014, Munzhedzi 2020), an evaluative analysis in the context of neopatrimonialism at the local scale is lacking.

We utilise the four categories from the PEGF as a novel implementative approach in assessing and evaluating contemporary local politicised EG in SA. The PEGF evaluation also revealed that even though EG in both municipal sites indicated signs of effective, equitable, responsive and robust EG,

there are political challenges that are dependent on neopatrimonial relations and political interests of governing political parties and councils that affect consistent and progressive local EG. The argument of the paper is that the PEGF can be practically applied in the context of neopatrimonialism – showing inefficiencies in LG through the process of cadre deployment and political influence. Therefore, the progress towards local EG is inconsistent because of local political mandates and neopatrimonialism that influences local policy development and strategic planning objectives.

The paper commences with a literature review, the research context and the methodology. Thereafter, an evaluation, assessment and discussion of the research findings. The final section of the paper provides a synthesis of the findings, as well as research contributions and suggestions for future research.

7.2. The geographies of environmental governance in local municipalities

The concept of EG gained popularity globally in the early 1990s as a result of increased pressure from Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), environmental activists, and academics (Bodin 2017, Caldas *et al.,* 2022). Bodin (2017) emphasised that a critical aspect of EG is understanding that environmental issues require multi-stakeholder input and holistic approaches in forming robust solutions. In Western countries, EG is often guided by neo-liberal principles, focusing on privatisation and commodification of environmental resources (Fairhead *et al.,* 2012). However, Bennett and Satterfield (2018) emphasised that practical and effective governance is important for the implementation of the local environmental agenda in Western countries and globally.

In most African countries local EG is predominately at a developmental stage. A study conducted by Rodgers (2016) in Zambia revealed that economic and political factors in LMs are prioritised over EG decisions and that additional research is required to assist in integrating environmental sustainability with economic benefits. Similar findings were identified by Asongu and Odhiambo (2020) in sub-Saharan Africa. Picketts (2018) emphasised the implication of political decisions, political power relations and instability on EG in Africa. Picketts (2018) also advised that local politics must be closely intertwined with EG principles to achieve effective local EG in Africa.

In SA, the initial focus of EG dated as far back as 1654 and was centered towards the conservation of flora and fauna (Steyn and Wessels 2000). Mayekiso (1996) emphasised that the prioritising of environmental health issues became prevalent in the 1970s, especially within South African townships. In the post-apartheid era, the democratic government prioritises environmental issues and environmental health and environmental-service delivery is a core component of democratic LG (Fuo 2015). Du Plessis (2015) stated that the South African constitution prioritises EG, environmental rights

and the access to environmental service delivery as a mandate for all government departments and municipalities. The process of democratisation in SA resulted in the broadening of environmental policy and environmental rights debates leading to the development of co-operative EG. The development of the environmental agenda in LMs positively influenced socio-economic issues and community environmental rights by emphasising environmental legislation and policy frameworks (Fuo 2015).

There are important characteristics of effective and stable EG such as institutions and law, participation, rights and representation, accountability, and transparency (Feris 2017). Kotze and Plessis (2015) asserted that LMs adopt the roles of both a regulator and provider of environmental-based services within their municipal boundaries, hence, LMs must implement effective environmental planning, management and environmental compliances. Contemporary EG evaluative literature in SA indicated that EG legislation and policies must be improved, EG systems require effective and consistent stakeholder collaboration and a strong political will is vital for the implementation of local EG principals (Mubanga and Kwarteng 2020, Munzhedzi 2020, Falayi 2023).

The challenges of obtaining effective local EG in SA are related to fragmented EG that is apparent within different spheres of government (Naidoo 2017). Fragmented EG is the failure to interact collaboratively when discussing environmental issues and the lack of clearly defined environmental roles and responsibilities between government departments and municipalities (Le Roux 2012). Other factors contributing to fragmented EG are a lack of human capacity, a lack of environmental-based knowledge and fragile environmental departments in LG (Le Roux 2012). There is also a lack of enforcement of environmental policies and environmental legislation in SA (Naidoo 2017).

Local political contestation and dynamics have a significant impact on EG in LMs Hellberg 2014, Du Plessis 2015). The political mandates in LMs are usually prioritised over EG mandates (Roberts 2010, Pasquini and Shearing 2014). Hellberg (2014) stated that LM councils are responsible for environmental decision-making and the approval for the distribution of environmental resources. However, municipal councils often utilise environmental resources and interventions to obtain political support from communities and provide incentives to politically inclined community members (see Olver 2017, Thakur and Nel 2023). Grest (2022) asserted that political power struggles in government institutions negatively influenced environmental-based decision making by promoting environmental injustices and prioritising the environmental needs of the political elite. Roberts (2010) emphasised the lack of priority provided towards environmental issues in municipal developmental plans and encourages LMs to prioritise environmental management and compliance. Olver (2018) also highlighted the deprioritising of environmental responsibilities by municipal council instability.

In a positive light, Pasquini and Shearing (2014) and Thakur and Nel. In press noted that political influence can trigger the process of environmental institutionalisation in LMs by allowing political champions the opportunity and support to promote EG for political benefits. The occurrence of political competition between opposing parties can also result in the improvement of environmental management and environmental service delivery during elections (Pasquini and Shearing 2014). However, Pasquini et al (2015) also cautioned that political contestations can impede environmental institutionalisation and hamper EG when there are changes in political mandates and the discontinuation of environmental interventions in politically unstable LMs. Lawhon and Patel (2013) found that in stable LMs, councils maintain power for five-year period cycles, and this is usually inadequate in comparison to environmental changes that span decades and require consistent decision-making from stable councils. Pasquini and Shearing (2014) advised for the institutionalisation of local EG to limit the influence of political contest. This paper further reinforces the current literature by emphasising the importance of institutionalising and implementing sustainable EG principles in LG by using the PEGF as an evaluative tool.

7.2.1. Conceptual framing: the Practical Environmental Governance Framework (PEGF)

The PEGF was developed by Bennet and Satterfield (2018) to assess and evaluate practical EG in different institutions and contexts (*see figure 7.1 overleaf*). Bennet and Satterfield (2018) emphasised that governance is vital for achieving effective and efficient environmental management. Bennet and Satterfield (2018) described institutions in the PEGF as both formal and informal that influence EG decision-making and interactions such as laws, policies and social culture. The concept of structures in the PEGF is described as formal stakeholders that are involved in EG functions and duties such as government, CSOs and the private sector. The processes concept in the PEGF is defined as the methods and procedures implemented to achieve effective EG such as conflict management, policy and law formation and stakeholder meetings (Bennet and Satterfield 2018).

Practical EG encourages stakeholders to take action and solve environmental issues by implementing practical and workable solutions. Practical EG frameworks have also been proposed by scholars such as Smiley et al (2010) to evaluate local EG in Australia and Driessen et al (2012) to assess EG transitions in the Netherlands. Merino (2018) applied a practical EG framework to assess politicised participatory stakeholder contributions to EG policies and plans in Peru. However, Bennet and Satterfield's (2018) PEGF was developed from numerous EG research, and they identified the recurring themes of effective, equitable, responsive, robust EG as vital objectives and attributes of achieving EG within different contexts.

The scanning of relevant literature revealed that the PEGF is novel and was not applied within a local political and neopatrimonial context before, especially in SA. Therefore, using the original PEGF by Bennet and Satterfield (2018) as an implementative and evaluative tool, we apply the PEGF to explore and examine the political interests, political labour mandates and political council instability that affected the transition and sustainability towards achieving effective, equitable, responsive and robust local EG in the ELM and UDM in SA. The PEGF was adapted to focus on the political and neopatrimonial dynamics within the municipal study sites and the PEGF evaluation consisted of descriptive evaluative terms such as partially effective and rarely accountable EG.

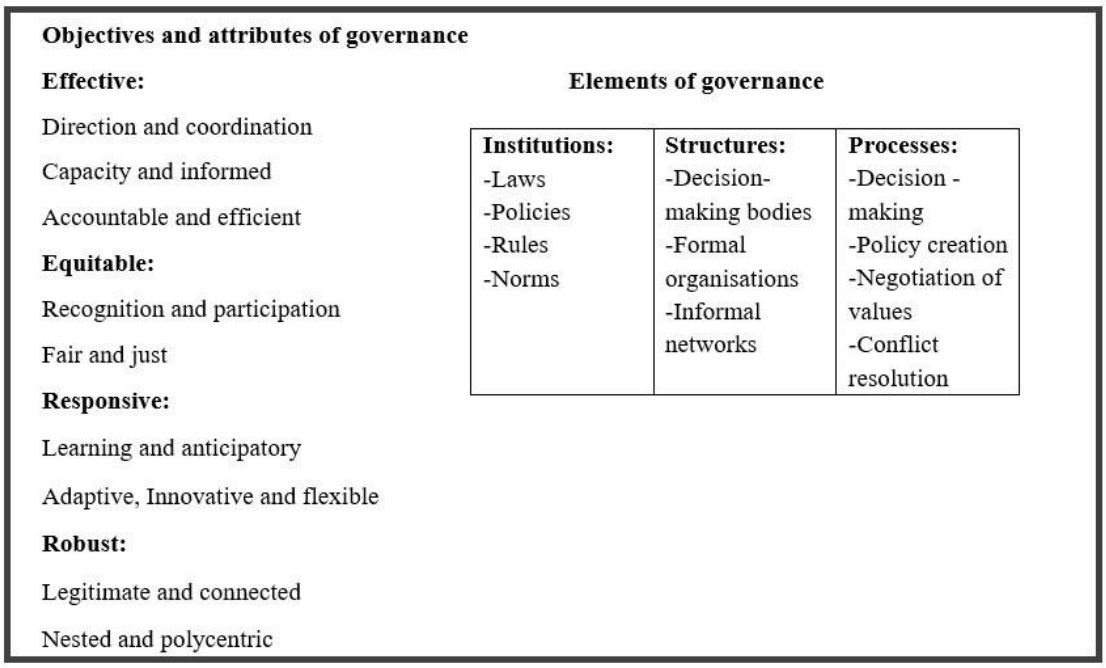


Figure 7.1. Environmental governance: A practical guide to design, evaluation, and analysis *(Adapted from Bennett and Satterfield, 2018)*

7.2.2. An overview of the elements of governance in the PEGF

Table 7.1 overleaf provides an overview of the elements of governance from the PEGF that were identified in the research. The elements of governance influenced the evaluation of EG within the municipal case study sites.

Table. 7.1: A context specific overview of the elements of governance in the PEGF from the research findings

Institutions:	-Environmental by-laws, plans and strategies.	**Importance:**

The institutional elements identified in the study were as follows:	-Municipal and environmental legislation and policies such as NEMA and the Municipal systems Act -Municipal forums, ward committees and service delivery groups. -Municipal operational culture and norms. -Conflict management and labour negotiation bodies such as municipal trade unions.	Act as EG regulators and guide the process of EG principles in LG.
Structures: The structural elements identified in the study were as follows:	-Environmental management officials from the Nquthu and Umvoti local municipalities. -Officials from the uMzinyathi DM- Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA). -Officials from uMzinyathi DM- Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) and department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). -Senior, middle, and environmental management officials from the Endumeni LM and uMzinyathi DM.	**Importance:** These are important effected and interested stakeholders in local EG. Effective and consistent local EG cannot occur without these stakeholders.

	-General workers (permanent and temporary) from the Endumeni LM and uMzinyathi DM.	

	-Councilors and other political leadership stakeholders from the Endumeni LM and uMzinyathi DM. -Private sector green businesses and local CBOs within the Endumeni LM. -Local political party leaders and temporary municipal workers. -Local communities within the Endumeni LM.	
Processes: The process elements identified in the study were as follows:	-Compliance deadlines and mandates from government / departmental officials. -The local government council meetings and portfolios. -Environmental-based workshops. -Community meetings and interventions. -Environmental watchdog/compliance organisations such as Endumeni civil organisation. -Environmental-based policies and plans.	**Importance:** These are the driving and influential processes and procedures of local EG.

	New environmental by-laws and policy formation pertaining to the environment.	

7.3. Methodology and context

The research methodology utilised for the study was guided by a pragmatic research philosophy. The research findings were obtained from a mixed method approach. The qualitative method consisted of in-depth formal and informal key informant interviews, focus groups, meetings, workshops, unstructured and structured direct observation, as well as community-based interventions. The quantitative method comprised of a community questionnaire survey that was administered to 600 respondents within all seven wards of the ELM. The findings were obtained from numerous stakeholders such as municipal officials, government department officials, municipal councillors, the private sector, civil society, politicians, ward committee members and targeted impoverished communities.

We utilised a combination of purposive, non-probability and convenient sampling of municipal and departmental officials based on their roles and duties. After the initial stage of data collection, we utilised snowball sampling to recruit a second batch of officials. Thereafter, a third batch of respondents consisted of permanent and temporary municipal employees and stakeholders from the private sector, political parties, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and local communities. A grounded theory approach was applied when stakeholders were interviewed, and a recursive method of interviewing was utilised until data saturation was achieved. The community questionnaire survey was administered using a stratified sampling technique. Secondary data was also obtained to provide a theoretical and contextual perspective. The research findings were assessed and analysed thematically and illustrated using graphs and thematic coding.

The UDM is one of ten district municipalities in KZN and is located in the North-West area of the province. The UDM is classified as a category C (District municipality) (IDP 2019/20). The four LMs that form part of the UDM are Umvoti, Endumeni, Msinga and Nquthu. The major towns in the UDM are Dundee and Greytown and are responsible for the main economic and administrative activities (IDP 2019/20). The UDM is predominately rural populated with activities of subsistence agriculture. The UDM is regarded as one of the most impoverished districts in KZN with a high unemployment rate. There are grasslands located in the north of the district with an extensive agricultural sector and diverse vegetation farming. The southern areas are dominated by extensive forestry production, small-scale

sugar cane plantations and fruit farming activities (IDP, 2019/20). The UDM also possesses mineral deposits such as coal and metal. The mining of coal is conducted only within the ELM.

The ELM is a category B municipality located on the Northern border of the UDM. The ELM is geographically the smallest of the four LMs in the UDM (IDP 2019/20). The core administrative and commercial service sectors are located in Dundee such as several departmental and regional government offices and shopping centres (IDP 2019/20). There has been a major decline in mass mining activities in the Endumeni LM, as there is a lack of investment and coal supplies have been diminishing. However, investors have shown interest in small-scale mining that encourages SMME growth in the region (IDP, 2019/20).

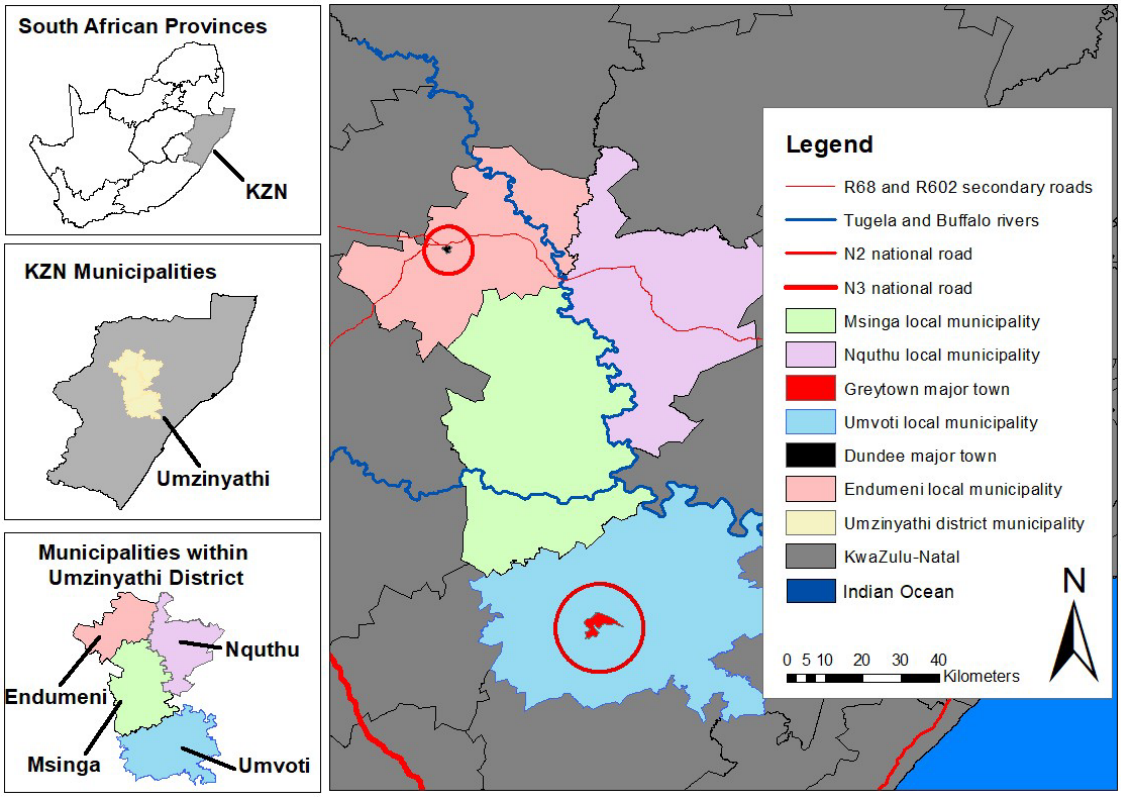


Figure 7.2. The research study site

At the LG scale, EG is closest to the people and LMs are responsible for ensuring that communities live in a safe and healthy environment (Kotze and Plessis 2015). The main legislative framework utilised to enforce section 24 of the constitution in SA is the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) 107 of 1998 (Kotze and Plessis 2015). LMs are spaces of intense political contest and power struggles and this influences effective EG. LMs in SA are faced with challenges such as corruption, state capture and financial mismanagement that are influenced by political dynamics (Olver 2018, Joshua *et al.,* 2022). There has been a recent decline in effective LG and lackluster environmental service delivery in the majority of LMs, especially within African National Congress (ANC) councils (see Nzo 2019, Joshua *et al.,* 2022). The implementation of effective local EG is dependent on political support and council stability

(Thakur and Nel 2023). Hence, we utilise the PEGF to evaluate the degree to which EG that is influenced by neopatrimonialism within the municipal study sites.

We chose the ELM and UDM as the most suitable study sites, as both municipalities were exposed to political instability within the last two decades from 2000 to 2020. There were political conflicts, erratic service delivery provision and a lack of council leadership and stability. The ELM and UDM were governed by the ANC and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) during different election periods in the last two decades with a few occasions of an IFP and Democratic Alliance (DA) council coalition. The unstable political climate resulted in interchangeable governance and political leadership with different and conflicting ward councillors, ward committees and politically inclined stakeholders. The ANC and IFP possessed political power for limited periods, creating unstable political and governance milieus in the municipalities.

This research paper forms part of a PhD thesis conducted by one of the authors that focused on politicised, contested and neopatrimonial-based EG in South African LMs. The thesis explored the sensitive interrelationship between EG, politics, power relations and LG within the political administrative interface in LMs. It was apparent that EG *'took a back seat'* to political mandates and interests and a unique outlook was provided on how the environmental sector was manipulated by political actors as a tool to obtain political support from communities (Anonymised for review).

The PhD thesis focused on political contest, alternation and instability in coalition and single councils in both the ELM and UDM that affected EG and the provision of environmental services. Within the study sites, the coalition council was in a state of contest, and this destabilised municipal operations. However, even with a shift from a coalition council to a single council, intra-party factions within the ruling party also destabilised operations at the ELM, indicating that it does not matter who governs, political contest occurred in both coalition and single councils and policy and legislation on coalition agreements are currently underdeveloped in SA (Anonymised for review).

The PhD thesis also assessed the process of neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment in the environmental departments of the ELM and UDM. The research provided a local municipal perspective of neopatrimonialism in the context of EG. Neopatrimonialism influenced local EG negatively in some instances, however, neopatrimonial relationships were sometimes morally justified by respondents based on livelihood support for impoverished cadres. A moral economy approach provided a moral perspective of the costs and utilitarian benefits of neopatrimonial relationships for cadres through incentivisation from the environmental sector. The findings also highlighted the complex, transitional nature of political theory in SA and point towards a multifaceted and tricky integration of

neopatrimonialism in coalitions (Anonymised for review). The next section of paper four focuses on the findings.

7.4. A practical assessment of politicised and neopatrimonial-based Environmental Governance (EG) in Endumeni and uMzinyathi

The elements of EG according to the PEGF consist of institutions, structures, and processes between stakeholders in EG. We integrate information from the elements of governance into the objectives and attributes section of the PEGF. The institutions, structures and processes section of the PEGF is applied to the municipal case study context and focuses on environmental legislation, municipal policies, forums, regulatory and advisory departmental stakeholders.

7.4.1. The objectives and attributes of governance in the Endumeni and uMzinyathi municipalities

As depicted in figure 7.1, previously the objectives and attributes of governance is classified into four categories. The four categories relate to the objectives of efficacy, equity, responsiveness and robustness, with associated attributes for each. These are discussed and applied to the research context in the following sections below.

7.4.2. Assessment of Objective 1 (Efficacy): Partially effective EG in Endumeni and uMzinyathi:

The evaluation of the first objective and attribute of practical EG is effectiveness. Effective EG consists of efficient, supportive, sustainable, and integral EG that benefits the environment, local communities, and other stakeholders in an ethical and transparent manner (Bennet and Satterfield 2018). The attributes of effective EG are direction, accountable and efficient, informed, coordination and capacity. The ELM and UDM demonstrated partial instances of effective EG that was influenced by political dynamics, this will be presented and substantiated in the following paragraphs.

7.4.2.1. Partial direction and coordination:

In the municipalities, EG coordination was predominately the role of contracted service providers that specialised in environmental consulting. The municipalities also delegated environmental planning duties to under resourced environmental staff that were often occupied with service delivery duties. The political instability in the municipalities usually resulted in poor coordination of environmental

initiatives and the termination of external funding for environmental interventions[7]. An ELM official claimed that *"environmental interventions are usually coordinated only in communities that support the ruling party"* (Interview, 15 March 2022, Dundee, SA). An ELM official claimed that *"there is a lack of resources to implement environmental interventions"* (Interview, 15 March 2022, Dundee, SA), indicating that support is required from external organisations for environmental coordination. It was also apparent that the councils did not provide sufficient budget for environmental coordination. A demotivated ELM official claimed that *"I feel that my job was created for compliance purposes, there is no proper focus or usage for my job"* (Interview, 12 April 2020, Dundee, SA), this revealed the lack of interest towards environmental coordination and planning from the municipal councils.

7.4.2.2. Limited capacity:

The concept of capacity referred to the intellectual and human capacity in the environmental sector of the UDM and ELM. In most instances, both municipalities recruited qualified environmental officials based on environmental compliance requirements such as Waste Management Officers (WMOs) and Environmental Officers (EOs). However, certain environmental based positions were awarded to unqualified candidates, especially when mandatory environmental compliance requirements were not a priority such as environmental general workers. A UDM official claimed that *"some environmental officials from the municipalities were employed from political support and are not qualified to conduct their duties effectively"* (Interview, 12 April 2020, Dundee, SA). Le Roux (2012) emphasised that a lack of human capacity in LG is a major contributor to fragmented EG. There were also allegations of irregularities in environmental based employment posts. An ELM official claimed that *"posts were tailor made for the hiring of certain comrades even though the position required specialist skills"* (Interview, 8 April 2021, Dundee, SA).

Temporary human capacity was externally sourced from government departments to promote EG and provide environmental service delivery. The casual labour assisted in cleaning illegal dumping hotspots and cutting grass and trees. A UDM supervisor stated that *"the municipalities relied on external grants from government departments to employ casual labour"* (Interview, 12 April 2020, Dundee, SA). There were also political challenges faced with temporary workers resulting from the recruitment process as councillors were tasked with choosing potential workers and comrades were often given preference. An ELM official claimed it was *"challenging to manage workers that had political ties, as they could not be reprimanded for not completing work duties as councillors always protected them"* (Interview, 12

[7] In SA, LM councils are responsible for environmental decision-making and the approval of environmental interventions at the local scale (Hellberg 2014).

April 2020, Dundee, SA), indicating the negative influence of politically affiliated appointments in LMs (see Olver, 2018).

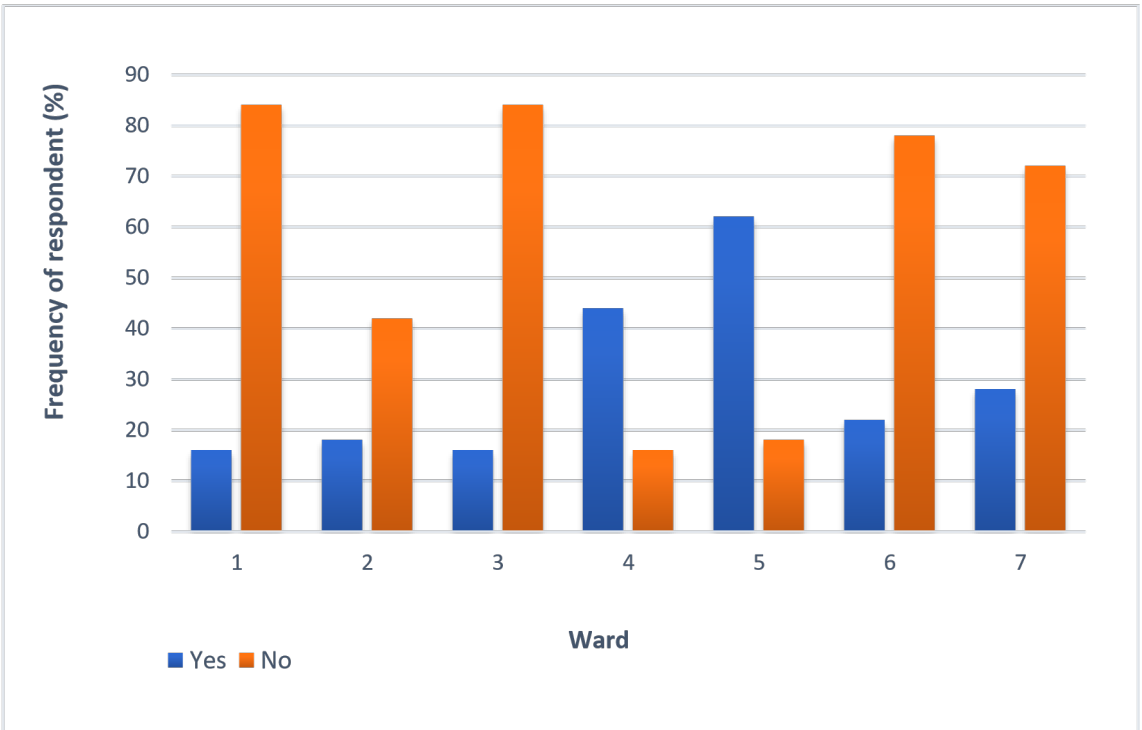


Figure 7.3. Community perceptions on sufficient and qualified environmental workers in the Endumeni Local Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, 2020 (n=600)

The community members from the 7 ELM wards provided their input towards human capacity in the environmental department of the ELM. As evident in figure 7.3, most community members (wards 1, 2, 4, 6, 7) felt that the ELM does not have sufficient and qualified workers to manage environmental interventions and provide environmental service delivery. An ELM councillor claimed that *"the municipality acknowledges the lack of qualified environmental workers and only workers with relevant tertiary qualifications will be recruited in the environmental department"* (Interview, 3 May 2020, Dundee, SA). Contrastingly, respondents from wards 4 and 5 claimed that the ELM has sufficient and qualified environmental staff. An ELM official claimed the main reason for this is that *"majority of municipal environmental employees reside in these wards with some notably having political affiliations to the council"* (Interview, 14 May 2020, Dundee, SA).

7.4.2.3. Partially informed:

Some municipal officials and councillors were informed of EG and environmental issues and others were not. The promotion of a positive environmental culture was not always supported by all council members. An ELM official provided recycling awareness to community members; however, the official

had a negative experience when conflict occurred with a community member from an illegal dumping incident and the council did not assist in the legal case, *"I was involved in a fight with a citizen, he took me to court and the municipality did not support me, I decided not to provide environmental awareness to the public anymore"* (Interview, 3 May 2020, Dundee, SA). This indicated that the council failed to support an official that experienced conflict whilst practicing informed EG.

The presence of autocratic and misinformed management was also apparent in the environmental departments of the municipalities. An ELM official claimed that she cannot initiate and implement environmental interventions without the approval of the manager, *"my manager does not allow me to be creative or make my own decisions"* (Interview, 21 July 2021, Dundee, SA). This resulted in a lack of employee morale and a lack of interest towards promoting informed EG, *"I work like a robot and just wait for my salary at the end of the month"* (Interview, 21 July 2021, Dundee, SA). The environmental workers from the municipalities also claimed they felt oppressed by senior managers in terms of environmental decision-making, especially if they supported a different political party, *"power hungry managers use environmental-based opportunities for political benefits and not for the benefit of the environment"* (Interview, 21 July 2021, Dundee, SA).

7.4.2.4. Rarely accountable and efficient:

The findings indicated that the municipalities were accountable and efficient in certain instances and that political dynamics influenced accountable and efficient decision-making in the environmental sector. The department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) mandates financial accountability and transparency of all municipalities by requesting annual audits of service delivery. A UDM official emphasised that *"environmental accountability was less prioritised than financial accountability in the UDM"* (Interview, 21 July 2021, Dundee, SA). The government environmental departments such as the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA) only charged or fined the municipalities when there was critical environmental harm caused by municipal actions. An EDTEA official stated that, *"the process of fining or charging municipalities for environmental injustices is a lengthy, bureaucratic process"* (Interview, 21 July 2021, Dundee, SA), indicating a rare sense of environmental accountability.

The negative influence of politics on environmental accountability and efficiency in the municipalities were emphasised by officials, *"it is better if an NGO or private companies implement environmental projects, because the municipality contaminates these projects with politics"* (Interview, 8 October 2021, Dundee, SA). An ELM official also stated that the implementation of environmental plans and access to consistent and functional machinery for environmental service delivery is lacking, *"there is a*

lack of environmental planning, the machinery are broken and insufficient" (Interview, 8 October 2021, Dundee, SA). However, the municipalities have structures in place to ensure accountability and efficiency such as the Municipal Public Accounts Committee (MPAC) *"to oversee and advise the council on financial and administration decisions"* (Interview, 8 October 2021, Dundee, SA). The MPAC official stated that the council did not approve sufficient budget for the environmental sector. This indicates that the environmental sector relies on external funding sources and must utilise limited resources efficiently.

7.4.3. Assessment of Objective 2 (Equity): Normatively equitable EG in Endumeni and uMzinyathi

The evaluation of the second objective and attribute of practical EG in the PEGF is equitable. The equitable objective focused on fair and inclusive EG that included stakeholders from different socioeconomic backgrounds. The attributes of equitable EG are participation, recognition, just and fair (Bennett and Satterfield 2018). The municipalities demonstrated a normative level of equitable EG by achieving minimum EG objectives.

7.4.3.1. Erratic recognition and participation:

The recognition attribute was utilised to assess EG that acknowledged cultural diversity and the environmental rights of stakeholders. The participation attribute assessed participation platforms and opportunities for stakeholders to participate in EG decision-making. The municipalities compiled environmental-based strategies and plans that prioritised cultural diversity and environmental rights in EG issues. According to ELM and UDM officials, *"the municipalities environmental-based documents adopted an inclusive approach to EG and promoted equal access to environmental resources and opportunities"* (Interview, 8 October 2021, Dundee, SA). However, there were challenges in the enforcement and implementation of EG plans and strategies. The challenges consisted of budget limitations, a lack of human capacity and the over prioritisation of political mandates, as a UDM official emphasised, *"the implementation of environmental plans and strategies are lacking, they are placed on shelves to collect dust"* (Interview, 8 October 2021, Dundee, SA).

The municipalities established community participation channels for environmental issues. However, there was predominately a negative environmental culture from local communities that resulted in a lack of community participation in environmental meetings and forums. Most community members

were more interested to participate in political meetings, as this usually provided better opportunities in comparison to environmental meetings, *"I rather attend political meetings, I have a better chance of getting a job this way"* (Interview, 8 October 2021, Dundee, SA).

7.4.3.2. Normatively fair and just:

The fair and just attributes focused on environmental justice issues that impacted EG. The municipalities often implemented fair and just EG by abiding to the mandate stated in the South African constitution. An ELM councillor emphasised that the ELM and UDM are governed by different political parties and this impacted fair and just EG, for example, *"the UDM usually invests resources in two of the four LMs that are governed by the same political party as the UDM"* (Interview, 12 July 2021, Dundee, SA). Leck and Crick (2020) emphasised that collaborative decision-making between neighbouring municipalities is vital for promoting EG and this was not always apparent in the ELM and UDM. Kolisang (2019) and Asmal (2019) have confirmed that some LMs in SA are achieving their constitutional obligations by adopting principles of developmental governance and managing environmental justice issues. According to municipal officials, *"we have fulfilled the environmental justice constitutional mandate by offering service delivery to communities even if there are outstanding bills and rates"* (Interview, 12 July 2021, Dundee, SA).

The political influence was also evident when managers prioritised environmental complaints within specific wards by ensuring that community members were satisfied with council duties and performances. A UDM manager claimed that *"it is our duty to serve the councillors because we were employed by the council and it is best to follow their instructions"* (Interview, 23 September 2021, Dundee, SA). This indicated that managers act as *"political soldiers"* for the council to ensure high standards of environmental services in favourable communities for future political benefits.

7.4.4. Assessment of Objective 3 (Responsiveness): Rarely responsive EG in Endumeni and uMzinyathi:

The evaluation of the third objective of practical EG is responsiveness. The responsiveness objective assisted in assessing how the municipalities responded and adapted to EG principles, promoted environmental education and awareness and provided environmental services. The attributes of responsive EG are innovative, flexible, learning, adaptable, and anticipatory.

7.4.4.1. Limited learning and anticipatory planning:

The learning attribute assisted in assessing the municipalities progress towards promoting and implementing environmental education interventions. The municipalities implemented environmental

interventions with the support of external government stakeholders and the local private sector. A UDM councillor confirmed that *"the municipal councils have implemented environmental interventions using local ward committee meetings"* (Interview, 23 September 2021, Dundee, SA). However, the UDM councillor complained that opposition community supporters choose not to participate and attempt to initiate conflict during the interventions. Environmental interventions such as environmental educational awareness campaigns and clean up campaigns were also utilised for political canvassing, especially during the local elections. An ELM official claimed that environmental interventions usually fail because of a negative community mindset towards environmental management and political issues, *"it is not a lack of awareness but an unsustainable environmental culture and political instability in communities"* (Interview, 23 September 2021, Dundee, SA).

The anticipatory attribute assisted in assessing the municipality's ability to plan for future EG requirements and adapt towards environmental compliance mandates. The municipalities supported the development of environmental-based infrastructure, especially for the waste and water management sectors. The assessment of the municipal IDPs provided evidence of EG objectives. Msibi and Penzhorn (2010) revealed that participatory stakeholder interaction proved vital for future planning and implementation of environmental plans. Municipal Infrastructure Grants (MIG) resulted in the development of a new landfill disposal cell for the ELM. A former ELM councillor claimed that *"the council influenced labour selection during the construction process"* (Interview, 23 September 2021, Dundee, SA)[8].

7.4.4.2. Borderline adaptive and innovative:

The adaptive and innovative attributes assisted in assessing the potential of the municipalities in creating environmental opportunities, adapting to environmental changes and implementing innovative environmental strategies. The municipalities have gradually progressed towards environmental innovation and adaptation, however administrative, political and financial factors are major challenges. The municipalities attempted to promote innovative strategies for developing the environmental sector by creating and monitoring databases of potential business development in the environmental sector. Municipal environmental officials encouraged community members to convert illegal dumping hotspots into areas of business and recreation such as car wash areas and community parks. An ELM official stated that *"the municipalities established buyback centres through funding opportunities which served as depots for recycling companies"* (Interview, 23 September 2021, Dundee, SA).

[8] The ELM council also utilised a cost-effective model for evaluating environmental assets, whereby assets were not revaluated on an annual basis, therefore any insurance claim or funding opportunities were valued on the initial worth of the assets.

The implementation of adaptive and innovative environmental initiatives in the municipalities were not always supported by the councils. Some environmental officials claimed that they were not allowed to be innovative and the council usually disapproved their ideas due to financial constraints and a lack of political priority, *"my ideas are always disapproved by the council, I won't waste my time to be innovative anymore"* (Interview, 9 March 2021, Dundee, SA). Environmental officials from the municipalities claimed that the council disapproved environmental-based construction for the municipal buildings, *"stating it was not cost- effective"* (Interview, 9 March 2021, Dundee, SA). There was also a lack environmentally sustainable workplace strategies implemented by municipal employees such as energy efficiency and recycling programmes. An ELM official stated that, *"the councils are all talk and no action when it comes to environmental issues"* (Interview, 9 March 2021, Dundee, SA).

7.4.4.3. Occasionally flexible:

The flexible attribute was utilised to assess how the municipalities applied EG principles in diverse cultural, social, political and economic contexts. The environmental officials revealed that the municipalities implemented flexible EG in some instances by encouraging community members to participate in environmental forums and interventions. The councils also utilised community roadshows and ward committee meetings as platforms to discuss environmental issues. An ELM official stated that, *"there is great EG potential in the ELM and UDM, but flexibility costs time and money that municipalities do not always possess"* (Interview, 9 March 2021, Dundee, SA). An ELM councillor confirmed that *"the municipalities have collaborated effectively with stakeholders and have become increasingly flexible with environmental decision-making"* (Interview, 9 March 2021, Dundee, SA). Municipal environmental officials also indicated that the municipalities are gradually implementing flexible EG, *"the municipalities are working towards establishing environmental units that will be responsible for different environmental branches"* (Interview, 9 March 2021, Dundee, SA).

7.4.5. Assessment of Objective 4 (Robustness): Seldom robust EG in Endumeni and uMzinyathi

The fourth objective and attribute of practical EG is robust. The robust objective was utilised to assess the resilience of the municipalities towards achieving EG within a politicised environment. The attributes of robust EG are polycentric, nested, connected and legitimate and were combined below for cohesiveness.

7.4.5.1. Erratically legitimate and nested:

The legitimate attribute assisted in assessing stakeholder support and collective action towards EG in the municipalities. The nested attribute assisted in assessing the horizontal and vertical stakeholder interactions in EG decision-making. The municipalities demonstrated instances of both legitimate and nested EG, however consistent progress was lacking. In terms of environmental legitimacy, the municipalities compiled numerous environmental-based plans, strategies, and by-laws with the assistance of several stakeholders. The environmental officials claimed that *"the main reason for the completion of environmental documents was for compliance purposes mandated by provincial and national departments"* (Interview, 15 March 2021, Dundee, SA). However, the implementation and evaluation of environmental planning documents was erratic. There was insufficient municipal budget and ineffective council decision-making that impacted the legitimacy of environmental plans, strategies and by-laws. An ELM official stated that *"environmental sector plans are developed, adopted and kept for compliance sake and are never implemented, monitored and reviewed as mandated"* (Interview, 9 May 2021, Dundee, SA).

The municipalities adopted nested EG to a certain extent by initiating communication platforms for stakeholders to discuss environmental issues such as forums, ward committee meetings and public participation meetings. However, the EG culture within the municipalities was not entirely applicable to the nested attribute, as power in environmental decision-making was reserved for senior management and the councils through a hierarchical approach. An ELM official emphasised that *"the communities do not possess power to approve environmental decisions and are reliant on council approval"* (Interview, 9 May 2021, Dundee, SA).

7.4.5.2. Occasionally polycentric and connected:

The polycentric and connected attributes were utilised to assess integrative and collaborative EG in the municipalities. The municipalities implemented polycentric and connected EG in most instances. In some occasions, environmental interventions were polycentric, as contracted environmental service providers assisted with implementation. Other stakeholders such as NGOs, the private sector and government departments participated collaboratively in environmental interventions and meetings. A UDM official claimed that the UDM council did not always provide consistent and effective support to EG, *"we do not have the budget to support environmental interventions, our main concern is providing service delivery"* (Interview, 9 May 2021, Dundee, SA). Reddy (2018) insisted that good LG is reliant on inclusivity, participation and power sharing in decision-making, these are key principles of polycentric EG. However, some municipal officials claimed that a polycentric approach also produces

financial and intellectual dependency on government departments, as LMs become *"reliant on external funding form department stakeholders"* (Interview, 12 May 2021, Dundee, SA).

The application of the PEGF indicated that there are significant neopatrimonial and political dynamics that influence the consistent and progressive implementation of local EG in SA. Some objectives in the PEGF were partially, normatively, seldomly and rarely achieved indicating that there is progress towards achieving EG principles in South African LG, however more LM resources and budget allocation as well as political factors such as council stability and merit-based neopatrimonialism is required in the hope of attaining consistent and progressive EG.

7.5. Discussion: Applying the PEGF evaluation in the context of neopatrimonial relations in local government

The PEGF is relatively new in the context of neopatrimonialism in South African LG and globally. In this paper, the PEGF was applied as a guiding tool and modified to evaluate practical EG within a South African LG context. By applying the PEGF, this paper contributed towards providing a detailed evaluative analysis of politicised and neopatrimonial-based local EG. The findings from the application of the PEGF in this study will assist other researchers and relevant stakeholders in SA and globally by providing guidance and clarity towards formulating local environmental policies and plans within a local politicised environment. The findings also revealed that both the ELM and UDM indicated signs of inconsistent and erratic progression towards EG. As indicated in figure 7.4 overleaf, there was partial effectiveness, normative equitability, rarely responsive and seldom robust EG depending on the political interests, political mandates and the political stability of governing political parties and the council. In times of intense political contest and instability in the ELM and UDM, EG was notably less effective, equitable, responsive and robust. The findings strongly indicate inconsistent EG within changing political conditions which indicates that coalition councils in SA are largely contested (see Thakur and Nel 2023).

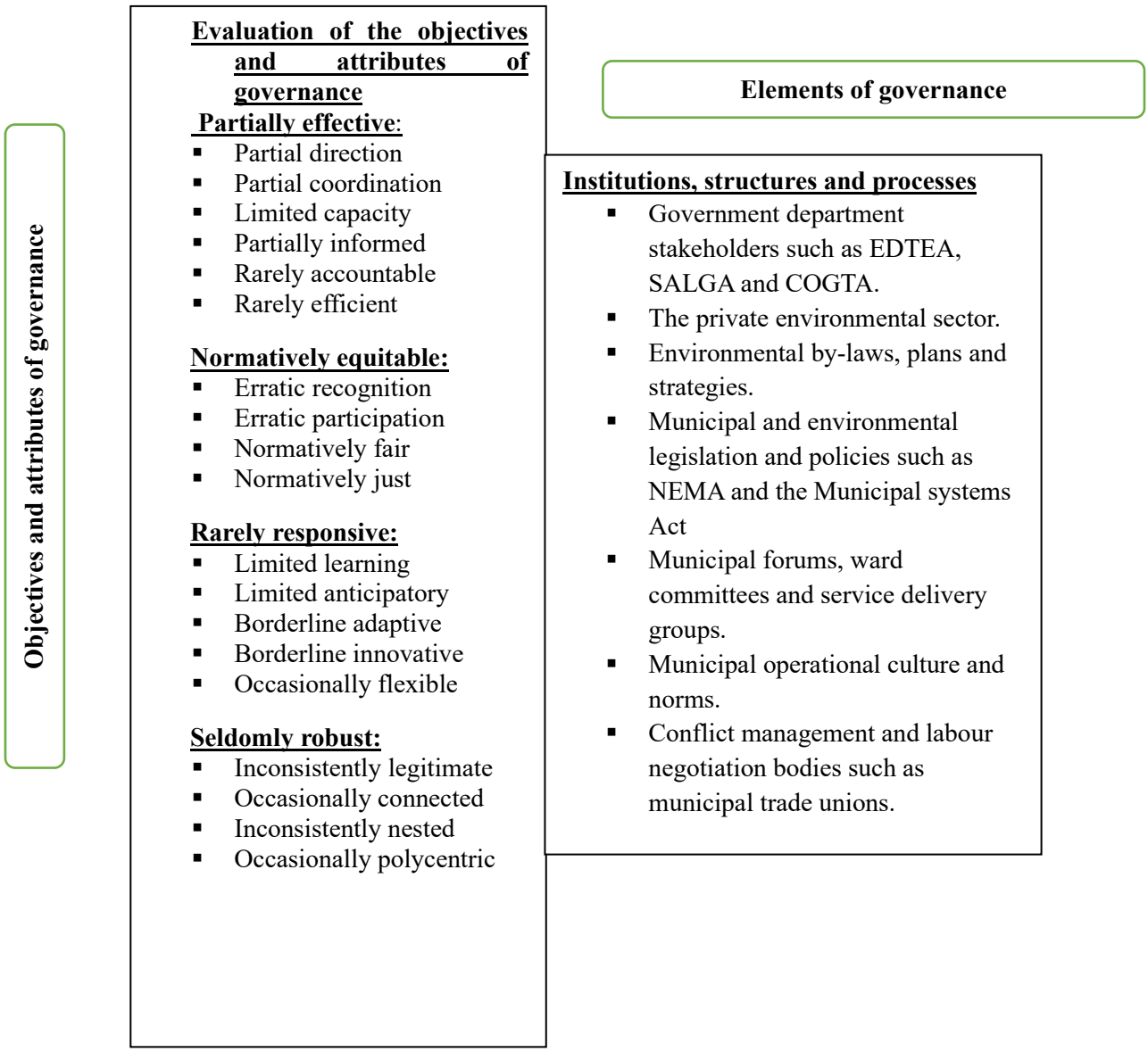


Figure 7.4. The context specific PEGF diagram of the Endumeni and uMzinyathi municipalities

Figure 7.4 above provides a summary of the PEGF application in the municipal study sites and indicates the inconsistent progression towards EG. The findings indicated that political and neopatrimonial dynamics influenced the stability of EG in the municipal study sites and were apparent in each category and attribute of the PEGF. The political and neopatrimonial influence in the study sites shifted with changing political councils and this resulted in changes or shifts in EG focus areas and recruitment. Similar findings on politicised EG in LG were also identified by Lawhon and Patel (2013), Pasquini and Shearing (2014), Olver (2018) and Thakur and Nel (2023). Kotze and Plessis (2015) asserted that LMs must ensure efficient environmental management and environmental compliance, however this research revealed that challenges occur as the result of fragmented EG and differing political and neopatrimonial mandates between councils and political parties. Roberts (2010) and Pasquini and Shearing (2014) have also found that political mandates in LMs are usually prioritised over EG mandates and municipal councils often utilise environmental resources to obtain political support from cadres.

In a coalition council, all political parties have to be in agreement regarding EG issues and compliances, as SA in the process of heading towards increased coalition councils in LG (see Thakur and Nel 2023). EG mandates are to encounter further issues as coalitions develop a culture of collaborative and consistent governance. Consistent and sustainable EG in SA is achievable depending on political consensus between the council and municipal officials, resilient and visionary leadership, political stability and efficient municipal operations. There is also need for effective and accountable institutions, structures and processes in LG to ensure consistent and progressive EG. Scholars such as Bodin (2017) and Bennett and Satterfield (2018) emphasised the importance of LG in the implementation of EG principles in LMs, as well as multi-stakeholder input and holistic decision-making for environmental issues, as evident in this paper. Rodgers (2016) further claimed that LG is vital in promoting stable and effective EG, however local EG is influenced by political and neopatrimonial dynamics and a lack of implementation of the environmental agenda.

The PEGF diagram in figure 7.4 is context specific to LMs in SA and provides a critical evaluation and practical tool tailored to a particular space and polity. The PEGF is highly adaptable to different contexts as evident in this study and can be applied in other government sectors in SA and globally. Other researchers and stakeholders may also utilise the PEGF as an evaluative tool to practically assess sustainable local EG in other LMs in SA and globally. From an optimistic perspective from the PEGF findings, we propose a progressive balance and understanding of LG, local political dynamics and EG between relevant stakeholders in the hope of achieving progressive EG, as well as consistent environmental service delivery and a thriving local environmental sector.

This paper applied the PEGF as a practical evaluative tool for assessing politicised and neopatrimonial-based EG in LG by focusing on important political and neopatrimonial dynamics. The PEGF can be modified to evaluate EG within different contexts, sectors and scales - from local to national and global. The PEGF is an assessment tool that can be applied to identify whether EG principles are progressive in nature and for consequential management and EG strategy formation in LG and other contexts. The PEGF is a contemporary and practical framework, that focuses more on the application, evaluation, reflection and improvement of EG and this is vital for not only academics, but policy makers, LG consultants and civil society in SA and beyond.

7.6. Conclusion

The paper contributed towards a deeper understanding and evaluation of politicised local EG in SA by applying the PEGF as a theoretical and evaluative tool. The PEGF was utilised to assess and evaluate the stability of EG within a highly politicised and neopatrimonial municipal environment. The four categories and attributes of the PEGF - effective, equitable, responsive and robust were utilised to assess and evaluate politicised EG in the ELM and UDM. A concise analysis was provided of each crucial attribute in the PEGF that assisted in evaluating the practicality and stability of EG at a local scale. The application of the PEGF demonstrated how neopatrimonialism determined the distribution of EG resources, opportunities and incentives in South African LG. The PEGF was applicable in a South African context and can be applied in other LMs globally as an assessment and evaluative tool for EG. The study contributed towards a deeper understanding of how political dynamics influence and affect the sustainability and stability of local EG in SA and can be applied and adapted to compared to other local EG research in Africa and globally. The application of the PEGF also revealed that political dynamics directly influences the progressiveness of sustainable and practical local EG in SA.

This research paper demonstrated and discussed how neopatrimonial and political factors directly influenced the progress and transition towards effective EG and the provision of environmental services both positively and negatively depending on local political preferences and mandates in EG decision making and prioritisation. By applying a context specific PEGF tool, the research contributed towards understanding that effective local EG would be futile without considering the fragile yet closely knitted interrelationship between local political dynamics, power relations, LG and council leadership qualities and environmental issues. The research also provided insight towards understanding how interactions within the political-administrative interface in LG within South Africa influences and shapes EG, environmental issues and environmental service provision.

We suggest that future researchers apply the PEGF to political and neopatrimonial dynamics in different LMs in SA and globally to assist in assessing practical EG. We also advise researchers to apply the

PEGF to evaluate politicised environmental issues in different sectors such as the private sector and civil society, as well utilise the PEGF to formulate practical solutions to environmental-based challenges and ineffective EG at the local scale.

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Disclosure statement

This research is sponsored financially by the National Research Foundation of South Africa, and this may lead to certain content of the research been licenced to the National Research Foundation of South Africa. We have hereby disclosed these interests entirely to Taylor & Francis and have a conflict resolution plan for any potential conflicts resulting from this agreement.

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Chapter 8

Synthesis / Conclusion

Synthesising insights about contested and politicised environmental governance and neopatrimonialism in the Endumeni local and uMzinyathi district municipalities in South Africa

This chapter synthesises the main findings of the research in relation to the aims and objectives of the study. There were two aims and five objectives in the study that assisted in answering the research questions related to politicised Environmental Governance (EG), the influence of contested politics and power relations on EG and environmental service provision, as well as the implications of neopatrimonial relationships between political elites and cadres. The research also covered aspects relating to the morality of environmental-based incentivisation on EG and environmental service provision in the municipal study sites. The influence of political dynamics in LM leadership, and governance functions is well established (see Patel, 2009, Du Plessis, 2010, Mngoma *et al.,* 2011, Hellberg, 2014, Pasquini and Shearing, 2014 and Houdet 2016), hence it is important to critically assess and discuss the influence of political dynamics on local EG and the environmental sector. The implications of incompetent LG and political contestations in South African LMs act as barriers towards attaining and transitioning towards effective and progressive EG (Du Plessis, 2015; Asmal, 2019; Falayi, 2022). This is important for understanding the role of the local environmental sector in SA and the potential benefits it has for local communities that often experience political contest and instability, as well as cadres that depend on incentivisation from the environmental sector for livelihood support. The chapter commences with justification for the research and then a findings summary is provided for each research objective, and a synthesized graphical depiction of the four analysis chapters is provided indicating the interrelationship between the findings of each chapter. This is followed by the research reflections, recommendations and suggestions for future research in contested politics, politicised EG and neopatrimonialism in South African LMs. The research limitations are then discussed, followed by my concluding thoughts and contribution to future research in this academic discipline.

8.1. Research justification

There are many reasons for the justification of this study. For instance, there is currently limited research focusing on the influence of local political dynamics on EG, environmental service delivery and environmental sustainability in LG within SA. Current literature also indicated limitations of the application of a political ecology theoretical framework at the LM scale to critically understand politicised EG, environmental service provision and access to incentives from the environmental sector. This study provided a critical assessment of the interrelationship between local politics, power relations, governance, and environment issues within a South African context. The study was also important for

identifying and discussing the implications of local political contestations, inter and intra party factionalism and neopatrimonialism on EG and how political dynamics influence the environmental sector for political benefits.

Senosha (2017), Olver (2018) and Masuku and Jili (2019) emphasised that environmental resources, opportunities, and services are often utilised as incentivisation in LMs for political support of local political elites by cadres. I focused on substantiating this claim and providing evidence of the interrelationship between local politics, power relations, factional contest, neopatrimonial relationships and EG in South African LMs. Studies conducted by Hlahla et al (2014), Leck and Crick (2014), Pasquini et al (2015) and Houdet (2016) confirmed the implementation of EG principles in South African LMs. Local councils and political elites have also acknowledged the potential benefits from the environmental sector and have budgeted for environmental compliances and priorities (Du Plessis, 2010; Kotze and Plessis, 2015). However, there is a lack of critical research in SA that focuses on a detailed analysis of EG and environmental sustainability within the political-administrative interface of LG.

There is currently insufficient research conducted on the influence of neopatrimonial and factional relationships on local EG in SA. The majority of current literature focused on the effects of neopatrimonial relationships on LG with limited environmental considerations such as how neopatrimonial relationships impact local EG, the labour dynamics within the environmental departments in LMs and access to environmental-based interventions and resources. I aimed to fill this research gap by investigating and discussing the politisation of EG and the influence and implications of contested factional dynamics on EG at the LM scale. This research provided evidence of neopatrimonial relationships in the environmental sector and indicated how environmental resources and opportunities are used as incentivisation sources for politically inclined communities and municipal officials. The application of the moral economy theoretical perspective was also vital in understanding the moral reasoning for the benefits of neopatrimonial relationships and environmental-based incentivisation for impoverished politically inclined cadres within a system of what African studies literature characters as hierarchical dependence and obligation (Ferguson, 2013).

Key research justification points:

1. There was limited research that focused on the influence of political dynamics on EG and environmental service provision at the LM scale in SA. However, my research contributed towards filling this research gap and the findings can also be applied in Africa and globally.

2. Previously the PEA was insufficiently utilised and applied at the LM scale in SA, especially to understand politicised EG and environmental injustices and inequalities, as well as environmental sustainability issues within a contested council coalition context.

3. This study provided a comprehensive assessment of the interrelationship within the political administrative interface between politics, power relations, governance and the environment in LMs. This research provides a critical and detailed contribution towards understanding the diverse interactions within the political-administrative interface in South African LG. This is important for future research, as it provides a platform to conduct comparison and substantiation studies within the LG space.

4. This study emphasised and assessed the role of neopatrimonialism in LMs and how cadre deployment and neopatrimonial incentivisation has become normalised and intertwined in the environmental departments of LMs.

5. The research provided evidence of neopatrimonial relationships in the environmental sector and demonstrated how environmental resources and opportunities are used as incentivisation for politically inclined communities and municipal officials, as well as de-incentivisation for opposition political supporters.

6. The research findings revealed an interesting comprehension of the benefits of neopatrimonial incentivisation for impoverished politically inclined cadres. By applying a moral perspective to the impoverished majority of South Africans, of which were previously disadvantaged by the Apartheid regime and experienced the unfair distribution of state opportunities, the contemporary neopatrimonial system provides a lifeline to accessing livelihood support from the LG sector, especially for competent, impoverished cadres that were previously excluded from such opportunities.

8.2. Summary of findings

Objective one: To identify and discuss the influence of local political dynamics on environmental governance and environmental service provision within the municipal study sites.

The discipline of human geography is diverse, incorporating and interlinking numerous disciplines such as politics and sociology. Therefore, a political ecology theoretical lens was applicable and utilised to achieve objective one of the study. The influence of political dynamics on EG and environmental services was identified and discussed in a temporal period of 20 years from the year 2000 to 2020. The temporal analysis revealed that there was a gradual progression of EG because of environmental compliance and environmental legislation mandates from government departments. To assist in fulfilling the objective, I compiled a political ecology diagram depicting the interrelationship between

local politics, environmental governance, power relations, environmental and social inequalities, as well as budgetary constraints in the environmental sector of the municipal case study sites. This interrelationship forms part of the political-administrative interface in LG, a concept that is described as a slim boundary between local politics, power relations and local municipal operations (Reddy, 2019).

The research findings provided evidence of blatant political interference and influence in environmental issues, environmental service delivery and EG in both municipal study sites. EG was found to be highly politicised. Mngoma et al (2011), Hellberg (2014) and Grest (2022) emphasised the influence of political decisions on EG and environmental issues in SA. The findings revealed that political issues were often prioritised over environmental issues. This resulted in both enabling and constraining implications on progressive EG. The principles of EG were often enabled by the ruling council in specific communities and spaces resulting in areas supporting the ruling council been prioritised for environmental interventions, incentives and resources, whilst communities that supported the opposition were usually excluded. EG principles were prioritised if it aligned with political mandates or agendas. There was evidence from the research findings that demonstrated political influence and council biasness in environmental-based decision making, the initiation and approval of municipal environmental by-laws, environmental development plans, and recruitment in the environmental department of the municipalities. The council approved environmental decisions based on political benefits received from the environmental sector. The research findings indicated that the environmental sector is one of the largest departments in LMs and provides socio-economic benefits such as employment opportunities and environmental based businesses, similar findings were also confirmed by Olver (2018) and Caldas (2022). The planning and implementation of external (by government departments) and internal (within the municipalities) environmental interventions were utilised for political reasons such as campaigning and incentivisation opportunities for politically inclined communities. Environmental resources and services were utilised for political persuasion and reserved for rewarding and maintaining the support of certain politically loyal comrades.

I also utilised the Practical Environmental Governance Framework (PEGF) by Bennett and Satterfield (2018) to assist in achieving this objective by assessing and evaluating the influence of political dynamics on EG and environmental service provision in the municipal study sites. The PEGF consisted of four main categories of attributes, effective, equitable, responsive, and robust EG that can be ap plied in different contexts, and in this case, an LM environment to assess effective and progressive EG. The political influence in the municipalities influenced each attribute in the PEGF. The findings revealed both enabling and constraining political influences on the attributes effective, equitable, responsive and robust EG. The PEGF encompasses concepts from the PEA and this was present in the findings. Using the theoretical combination of the PEA and the PEGF indicated that political dynamics will always be present and influential in LMs. Therefore, a consistent balance of priority representation between

political dynamics, power relations, EG, municipal budget availability, environmental justice and service delivery will contribute towards attaining effective local EG. The environment is directly linked to service delivery and service delivery provision cannot function without environmental influence, for example waste management and water provision (Mason, 2020).

Objective two: To assess the influence of local contested factional politics on environmental governance and environmental service provision within the municipal study sites.

The findings indicated evidence of contested and conflicted local politics and power relations between different political parties and within the same political party in the two municipal study sites. The occurrence of internal and external factionalism was prevalent, influencing EG and environmental service provision. The occurrence of factions in LG is common not only in SA but also on a global scale indicating power struggles over resources and decision making (see Mei & Wang, 2017 and Bucchianeri, 2020). In SA, there is a deep history of factionalism, especially in the ANC political party (Olver, 2017). Mukwedeya (2015) and Olver (2018) emphasised the negative influence of intraparty factionalism in the ANC structures on local EG. In the study, political contest was evident during alternating periods of political power and council leadership within an electoral democratic period in SA. Political factions and contestations in the municipalities resulted in a biased provision of environmental services and environmental opportunities, as communities that supported the ruling party were prioritised and communities that supported the opposition received delayed or inadequate environmental services and were not prioritised for environmental opportunities. Both internal and external factions were proven to delay effective EG as officials from the environmental departments and council members utilised working hours and municipal resources for political priorities rather than environmental priorities.

The council meetings in the ELM and UDM failed to convene during political contestations and instability to discuss environmental issues. When council meetings were convened, the council did not reach consensus on environmental issues, as there were conflicting views and agendas. The delay in council decision making resulted in numerous implications for the environmental sector such as delays in budget and the procurement of environmental resources and recruitment in the environmental department of the municipalities. Similarly, Reddy (2018) proved that LMs governed by faction-based councils often prioritise political mandates over service delivery and environmental priorities. The council and municipal officials also utilised environmental services and resources as political persuasion against opposition party supports, this created an imbalance in environmental service delivery and exposure to environmental interventions. Olver (2018) also found that the environmental sector was utilised for political persuasion by factional battles within the council when certain communities were prioritised over others within the Nelson Mandela Bay council. There was also evidence of opposition political supporters that misused environmental-based facilities such as parks

and recreation areas and engaged in illegal dumping, as well as damage to environmental-based resources such as bins and environmental awareness signage to indicate that the ruling party was not completing their environmental duties effectively.

Political contestations were also evident between the district and local municipal study sites. In 2019, the ELM and UDM were governed by different political parties and this resulted in a fragile working relationship between the majority of workers and officials from the environmental departments of the municipalities. Local political contestations and differing political agendas between neighbouring LMs significantly impact local EG and environmental-based policies and plans (Hellberg 2014, Du Plessis 2015). There was also ineffective communication between the ELM and UDM regarding environmental responsibilities and a lack of assistance in achieving environmental compliances such as landfill site management and the implementation of district environmental interventions. The UDM favoured LMs in the district that were governed by the same political party and at times excluded the ELM from environmental initiatives and opportunities.

There was also a high level of irritability and conflict between environmental officials from the UDM and ELM. The supply of environmental service delivery was erratic, for example the UDM is responsible for water provision in the ELM and the UDM implemented consistent water shedding in the ELM and prioritised other LMs in the district for water provision. Political contestations also influenced the usage of limited municipal resources, as political mandates and campaigns were prioritised over environmental mandates. Other studies by Pasquini et al (2015) and Grest (2022) also highlighted the implications of political contestations on environmental institutionalisation and the discontinuation of environmental interventions in politically unstable LMs. In the study sites, environmental compliances and commitments were also neglected during political contestations such as environmental audits for the landfill site and the gazetting of environmental by-laws.

However, from a critical perspective, political contestations also positively influenced EG and the provision of environmental services in the municipal study sites. For instance, communities that supported the ruling party were exposed to consistent environmental services and better environmental opportunities and this contributed to effective EG in these areas. The utilisation of environmental services and resources for political persuasion was also proven to be an effective method of achieving progressive EG in certain communities within the municipalities. Political rivalries between parties resulted in competition for political support and this encouraged the council and municipal officials to provide communities with better standards and consistent environmental services and opportunities to secure sustainable political support over their opposition. Likewise, Pasquini and Shearing (2014) indicated that effective EG is possible during political contest, as environmental responsibilities were prioritised in accordance to political benefits of the ruling party.

Objective three: To investigate and discuss the implications of neopatrimonial relationships on effective environmental governance at a local municipal scale.

Hicken (2011) and Nzo (2019) defined the concept of neopatrimonialism as political elites utilising and exchanging state resources with cadres and general members of the public for political support to maintain political rule and authority. An investigation of the neopatrimonial networks and relationships in the municipal study sites revealed five major implications of neopatrimonial relationships on EG, environmental-based service delivery and environmental interventions.

The first implication identified was employment and labour dynamics in the environmental department of the municipalities. There were instances when neopatrimonial relationships influenced the municipal recruitment process negatively by recruiting incompetent and inexperienced officials. The ANC political party in SA promoted the cadre deployment policy as a political incentive model to appoint loyal party members in employment positions to implement political mandates (Tshishonga 2014). However, Swanepoel (2022) and Zulu et al (2022) stated that cadre deployment often results in effective service delivery and unprofessionalism in the public sector, especially when incompetent cadres are appointed. The findings also revealed that politically inclined workers were not reprimanded and disciplined for incompetence and misconduct as they were important political leaders in communities. The recruitment of incompetent and unqualified workers negatively affected workplace professionalism and ethics, as well as service delivery provision and workplace morale.

The second implication identified was the procurement of municipal environmental resources and services. The occurrence of neopatrimonial relationships between municipal officials, councillors and private sector service providers resulted in unethical and biased procurement of environmental resources and services. There were cases of wasteful expenditure such as tenders awarded to service providers with inflated quotations for environmental resources and the hiring of inexperienced and unqualified environmental consultants to conduct environmental compliance audits. This impacted the limited municipal budget available to the environmental department and the quality of environmental resources provided. The awarding of environmental-based tenders was influenced by the council and politically inclined municipal officials. There were also reports of the council and municipal officials utilising the procurement of environmental resources and services to reward politically inclined businesses for their political support and to obtain financial benefits from procurement contracts. This can be classified as a form of state capture at a local municipal scale. Masenya (2017) likewise claimed that state resources and tender procurement opportunities are unevenly distributed in the public sector, as cadres are incentivised and rewarded by having access to state resources such as public sector tender contracts and employment opportunities.

The third implication of municipal neopatrimonial relationships on EG was favoritism and bias in cadre appointments. The findings indicated that senior managers and the council favoured cadre appointees

for career and education opportunities in the environmental department of the municipalities. Municipal officials that did not support the ruling party and ruling council in 2019 were ignored and not exposed to career development opportunities in the environmental sector. Moti (2019) explained that there is frequent rotation of the political elite within one political party to prevent political power from reaching opposition parties, allowing the ruling party to extend its clientelist network, as evident in the study. The findings also revealed instances of employee conflict, as cadre appointees were favoured and protected even when there was evidence of misconduct and incompetency and this impacted employee morale and competency in the environmental department.

The fourth implication was professionalism and work ethic in the environmental departments of the municipalities. Kaizer (2022) describes this process as the political elite in power serving the cadres in the neopatrimonial system to ensure the concentration of political power, dominance and the control of state policies and resources. It was also evident that workers were treated unequally depending on political support and activeness during elections, as well as their contributions to achieving political mandates. In some instances, political opposition workers and officials refused to work together and this impacted professionalism in the workplace. In terms of workplace ethics, cadre appointees adopted an invincible attitude by completing work duties at their preference and disregarding instructions provided by managers as they had council backing and support. This resulted in unethical and unprofessional behaviour in the municipal environmental departments between workers and managers that supported different political parties. However, this did not mean that cadres could not fulfill their work duties and there were conditions in which the appointments could work effectively.[7]

The fifth implication was the use of environmental opportunities and incentives for political gain and vote-buying. Environmental resources and opportunities were also utilised as a persuasive tool to attract political support from communities. The use of casual employment opportunities in the environmental department was common by the council, as loyal comrades were prioritised for casual contracts in exchange for political support. The implementation of environmental interventions was also influenced

[7] The formula below was compiled from the research findings and contributes to theoretical building and helps us understand the process of municipal cadre deployment in LG.

Education (relevant qualifications) (20%) + Politically active and neopatrimonial consideration by political elites (40%) + Sufficient experience and work ethic (20%) + Availability of municipal budget and placement opportunities (20%)
= Sustainable LM employment / recruitment of a competent cadre (100%)

by the council. The communities that supported the ruling party were prioritised for environmental interventions and comrades were exposed to income-generating opportunities in the environmental sector. There were also limited environmental opportunities and resources that were exchanged for vote-buying, and this resulted in conflict between political elites and cadres in neopatrimonial relationships. The understanding of neopatrimonial relationships from a moral economy approach is the two-way relationship of dependence and obligation in a hierarchical system between political elites and cadres (Ferguson, 2013). Mamogale (2017) claimed that neopatrimonial relationships increases dependency of impoverished communities on state and political actors, in the hope of receiving incentives for political loyalty and support. Community dependency results in the concentration of political power and control over local communities, likewise local communities possess the power to vote out councillors or political parties that offer poor levels of service delivery. Therefore, at times, neopatrimonial relationships in LMs can be detrimental to progressive and participative local EG in communities.

Objective four: To identify and assess the benefits of neopatrimonial relationships for politically inclined comrades and communities

To achieve this objective, I utilised a Moral Economy Approach (MEA) to provide a moral understanding and reasoning of neopatrimonial relationships between municipal political elites and community comrades in the ELM that provided positive and beneficial outcomes and opportunities for politically inclined supporters and communities. It was evident that neopatrimonial relationships in the ELM are sometimes viewed as morally rational based on the reasoning of providing sustainable livelihoods and access to economic opportunities for impoverished politically inclined municipal employees and communities (cadres). Sayers (2011) ME theoretical perspective was utilised to discuss and morally comprehend the possible benefits and positives of neopatrimonial relationships in the environmental sector and environmental department of the ELM. I went beyond the normative pessimistic understanding of neopatrimonialism that is usually related to corruption and unethical behaviour and revealed that neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment are sometimes morally logical from a utilitarian redistributive standpoint based on sustaining livelihoods and accessing economic opportunities for cadres belonging to the impoverished and previously disadvantaged majority in SA.

According to Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2004), Stokes (2011) and Anciano (2017) neopatrimonialism in SA contributes towards achieving democratic principles, this occurs when non-incentivised cadres hold patrons accountable by providing transparency to the media and other forms of accountability platforms. Benit-Gbaffou (2011) also emphasised the importance of neopatrimonial incentives in allowing marginalised and impoverished communities access to employment opportunities to sustain livelihoods. To further build on this, the research findings were categorised into six reasons as to why

neopatrimonial relationships between local municipal political elites and impoverished, politically active communities and municipal employees have the potential to sustain livelihoods, decrease poverty, improve political relations, promote environmental service delivery and promote EG, as well as provide access to state environmental resources and opportunities for impoverished comrades at the LG level in SA. The six reasons provided below indicated how politically inclined comrades and communities are incentivised from the environmental sector through the process of neopatrimonialism:

1. The recruitment of politically inclined competent, qualified, and experienced cadres in the municipal environmental department.
2. Builds long term political relationships
3. Provides benefits for local politically inclined communities
4. Political support and stable EG
5. Promotes professionalism in the municipal workplace environment
6. Provides environmental-based procurement opportunities for local SMMEs

Objective five: To identify community perceptions on politicised and neopatrimonial-based environmental governance and environmental incentivisation within the ELM.

To achieve this objective, I critically assessed community-based environmental interventions within the ELM, focusing on the neopatrimonial relationships that were prevalent in the intervention that resulted in political based incentivisation for communities aligned to the ruling party. Furthermore, I administered a community questionnaire and key-informant interviews that consisted of questions relating to perceptions on EG, environmental service provision and environmental incentivisation in the ELM. Research conducted by Hlahla et al (2014) and Kolisang (2019) emphasised the importance of a community development-based approach in SA that resulted in the promotion of local EG and attempting to meet the needs of impoverished communities through sustainable development and progressive EG. It was evident that stakeholders such as municipal environmental officials, community members and department officials felt that neopatrimonialism strongly influenced the planning and implementation of environmental-based interventions resulting in unequal intervention opportunities and incentivisation for neopatrimonial linked communities and non-neopatrimonial linked communities.

Multiple stakeholders also claimed that neopatrimonialism impacted the implementation of environmental interventions, as there was often a political tussle for intervention incentives by the council for community comrades. De Jager and Steenekamp (2016) stated that socio-economic issues affecting impoverished communities such as inequality and poverty remain prevalent well into democracy and this provides a platform for politics and neopatrimonialism to influence impoverished communities in SA. The community questionnaire on perceptions of neopatrimonialism in the

environmental sector of the ELM revealed that community members perceived municipal employment in the environmental departments as a source of neopatrimonial incentivisation for comrades that demonstrated political loyalty and were important to political mandates. Community wards that supported opposition parties felt that the ELM did not have sufficient and qualified environmental workers and officials to achieve effective EG, however the majority of respondents from community wards in support of the ruling party claimed that the ELM possessed sufficient and qualified environmental workers and officials, since the majority of municipal employment positions were chosen from their wards. Olver (2017) also stated that municipal councils often utilise environmental resources and interventions to obtain political support from impoverished communities. This also relates to the aspects of the moral economy where systems of dependence create subjects (Ferguson, 2013), in this case cadres.

In terms of EG and environmental service provision, community members felt that politically active communities were always prioritised for environmental services and opportunities and this resulted in biased environmental service delivery provision and unequal access to environmental resources in the ELM. Sadie et al (2016) and Odiyo (2020) emphasised that neopatrimonial relationships are more apparent within impoverished communities, as most affluent communities require less livelihood incentives from political leaders. Impoverished communities within the ELM that voted for the ruling party also received additional environmental-service delivery benefits, even though they did not pay for the services. Community members and other environmental-based stakeholders also claimed that communities that supported the ruling party were prioritised for participation in environmental interventions and access to environmental-based incentivisation, environmental resources and business opportunities in the environmental sector, resulting in community inequalities in the environmental sector. By viewing these findings from a moral economy perspective, it can be noted that rather than accepting the liberal view that corruption and cadre deployment represent mere moral failings, a moral economy approach and a political ecology perspective suggests that, in contrast to 'grand' corruption, petty forms of patronage are embedded in moral economies of survival and relationships of 'nested dependence' that are more structural – persisting across political party orders and supported respective by their voters.

1. Paper one: Taking a back seat: The politicisation of municipal environmental governance in South Africa:

The first research paper focused on the interrelationship between local EG, politics, power relations and LG, as well as how EG *'takes a back seat'* to political mandates and interests. It was interesting to identify and discuss how EG interventions and resources were mainly used for political purposes. It was important to note that interactions within the political-administrative interface in LG within South

Africa influences and shapes EG, environmental issues and environmental service provision. These interactions are essential in understanding the future progress of local EG and the role of politics in EG decision making and planning that impacts socioeconomic issues in communities.

2. Paper two: Alter-nation? factions, coalitions and environmental governance in the context of contested post-apartheid local state democratisation:

I explored the hostile emergence of political contest and instability in the ELM and UDM that affected both EG and the provision of environmental services. I emphasise that the current political moment in SA has shifted LG towards a transition to coalition-based LG and this is seemingly the future political trajectory of SA. I found that the coalition council in the study sites were in a state of contest, and this destabilised municipal operations. Even with a shift from a coalition council to a single council, intraparty factions affected municipal operations. An important finding was that both single and coalitions councils are bound to be conflicted, indicating that it does not matter who governs, political contest is probable. I now have a more informed understanding of alternating power structures in South African LG, council instability, factionalism and coalition councils in LMs.

3. Paper three: The application of a Practical Environmental Governance Framework in politicised and neopatrimonial local government relations: the case of Endumeni and uMzinyathi municipalities in South Africa

I identified and discussed a detailed understanding and evaluation of politicised local EG in SA by applying the PEGF as a theoretical and evaluative tool. The PEGF assisted in assessing and evaluating the stability of EG within a highly politicised and neopatrimonial municipal environment. I was fascinated about the findings acquired from the application of the PEGF. The four categories and attributes of the PEGF that were applied in the research were- effective, equitable, responsive and robust. The application of the PEGF demonstrated how neopatrimonialism determined the distribution of EG resources, opportunities and incentives in South African LG and I consider this important for assessing the practicality of local EG, as well as the progressiveness of sustainability of local EG in SA.

4. Paper four*: "We are political soldiers of the council"* – The moral economy of neopatrimonialism and 'cadre deployment' in municipal environmental governance in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

I focused on neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment in the environmental departments of two LMs in SA. There were major impacts associated with neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment on local EG such as the hiring of incompetent service providers and unskilled human capital in the environmental sector. I feel that the impacts of neopatrimonialism on local EG are important and this paper provided a deeper understanding of these dynamics. I applied a moral economy approach through the lens of utilitarian morality to provide an understanding of how neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment result

in potential economic opportunities for impoverished and previously disadvantaged cadres from the local environmental sector. It was interesting to identify and discuss the environmental-based benefits for impoverished politically inclined cadres. I was also intrigued by discussing the complex, transitional nature of political theory in SA and the multifaceted and tricky integration of neopatrimonialism in coalitions, which requires further research enquiry.

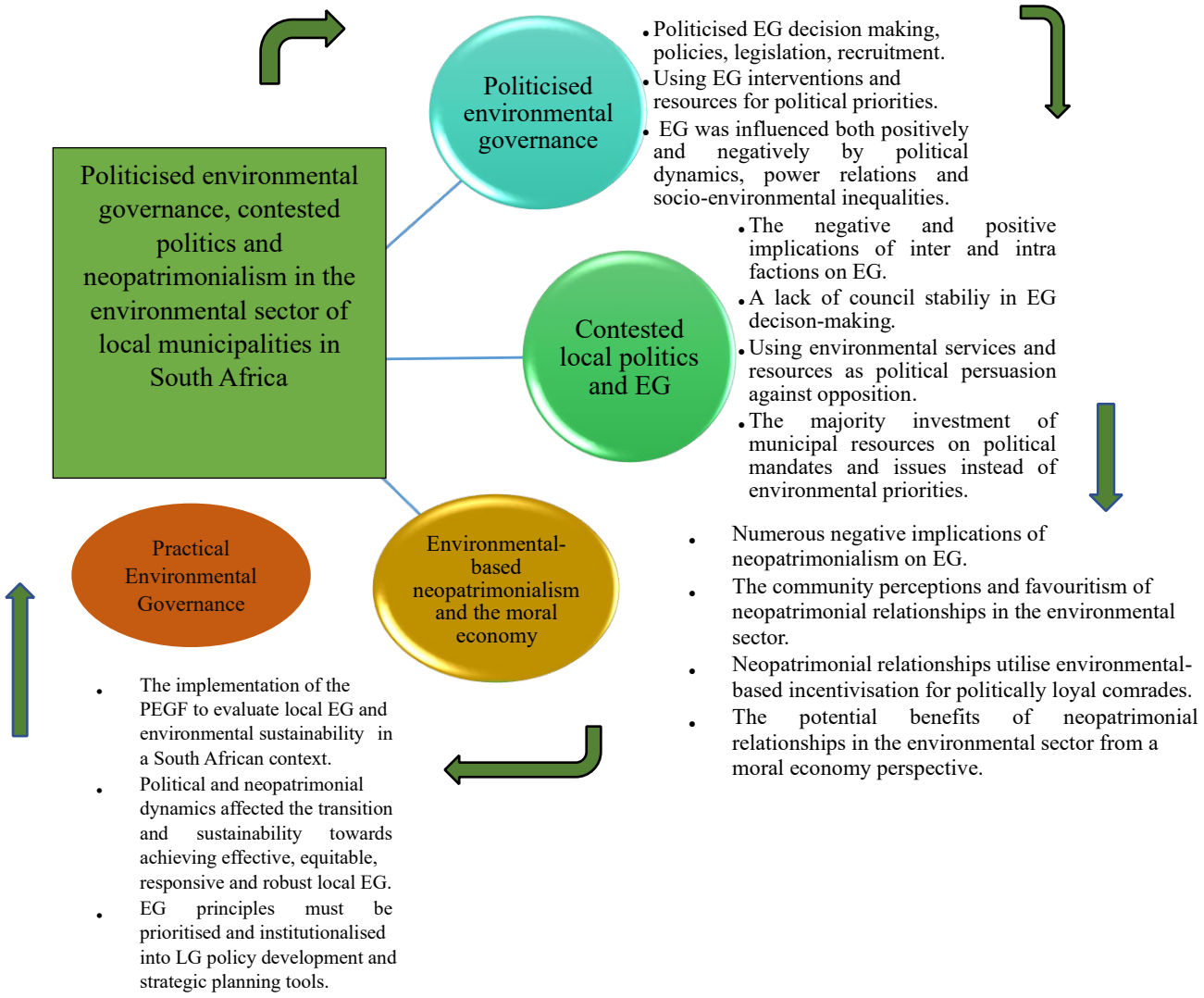


Figure 8.1: A synthesis of the research analysis

Figure 8.1 provides a brief synthesis of the four analysis papers in the study by listing key findings in each analysis paper. There is also a visual depiction of how the four analysis papers are comprehended cohesively within a LM context as evident in the study. Bodin (2017) and Mitchell et al (2020) emphasised that global environmental policies and legislation influence EG at the local scale and this

was also apparent in the study. The first analysis bubble provided key findings on politicised EG, the second bubble focused on contested local politics and EG and the third bubble presented key findings on environmental-based neopatrimonialism and the moral economy in an LM context. The fourth analysis bubble presents key findings from a practical evaluation of EG in LG. The green arrows represent a systematic process of the research findings. There were both negative and positive outcomes and implications for stakeholders from the municipal environmental sector and the findings reiterated the importance of LMs in promoting EG and environmental sustainability as emphasised by Senosha (2017) and Odiyo (2022).

8.3. Reflections on research findings and engagement with the literature:

The research findings were intriguing and interesting and provided a more detailed analysis of local politicised EG in SA. It was a rewarding and academically fulfilling experience to obtain in-depth information from the local municipal environment in SA and from other interested and affected stakeholders. The research suggests that the environmental sector is a crucial space within the political administrative interface to explore patronage and politicisation within local municipal governance. I chose to conduct research within a politically contested local municipal environment, and this allowed for the opportunity to obtain information from daily operations and the council leadership and administration of the ELM and UDM. It was beneficial to attend local political discussions and meetings, that allowed me to understand the fragile dynamics that influence political decisions and strategies, as well as how politicians apply persuasion tactics at a community level during municipal operations and interventions. It was also surprising to identify and discuss the political influence of local councils on municipal officials, workers, and the public. I was also presented with the opportunity to participate in numerous municipal and departmental meetings, forums, and workshops. This opportunity resulted in the collection of valuable data and a first-hand experience of interacting with experts in the fields of local governance, service delivery and environmental governance. I identified important features of neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment in the local environmental sector, and I strongly recommend that LMs must consider both the enabling and constraining impacts of cadre deployment when recruiting human capital, especially within the environmental department of LMs.

I am confident that this research has also provided and contributed towards a detailed understanding and assessment of politicised EG. I am confident that this research has provided crucial advice on local coalitions and coalition sustainability and partnership agreements for EG and environmental sustainability in SA and is applicable in Africa and globally. A fair amount of research was conducted on neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment in SA (see Kaizer 2022, Swanepoel 2022, Zulu *et al.,* 2022 and Mlambo 2023). However, emphasis on the environmental sector was lacking and this research attempted to cover that aspect. I suggest that council legislation and policies are reviewed and amended accordingly in SA, especially regarding the formation of councils and the power distribution within

coalition councils as emphasised by research conducted by Bradshaw and Breakfast (2019) and Khumalo and Netswera (2020). Future researchers must be cautious, respectful and confidential when using LMs as study sites, as politicised environments can be unsafe and hostile. Some findings in the research were too sensitive and confidential and might have triggered disputes between stakeholders if utilised. However, this research is beneficial for LG and the concepts covered are vital for the environmental sector and I strongly feel that further research is required to substantiate the findings. I know that this research will inspire other researchers to conduct further research on coalition councils and EG in SA and globally. The environmental sector will continue to be an important aspect in LG and as such, there must be adequate resources, policies and plans in place to ensure environmental sustainability.

From a theoretical perspective, the study provided an understanding towards the role of political contest and political moments on local state formation and democratisation as well as the effects on local EG in SA, especially with the increasing transition towards coalition councils. I feel that the findings are applicable to LMs globally in assessing how political contestations and factionalist tendencies enable or restrict the progression towards environmental sustainability at the local scale within a democratic state. The recurring pattern of coalitions in SA and globally indicate initial political instability and contest between political parties and extensive negotiation and power sharing strategies in alternating power situations (Justesen & Schulz Herzenberg, 2018, De Vos, 2021). However, further research can build on this and assess how coalitions function in SA, what factors can be improved and what can be studied moving forward. In terms of EG literature the thesis provided a detailed discussion of how EG is politicised and how it builds on existing literature in SA (Mngoma *et al.,* 2011, Pasquini and Shearing, 2014, Kotze and Plessis, 2015, Olver, 2017, Muller, 2018) focusing on EG within both single and coalition councils and how EG is affected in times of political instability and contest. The research also demonstrates how EG is prioritised based on political mandates and provides a PEA conceptual diagram (see figure 2.1) of the interrelationship between local politics, EG, and LG. The conceptual diagram places EG in the political administrative interface.

My reflection on the MEA focuses on redistributive justice, indicating how the ME is applied to understand neopatrimonial relationships in SA from a redistributive and impoverished cadre perspective. This is a different view from the normative, pessimistic understanding of neopatrimonialism (see Lodge 2014, Beresford, 2015) and assists researchers to understand that not all neopatrimonial relationships are constrained. Several African studies such as (Hicken, 2011, Moti, 2019) are in favour of neopatrimonial relationships, as it is embedded in African culture of redistribution and obligation. Africans are by nature reciprocal – these are common morals in Africa and were also evident in the study. It is possible for cadres to be qualified, competent and politically loyal. We must consider South Africa's Apartheid past to understand the rationality of neopatrimonialism in LG.

This study focused on neopatrimonialism in the environmental sector, hence the theoretical contribution of understanding how environmental benefits and incentives is exchanged between patrons and cadres creating a declaration of dependence with regards to labour and income-generating dynamics (see Ferguson, 2013) on declaration of dependence of moral economy.

8.4. Limitations of the research

1. The research study was confined to a PhD timeframe of five years and therefore the data collection period was limited and could not include recent changes in political leadership and local government structures.

2. The research study only focused on one local municipality and one district municipality within KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa.

3. The political context and situation of focus was within the Endumeni local and uMzinyathi district municipalities. Other socioeconomic and political contexts of other municipalities in KZN and SA were not focused in this research.

4. There are specific environmental factors and political culture and history within the uMzinyathi and Endumeni region, which is different from other municipalities in KZN, SA and globally. Furthermore, there are specific political icons, political stakeholders and political dynamics experienced only in the uMzinyathi and Endumeni region and this influenced the research findings to a certain level.

5. The data collection techniques utilised in the study were limited and consisted of a questionnaire survey, interviews, observation and focus group meetings. Other data collection techniques such as matrix ranking and mental maps could have provided different research aspects and information.

6. Access to certain political and environmental information was confidential and unable to access due to conflict and legal reasons.

7. Researcher bias and personal views and background shape the direction of the research. The research was an intern at the ELM and a member of one of the political parties mentioned in the research. The researcher maintained a high level of professionalism and was objective during the research process, especially when interacting with political officials, whilst also maintaining strict levels of anonymity. The researcher also maintained respect for political officials and was cautious when extracting political information from the politically contested study sites.

8.5. Recommendations and suggestions for future research

There are numerous recommendations and suggestions for future research and municipal governance resulting from the thesis findings:

Future research:

1. I suggest that future research should focus on comparison studies of politicised EG in LMs from different geographic areas (rural and urban) in SA and globally with different budgetary and operational factors and dynamics.

2. I recommend for further research be conducted on the influence of contested councils, alternation of political power and leadership, as well as factional dynamics on EG in other LMs globally. More research is recommended on the identification and discussion of EG differences and similarities between LMs from the global south and north. A comparison study is also recommended of LMs that experience political contest from diverse geographical regions in SA and globally to better understand the implications and influence of alternating coalition and single councils on a local state formation, democratisation and EG.

3. I suggest that future researchers apply the PEGF to political and neopatrimonial dynamics in different LMs in SA and globally to assist in assessing practical and evaluative EG. I also advise researchers to apply the PEGF to assess and evaluate politicised environmental issues in different sectors such as the private sector and civil society, as well utilise the PEGF to formulate practical solutions to environmental-based challenges and ineffective EG at the local government scale.

4. In addition to the research findings, I suggest for future research to be conducted on the influence of neopatrimonialism and cadre deployment on EG in other municipalities in SA and globally, especially with the recent union-based coalition government in SA.

Municipal governance:

1. The findings also complicate the narrative that coalition governments are by their very nature problematic and that in a context of continued post-apartheid local state formation, democratisation plays out in the context of increasing political contestation and factionalism that negatively affects/constrains progress towards achieving effective and consistent EG. Other studies conducted by Reddy (2018), Caldas et al (2022) and Joshua et al (2022) have also confirmed this, however, to promote effective local EG and environmental sustainability, I point to a broader and ongoing need for progressive council policy reform, local council stability (of

both single and coalition councils), increased municipal competence, accountability and professionalism.

2. I suggest for the implementation and evaluation of stringent coalition policies and regulations that focus on promoting coalition sustainability, as well as a recursive process of improving coalition policies and regulations through multiple stakeholder consultation sessions.

3. I also recommend that cadre deployment should be revised to focus more on impoverished and previously disadvantaged cadres that are competent, possess the relevant skills and experience, as well as the reviewing of political mandates that are more merit driven when recruiting human capital in LG.

4. I also advise that larger political parties such as the ANC, DA and IFP become more accustomed to forming resilient and workable partnerships with smaller political parties in coalition councils with the focus of improving inclusive and effective service delivery and EG in local communities.

8.6. Concluding thoughts and the contribution to new knowledge

The research study provided a novel discussion and assessment of local politicised environmental governance in the context of SA. The application of a grounded theory approach resulted in complex and detailed findings from a LG context in SA. The abundance of research findings was theoretically analysed using a combined theoretical framework of the Political Ecology Approach, the Moral Economy Approach and Practical Environmental Governance Framework that was not applied on South African, African and global context before. It was intriguing to identify and discuss how the environmental sector is utilised for political benefit and persuasion. The distribution of environmental resources and opportunities through neopatrimonial relationships proved both redistributive from a moral economy perspective and exploitative in some instances. With coalition councils and government increasingly becoming apparent in SA, especially with the recent formation of the coalition government of national unity, research on LG coalitions provides valuable directive and advisory information for policy makers, researchers and other stakeholders that comprise the local, provincial and national government spheres in SA.

This research also attempted to demonstrate to regional and global researchers the fragile coalition council system in SA and provided a detailed outlook into the actual practical interactions of diverse stakeholders within the political-administrative interface ranging from the general municipal workers and local communities to the municipal council and environmental government departments. This research provides a platform for other researchers to further research the aspects and influences of local

political dynamics, local environmental governance and the political-administrative interface on progressive EG principles. The findings contribute towards the much-needed understanding of how coalition councils' function under contested periods and changes in political leadership and the direct and indirect influence on the EG, environmental resources and environmental-based incentivisation. This research is important for understanding how the factors of democratisation, alternation of political power and leadership and contemporary council coalitions in SA incorporate and prioritise EG and environmental sustainability in local municipal operations. The application of the MEA also provided an understanding of neopatrimonial relationships in South African LG and the moral implications of dependence and obligation of cadre deployment and incentivisation from the local environmental sector.

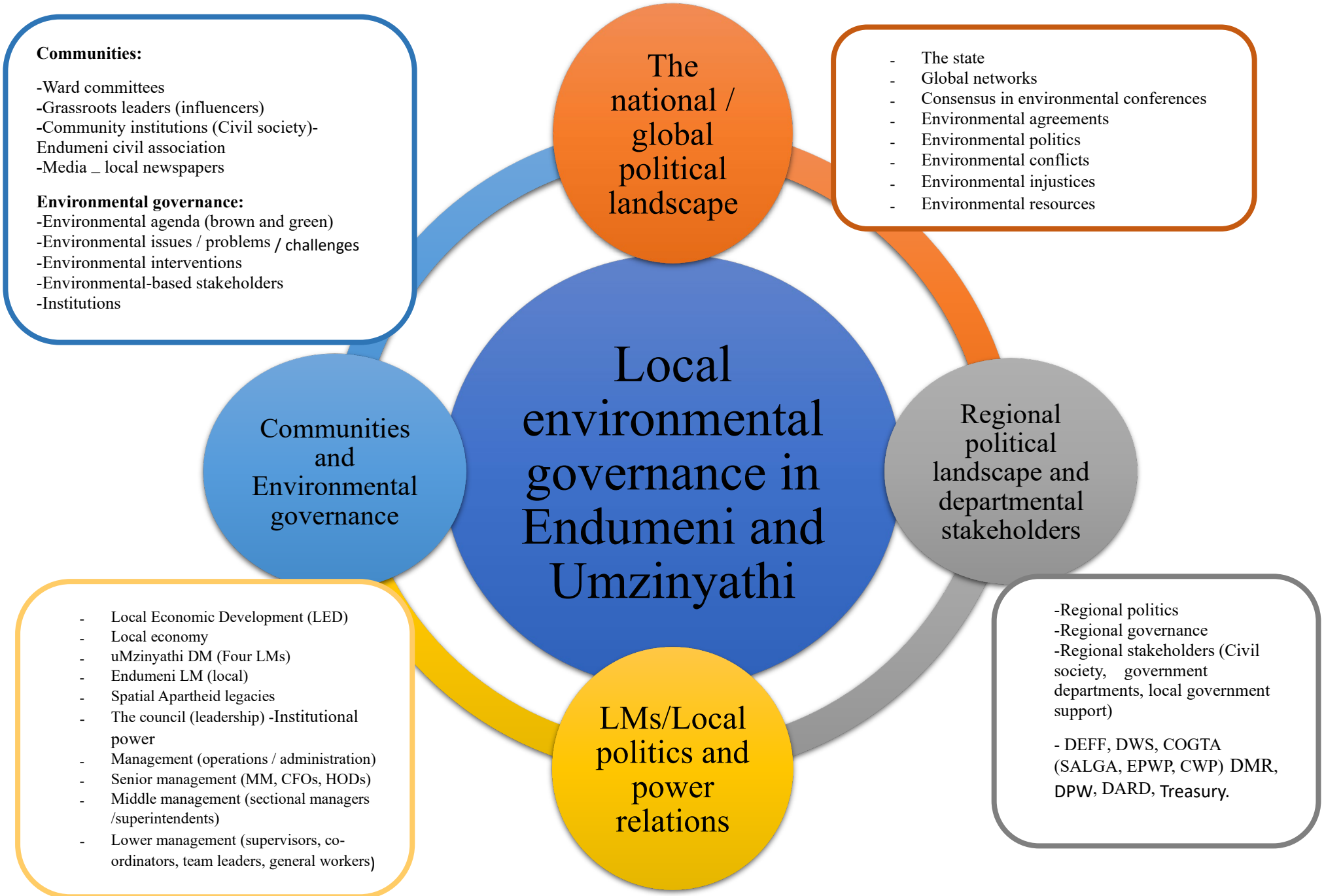

Communities:
-Ward committees
-Grassroots leaders (influencers)
-Community institutions (Civil society)- Endumeni civil association
-Media _ local newspapers
Environmental governance:
-Environmental agenda (brown and green)
-Environmental issues / problems / challenges
-Environmental interventions
-Environmental-based stakeholders
-Institutions
The national / global political landscape
- The state
- Global networks
- Consensus in environmental conferences
- Environmental agreements
- Environmental politics
- Environmental conflicts
- Environmental injustices
- Environmental resources
Communities and Environmental governance
Local environmental governance in Endumeni and Umzinyathi
Regional political landscape and departmental stakeholders
- Local Economic Development (LED)
- Local economy
- uMzinyathi DM (Four LMs)
- Endumeni LM (local)
- Spatial Apartheid legacies
- The council (leadership) -Institutional power
- Management (operations / administration)
- Senior management (MM, CFOs, HODs)
- Middle management (sectional managers /superintendents)
- Lower management (supervisors, co-ordinators, team leaders, general workers)
LMs/Local politics and power relations
-Regional politics
-Regional governance
-Regional stakeholders (Civil society, government departments, local government support)
- DEFF, DWS, COGTA (SALGA, EPWP, CWP) DMR, DPW, DARD, Treasury.

Figure 8.2: A stakeholder and conceptual diagram of local EG within the municipal study sites.

The diagram in figure 8.2. depicts the interrelationship between all spheres of governance in SA with regards to local EG with the case study sites. There are national, regional and local stakeholders, as well as organisations and initiatives that influence the progressiveness and sustainability of local EG in Endumeni and uMzinyathi. This conceptual diagram can be applied as a benchmark framework to other municipalities in SA and is important in understanding the EG processes and interactions of stakeholders. Local EG principles are unlikely to be achieved if any stakeholder in the diagram fails to provide beneficial inputs, direction and knowledge and progressive assistance and contribution.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire for community members from the Endumeni LM community wards

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire for community members from the Endumeni LM community wards



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Consent/Gatekeepers letter-Endumeni municipality

The Endumeni municipality is invited to participate in a research study conducted by the researcher, Shaheen Sewparsadh Thakur, who is pursuing a PhD of Science degree in Geography at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Project title: Politicised environmental governance in local municipal spaces within KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

What is the study about: The exploration and assessment of how local municipalities, that experience contested political governance and limited financial resources are attempting to transition towards a green economy philosophy at a local scale in impoverished communities with the assistance of multiple stakeholders. The primary research question of the study will be investigated and explored within a local and district municipality in the Northern KwaZulu-Natal area; the Endumeni Local Municipality (ELM) and the uMzinyathi District Municipality (UDM). Considering the mentioned study sites, research questions can be posed pertaining to –the extent local municipalities in South Africa have engaged the emerging green economy transition agenda under a politically challenging environment? At present, there is a lack of research that focuses on an in-depth analysis of how local municipalities in vulnerable South African communities are engaging and adapting to the green economy under the influence of contested political governance. Therefore, the two aims of the study are as follows:

1. To identify and explore the influence and dynamics of contested political governance on the transition to the green economy in local municipal spaces within South Africa.

2. To investigate and assess the implementation of the green economy philosophy in local municipal spaces in South Africa.

Statement of Consent: I ……. (Full name of Municipal/ Senior manager) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. Therefore, consent is awarded by the Endumeni municipality to participate in the research project. The Endumeni municipality understands that liberty is provided by the researcher to withdraw from the project at any time, should the municipality so desire.

Signature of participant ……. Date …….

Endumeni Municipality stamp

What I will ask you to do: If you are agreeing to be interviewed or to answer the questionnaire, you will be asked to provide your perceptions, views and opinions on the issues of political power, governance and the transition to the green economy in the Endumeni and uMzinyathi region. You shall be questioned on the interrelationship of these concepts and how they influence the transition to the green economy at a local municipal scale. You will also be asked about the implementation of environmental-based community projects, awareness programmes and the current state of the environment within your community. I will also welcome any suggestions and recommendations you may have on the above issues.

The interview is estimated to take about 20 – 30 minutes to complete. I will then write about your experiences with reference to relevant literature, policies and legislation to better understand the interrelationship between political power, governance and the green economy at the local municipal scale in South Africa.

Risks and benefits: I do not predict any risks towards you in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. Furthermore, there are no direct benefits to you, although you may find it beneficial to think about these issues.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this questionnaire/ interview is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any questions of your choice. If you decide to skip some of the questions or withdraw, you will not be penalised in any way.

Your identity will be protected: In the research, you will be referred to by a pseudonym (false name).

Your answers will be confidential: The records of the questionnaire/ interview will be kept private and disposed of at the end of the year.

If you have questions: If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact **Dr. A. Nel** (Project Supervisor) on [redacted] or email- NELA@ukzn.ac.za

You may also contact the Research Office through:

P. Mohun, HSSREC Research Office, Tel- 031 260 4557 or E-mail-mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Statement of Consent: I ……. (Full name of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. Therefore, I consent to participating in the research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Signature of participant ……. Date …….

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Consent form for Video/ Audio Recording

I authorise Shaheen Sewparsadh Thakur to record my participation and appearance on devices that possess video and/ or audio tape features for the following project:

Project title: Politicised environmental governance in local municipal spaces within KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

I acknowledge that I am fully aware of the contents of this release and I understand that this video/ audio recording will be used for educational purposes only within the Geography department at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (PMB Campus). Furthermore, this recording will be destroyed within one year of filming/ recording.

Signature …… Date …….

Community Questionnaire- Endumeni LM

1) Household demographic details 1.1

Gender

1. Male	
2. Female	

1.2. Age of respondents

1. 18-25 yrs	2. 26-35 yrs	3. 36-45 yrs	4. 46-55 yrs	5. 56-65 yrs	6. >65 yrs

1.3 Race Classification

1. African	2. White	3. Coloured	4. Indian	5. Other

1.5. Home Language

1. English	2. IsiZulu	3. Xhosa	4. Afrikaans	5. Other (Specify)

1.7. Education

1. Primary	2. Secondary	3. Tertiary

1.8. Does your household receive weekly waste / refuse collection services from the municipality?

1. Yes	2. No

Any comments about these services?

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1.9 Occupation

1. Unemployed	2. Domestic	3. Labourer	4. Business Owner	5. Technician	6. Manager

7. Artisan	8. Professional	9. Pensioner	10. Other

1.10. Main sources of monthly income

1. Pensions	2. Remittances	3. Wages	4. Informal income	5. Farmharvest	6. Social welfare grants	7. Salary

1.11. Type of Dwelling

1. Own formal house	2. Own traditional hut	3. Shack / informal	4. Formal farmhouse	5. Employer provided house

1.12. Type of Sanitation

1. Flush toilet	2. Chemical toilet	3. Pit latrine	4. Bucket toilet	5. None

1.13. Main sources of domestic water

1. Tap water in dwelling	2. Tap water on site	3. Public tap	4. Bore-hole communal	5. Rainwater tank on site

6. Flowing stream	7. Well communal	8. Dam / pool	9. Spring communal

1.14. Main sources of energy / fuel for this household

1. Electricity from public supply	2.Gas	3. Paraffin	4. Wood

5. Coal	6. Candles	7. Other

2. Green economy / environmental awareness and perceptions in communities

***** Environmental community-based project in this study is defined as any project that is aimed at promoting environmental protection, conservation, and awareness, as well as social and financial benefits that are includes community participation and input.

2.1. What is your understanding of the environment? And do you consider environmental protection and conservation important?

1.Yes	
2.No	

……
……
……

2.2. Have you ever heard of the term *"green economy"?* if yes, what is your definition of the green economy?

1.Yes	
2.No	

……
……
……

2.3. Were there any environmental projects implemented in your community? By who? If no, what do you think is the reason for this?

1.Yes	
2.No	

……
……
……

2.4. Do you think that environmental / waste management / recycling projects have benefits for the community?

1.Yes	
2.No	

……
……
……

2.5. What are your comments about waste management and recycling in your ward / community/ municipality?
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……

2.6. Could you provide any examples of environmental projects implemented in your community? And possibly a brief description of these projects.

……
……
……
……

2.7. How would you rate your experience of participating in previous environmental-based community project?

1.Very good	2. Good	3. Neutral	4. Bad	5. Very bad	6. Have not participated before

2.8. Do you think your local municipality is doing enough to promote environmental education and projects within your community? If no, what suggestions do you have?

1.Yes	
2.No	

……
……
……

3. <u>Council, service delivery and the environment</u>

3.1. What is your understanding of the term council?

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……
……

3.2. What do you think about the current governance situation in your local municipality?

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……
……

3.3. What do you think about the current standard of service delivery in your ward/ community?

……
……
……

3.4. Do you think council issues or conflict within the municipality have an influence on environmental projects and service delivery within your ward / community? If yes, how?

1.Yes	
2.No	

……
……
……

3.5. Has there even been a situation where a change in local governance had a negative effect on the environment / environmental projects or service delivery in your ward / community?

1.Yes	
2.No	

……
……
……

3.6. Do you think political issues impact environmental projects or service delivery in your ward/ community?

1.Yes	
2.No	

……
……
……

3.7. How do you report environmental /service delivery complaints to the municipality? Does the municipality respond positively?

……
……
……

3.8. Do you attend council ward meetings / municipal community meetings? And are there any environmental / service delivery issues discussed in these meetings?

1.Yes	
2.No	

……
……
……

3.9. From your opinion, provide a rating of the different issues your local municipality prioritises the most from the list below?

1= Most important	2= Important	3= Neutral	4 = Less important	5= Not important

Community issues	**Number rating (1 to 5)**
1.Financial issues (raising funds and donations)	
2.Social issues (crime, poverty, unemployment)	
3.Environmental issues (conservation, awareness, protection of the environment)	
4.Political issues	
5.Spiritual/religious issues (encouraging prayer, faith and divine practices)	

3.10. Are you aware of any local municipal by-laws, plans, or strategies that focus on environmental issues? If yes, could you provide your understanding of this?

1.Yes	
2.No	

……
……
……

3.10. In your opinion, do you think your municipality has sufficient and qualified staff to manage environmental / service delivery issues and projects in your community? Please provide a reason for your answer.

1.Yes	
2.No	

……
……
……

3.11.Do you think that your local municipality is doing enough to manage environmental issues and provide service delivery in your community? If not, what suggestions can you provide?

1.Yes	
2.No	

……
……
……

<u>END OF QUESTIONNAIRE- THANK YOU!!!</u>

COMMENTS FROM ENUMERATORS

……
….....

Appendix 2. Interview schedule for DARD representatives

1. What are your general views about environmental management and conservation within your municipal area?

2. Are you passionate about environmental issues within your community? Why?

3. Have you ever heard of the term the *"green economy"*? Can you define the term - *"green economy"*?

4. Could you briefly explain what the DARD is doing to assist local municipalities with green and environmental based developmental projects?

5. In terms of local politics, what do you think about the current political situation at your municipality? Does it impact on the relationship between DARD and the municipalities?

6. Do you think the municipality is managed or governed effectively?

7. What are your views on the current council and municipal manager? Does the DARD participate in the IDP formation for municipalities?

8. Could you describe the relationship between DARD, the local and district municipality in your area? Has there been any successful environmental-based projects implemented by the municipalities and DARD?

9. Do you think the current council and municipal manager is doing enough to promote and implement environmental awareness and projects within your community? Is the natural environment a priority to them?

10. Do you think the possible struggle for political power by local councilors and political parties have implications on environmental management, the green economy and the objectives set by the DARD?

11. Do you think council decisions have a significant impact on environmental issues and projects in your community and does this influence the goals and objectives set by the DARD?

12. From your perspective, is the municipalities doing enough to promote the green economy within your community? What more can be done by the municipality to contribute towards the green economy movement?

13. Have you ever received any training, knowledge or skills regarding environmental management and conservation by the municipality or any stakeholder within your community?

14. What suggestions could you provide regarding local municipal politics and governance and the possible lack of interest of some stakeholders towards a green development within the municipality?

15. What are the future objectives or strategies of the DARD to assist local municipalities in promoting the green economy and green development?

Appendix 3. Interview schedule for DEA representatives

1. What are your general views about environmental management and conservation within your municipal area?

2. Are you passionate about environmental issues within your community? Why?

3. Have you ever heard of the term the *"green economy"*? Can you define the term - *"green economy"*?

4. Could you briefly explain what the DEA is doing to assist local municipalities with green and environmental based developmental projects?

5. In terms of local politics, what do you think about the current political situation at your municipality? Does it impact on the relationship between DEA and the municipalities?

6. Do you think the municipality is managed or governed effectively?

7. What are your views on the current council and municipal manager? Does the DEA participate in the IDP formation for municipalities?

8. Could you describe the relationship between DEA and the local and district municipality in your area? Has there been any successful environmental-based projects implemented by the municipalities and DEA?

9. Do you think the current council and municipal manager is doing enough to promote and implement environmental awareness and projects within your community? Is the natural environment a priority to them?

10. Do you think the possible struggle for political power by local councilors and political parties have implications on environmental management, the green economy and the objectives set by the DEA?

11. Do you think council decisions have a significant impact on environmental issues and projects in your community and does this influence the goals and objectives set by the DEA?

12. From your perspective, is the municipalities doing enough to promote the green economy within your community? What more can be done by the municipality to contribute towards the green economy movement?

13. Have you ever received any training, knowledge or skills regarding environmental management and conservation by the municipality or any stakeholder within your community?

14. What suggestions could you provide regarding local municipal politics and governance and the possible lack of interest of some stakeholders towards a green development within the municipality?

15. What are the future objectives or strategies of the DEA to assist local municipalities in promoting the green economy and green development?

Appendix 4. Interview schedule for Municipal employees

1. What are your general views about environmental management and conservation within your municipality?

2. Are you passionate about environmental issues within your community? Why?

3. Have you ever heard of the term the *"green economy"*? Can you define the term - *"green economy"*?

4. What do you think about the current political situation at your municipality (workplace)?

5. Do you think the municipality is managed or governed effectively?

6. What are your views on the current council and municipal manager?

7. Do you think the current council and municipal manager is doing enough to promote and implement environmental awareness and projects within your community? Is the natural environment a priority to them?

8. Do you think the possible struggle for political power by local councilors and political parties have implications on environmental management and the green economy?

9. Can you list and provide a description of any environmental-based projects within your community?

10. Do you think council decisions have a significant impact on environmental issues in your community?

11. From your perspective, what is the municipality doing to promote the green economy within your workplace and the community? What more can be done by the municipality to contribute towards the green economy movement?

12. Have you ever received any training, knowledge or skills regarding environmental management and conservation by the municipality or any stakeholder within your community?

13. What suggestions can you provide regarding local municipal politics and governance and the possible lack of interest of some stakeholders towards a green development within the municipality?

Appendix 5: Interview schedule for municipal councillors

1. What are your general views about environmental management and conservation within your municipality?

2. Are you passionate about environmental issues within your community? Why?
3. Have you ever heard of the term the *"green economy"*? Can you define the term - *"green economy"*?

4. What do you think about the current political situation at your municipality (workplace)?

5. As a member of the council, do you think the municipality is managed or governed effectively? What more can be done to ensure effective political governance at the municipality?

6. Are you and the other members of the council doing enough to promote and implement environmental awareness and projects within your community? Is the natural environment a priority to the council?

7. Do you think the possible struggle for political power by local municipal stakeholders have implications on the promotion and implementation environmental management and the green economy within the municipality?

8. Can you list and provide a description of any environmental-based projects within your community that was implemented at the approval of the council?

9. Do you think council decisions have a significant impact on environmental issues in your community?

10. From your perspective, what is the council, municipal manager and senior managers doing to promote the green economy within your workplace and community? Do you think the municipal staff are qualified to mitigate environmental issues?

11. As a ward councilor, have you ever received any training, knowledge or skills regarding environmental management and conservation by the municipality or any stakeholder within your community?

12. Could you list any local environmental policies, plans or strategies and how is the municipality implementing and including these in the IDP? Could you also tell me more about the IDP and its role in promoting green-based development within the municipality?

13. What suggestions can you provide regarding local municipal politics and governance and the possible lack of interest of some stakeholders towards a green development within the municipality?

Appendix 6: Interview schedule for civil society organisations

1. What motivated you to establish an NGO in the environmental sector?

2. What are your general views about environmental management and conservation within your municipality?

3. Are you passionate about environmental issues within your community? Why?

4. Have you ever heard of the term the *"green economy"*? Can you define the term - *"green economy"*?

5. What do you think about the current political situation at your municipality? Does this influence your NGO in any way?

6. Do you think the municipality is managed or governed effectively?

7. What are your views on the current council and municipal manager? And have they done enough to accommodate environmental-based NGOs within the municipality?

8. Do you think the current council and municipal manager is doing enough to promote and implement environmental awareness and projects within your community? Is the natural environment a priority to them?

9. Do you think the possible struggle for political power by local councilors and political parties have implications on environmental management, the green economy, green business development and environmental-based NGOs?

10. Can you list and provide a description of any environmental-based projects within your community?

11. Do you think council decisions have a significant impact on environmental issues in your community?

12. Do you know of any strategy or plan from the municipality that focuses on the promotion of the green economy and environmental-based NGOs within your community? What more can be done by the municipality to contribute towards these important issues?

13. Have you ever received any training, knowledge or skills regarding environmental management and conservation by the municipality or any stakeholder within your community?

14. What suggestions can you provide regarding local municipal politics and governance and the possible lack of interest of some stakeholders towards environmental-based NGOs within the municipality?

Appendix 7: Interview schedule for municipal environmental officers

1. What are your general views about environmental management and conservation within your municipality?

2. How do you feel about being an environmental officer for the municipality? What are the positives? and challenges you faced with in doing your job effectively?

3. Have you ever heard of the term the *"green economy"*? Can you define the term - *"green economy"*?

4. What do you think about the current political situation at your municipality (workplace)?

5. Do you think the municipality is managed or governed effectively?

6. What are your views on the current council and municipal manager?

7. Do you think the current council, municipal manager and senior managers are doing enough to promote and implement environmental awareness and projects within your community? Is the natural environment a priority to them?

8. Do you think the struggle for political power by local councilors and political parties have implications on environmental management and the green economy?

9. Can you list and provide a description of any environmental-based projects within your community?

10. From your experience working for the municipality, do you think council decisions have a significant impact on environmental issues in your community?

11. From your perspective, what is the municipality doing to promote the green economy within your workplace and the community?

12. Have you ever received any training, knowledge or skills regarding environmental management and conservation other than your qualification by the municipality or any stakeholder within your community?

13. What suggestions can you provide regarding local municipal politics and governance and the possible lack of interest of some stakeholders towards a green development within the municipality?

Appendix 8: Interview schedule for municipal manager/mayor

1. What are your general views about environmental management and conservation within your municipality?

2. Are you passionate about environmental issues within your community? Why?

3. Have you ever heard of the term the *"green economy"*? Can you define the term - *"green economy"*?

4. What do you think about the current political situation at your municipality (workplace)?

5. Do you think you are managing the municipality effectively? Are there any challenges? What are your strengths?

6. What are your views on the current council?

7. How does political power influence the way you manage the municipality?

8. Do you think you and the current council are doing enough to promote and implement environmental awareness and projects within your community? Is the natural environment a priority to you?

9. Do you think the possible struggle for political power by local councilors and political parties have implications on environmental management and the green economy? Does this also impact the way you do your job?

10. Can you list and provide a description of any environmental-based/ green development projects within your community that you and council have approved?

11. Do you think council decisions have a significant impact on environmental issues in your community? Does this also impact your decisions on environmental issues?

12. From your perspective, what is the municipality doing to promote the green economy within your workplace and the community? What more can be done by you and the council to contribute towards the green economy movement?

13. Have you ever received any training, knowledge or skills regarding environmental management and conservation by the municipality or any stakeholder within your community?

14. Could you tell me more about the IDP or any other local municipal plans and strategies that include environmental issues the movement of local municipalities to green development in the near future?

15. What suggestions can you provide regarding local municipal politics and governance and the possible lack of interest of some stakeholders towards a green development within the municipality?

Appendix 9: Interview schedule for municipal senior managers and LGS official

1. What are your general views about environmental management and conservation within your municipality?

2. Are you passionate about environmental issues within your community? Why?

3. Have you ever heard of the term the *"green economy"*? Can you define the term - *"green economy"*?

4. What do you think about the current political situation at your municipality (workplace)? How does this impact your duties as a senior manager?

5. Do you think the municipality is managed or governed effectively? As a senior manager, are you are effectively utilising your skills and experience to manage your department effectively without limitations from the council?

6. What is your role as a senior manager in promoting environmental-based projects and green development within the municipality?

7. What are your views on the current council and municipal manager?

8. Do you think the current council and municipal manager is doing enough to promote and implement environmental awareness and projects within your community? Is the natural environment a priority to them? How can you influence their decision-making regarding these issues?

9. Do you think the possible struggle for political power by local councilors and political parties have implications on environmental management and the green economy?

10. Can you list and provide a description of any environmental-based/ green development projects within your community that you have motivated to council and the municipal manager that has resulted in approval?

11. Do you think council decisions have a significant impact on environmental issues in your community?

12. From your perspective, what is the municipality doing to promote the green economy within your workplace and the community? What more can be done by the municipality to contribute towards the green economy movement?

13. Have you ever received any training, knowledge or skills regarding environmental management and conservation by the municipality or any stakeholder within your community?

14. What suggestions can you provide regarding local municipal politics and governance and the possible lack of interest of some stakeholders towards a green development within the municipality?

Appendix 10: Interview schedule for the private sector

1. What motivated you to establish a business in the environmental sector?

2. What are your general views about environmental management and conservation within your municipality?

3. Are you passionate about environmental issues within your community? Why?

4. Have you ever heard of the term the *"green economy"*? Can you define the term - *"green economy"*?

5. What do you think about the current political situation at your municipality? Does this influence your business in any way?

6. Do you think the municipality is managed or governed effectively?

7. What are your views on the current council and municipal manager? And have they done enough to accommodate green-based businesses within the municipality?

8. Do you think the current council and municipal manager is doing enough to promote and implement environmental awareness and projects within your community? Is the natural environment a priority to them?

9. Do you think the possible struggle for political power by local councilors and political parties have implications on environmental management, the green economy and green business development?

10. Can you list and provide a description of any environmental-based projects within your community?

11. Do you think council decisions have a significant impact on environmental issues in your community?

12. Do you know of any strategy or plan from the municipality that focuses on the promotion of the green economy and green business development within your community? What more can be done by the municipality to contribute towards these important issues?

13. Have you ever received any training, knowledge or skills regarding environmental management and conservation by the municipality or any stakeholder within your community?

14. What suggestions can you provide regarding local municipal politics and governance and the possible lack of interest of some stakeholders towards a green business development within the municipality?

Appendix 11: Observation guide for unstructured, participant and uncontrolled observation

Day-to-day working environment-Municipal employees and other stakeholders (private sector, NGOs, etc):

Stakeholder / Participant Observed:	Physical response to or interactions with political matters/ issues:	Physical response to or interactions with local governance matters /issues:	Physical response to or interactions with politicalgovernance power matters /issues:	Physical response to or interactions with environmental matters /issues:	Researcher comments on findings:
1.					
2.					
3.					

Appendix 12: Informed consent form Endumeni local municipality



School of Agriculture, Engineering and Science Discipline
of Geography
P/Bag Scottsville
Pietermaritzburg, 3209
South Africa

Consent/Gatekeepers letter-Endumeni municipality

The Endumeni municipality is invited to participate in a research study conducted by the researcher, Shaheen Sewparsadh Thakur, who is pursuing a PhD of Science degree in Geography at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Project title: Political governance and the transition to the green economy in local municipal spaces in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

What is the study about: The exploration and assessment of how local municipalities, that experience contested political governance and limited financial resources are attempting to transition towards a green economy philosophy at a local scale in impoverished communities with the assistance of multiple stakeholders. The primary research question of the study will be investigated and explored within a local and district municipality in the Northern KwaZulu-Natal area; the Endumeni Local Municipality (ELM) and the uMzinyathi District Municipality (UDM). Considering the mentioned study sites, research questions can be posed pertaining to —the extent local municipalities in South Africa have engaged the emerging green economy transition agenda under a politically challenging environment? At present, there is a lack of research that focuses on an in-depth analysis of how local municipalities in vulnerable South African communities are engaging and adapting to the green economy under the influence of contested political governance. Therefore, the two aims of the study are as follows:

1. To identify and explore the influence and dynamics of contested political governance on the transition to the green economy in local municipal spaces within South Africa.

2. To investigate and assess the implementation of the green economy philosophy in local municipal spaces in South Africa.

Statement of Consent: I ..... LINAZI CINDY ..... (Full name of Municipal/ Senior manager) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. Therefore, consent is awarded by the Endumeni municipality to participate in the research project.

municipality understands that liberty is provided by the researc Date ....27./.02./ 2019.....
municipality so desire.

Signature of participant .....

ENDUMENI
28 FEB 2019
REG OFFICER :
MUNICIPALITY

Endumeni

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What I will ask you to do: If you are agreeing to be interviewed or to answer the questionnaire, you will be asked to provide your perceptions, views and opinions on the issues of political power, governance and the transition to the green economy in the Endumeni and uMzinyathi region. You shall be questioned on the interrelationship of these concepts and how, they influence the transition to the green economy at a local municipal scale. You will also be asked about the implementation of environmental-based community projects, awareness programmes and the current state of the environment within your community. I will also welcome any suggestions and recommendations you may have on the above issues.

The interview is estimated to take about 20 — 30 minutes to complete. I will then write about your experiences with reference to relevant literature, policies and legislation to better understand the interrelationship between political power, governance and the green economy at the local municipal scale in South Africa.

Risks and benefits: I do not predict any risks towards you in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. Furthermore, there are no direct benefits to you, although you may find it beneficial to think about these issues.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this questionnaire/ interview is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any questions of your choice. If you decide to skip some of the questions or withdraw, you will not be penalised in any way.

Your identity will be protected: In the research, you will be referred to by a pseudonym (false name).

Your answers will be confidential: The records of the questionnaire/ interview will be kept private and disposed of at the end of the year.

If you have questions: If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. A. Nel (Project Supervisor) on [redacted] or email- NELA@ukzn.ac.za You may also contact the Research Office through:

P. Mohun, HSSREC Research Office, Tel- 031 260 4557 or E-mail-mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Statement of Consent: I .....1.2•Q RZ4..... (Full name of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. Therefore, I consent to participating in the research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Signature of participan [redacted] Date . 27.02.2019

ENDUMENI
28 FEB 2019
REG OFFICER :
MUNICIPALITY

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UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL
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YAKWAZULU-NATALI

School of Agriculture, Engineering and Science
Discipline of Geography
P/Bag XOI Scottsville
Pietermaritzburg, 3209
South Africa

Consent form for Video/ Audio Recording

I authorise Shaheen Sewparsadh Thakur to record my participation and appearance on devices that possess video and/ or audio tape features for the following project:

Project title: Political governance and the transition to the green economy in local municipal spaces in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

I acknowledge that I am fully aware of the contents of this release and I understand that this video/ audio recording will be used for educational purposes only within the Geography department at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (PMB Campus). Furthermore, this recording will be destroyed within one year of filming/ recording.

Signa[illegible] [redacted] ..... Date . . . . . .27/02/2019 . :. . . . .:. . . . .



Appendix 13: Informed consent form uMzinyathi district municipality



School of Agriculture, Engineering and Science
Discipline of
Geography
P/Bag XOI
Scottsville
Pietermaritzburg, 3209
South Africa

Consent/Gatekeepers letter-uMzinyathi municipality

The uMzinyathi municipality is invited to participate in a research study conducted by the researcher, Shaheen Sewparsadh Thakur, who is pursuing a PhD of Science degree in Geography at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Project title: Political governance and the transition to the green economy in local municipal spaces in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

What is the study about: The exploration and assessment of how local municipalities, that experience contested political governance and limited financial resources are attempting to transition towards a green economy philosophy at a local scale in impoverished communities with the assistance of multiple stakeholders. The primary research question of the study will be investigated and explored within a local and district municipality in the Northern KwaZulu-Natal area; the Endumeni Local Municipality (ELM) and the uMzinyathi District Municipality (UDM). Considering the mentioned study sites, research questions can be posed pertaining to —the extent local municipalities in South Africa have engaged the emerging green economy transition agenda under a politically challenging environment? At present, there is a lack of research that focuses on an in-depth analysis of how local municipalities in vulnerable South African communities are engaging and adapting to the green economy under the influence of contested political governance. Therefore, the two aims of the study are as follows:

I. To identify and explore the influence and dynamics of contested political governance on the transition to the green economy in local municipal spaces within South Africa.

2. To investigate and assess the implementation of the green economy philosophy in local municipal spaces in South Africa.

Statement of Consent: I SIPHO NDABANDABA (Full name of Municipal/ Senior manager) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. Therefore, consent is awarded by the uMzinyathi municipality to participate in the research project. The uMzinyathi municipality understands that liberty is provided by the researcher to withdraw from the project at any time, should the municipality so desire.

Signature of Manager : [redacted] Date 06/03/2019

uMzinyathi M

Municipalitystamp

UMZINYATHI
DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY / UMASIPALA WESIFUNDA
P.O. BOX 1965 DUNDEE 3000
TEL : (034) 219 1500
E-MAIL : rc3@umzinyathi.gov.za FAX : (034) 2181940

Appendix 14: Ethical clearance



UNIVERSITY OF

KWAZULU -NATAL

28 May 2019

Mr Shaheen Sewparsadh Thakur (212511172)
School of Agricultural, Earth & Environmental Sciences
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mr Sewparsadh Thakur,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0287/019D
Project title: Political governance and the transition to the green economy in local municipal spaces in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Approval Notification — Expedited Application In response to your application received on 03 April 2019, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted FULL APPROVAL. Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 1 year from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study

You[redacted]

.....
Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)

Cc Supervisor: Dr A Nel cc
Academic Leader Research: Dr Hussein Shimelis cc School Administrator: Ms Marsha Manjoo

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