Introduction

The paradox: more participation but an enduring democratic deficit

Liberal democracy is in trouble. Authoritarian regimes from China to Turkey are gaining influence on the world stage, right wing nationalism is on the rise globally, and developing countries have appeared to stall en route to full democracy. Perhaps even more parlous for liberal democracy than the rising power of its opponents, is the declining satisfaction of its supporters. Pippa Norris (2011) argues that while demand for democracy is at an all-time high, satisfaction with the supply of democracy by government is dropping. This difference between citizens’ ‘demand’ for democratic institutions, values and principles and the ‘supply’ from government is termed a ‘democratic deficit’, and is clearly manifest in recent waves of protest and populist politics across all continents.

An important response to the liberal democracy deficit has been the rise of new forms of participatory democracy (Gaventa 2006; Wampler 2012). This idea echoes northern debates on deliberative democracy (Cohen 1997), but is mostly a Southern invention from radical political parties and social movements, largely urban-based, and often driven from the peripheries of the city. Hence, the origins of the archetypal participatory democratic institution, participatory budgeting, lie in the rise of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (Worker’s Party) in Porto Alegre, Brazil. This city is also home to the World Social Forum and the attendant demand of the ‘right to the city’ championed by social movements. Harvey (2012: xii) argues that central to the idea of the ‘right to the city’ is a desire by peripheral residents to claim control over daily urban life. Related to this are notions of active citizenship, and especially in the Brazil, the ‘insurgent citizenship’ developed in the favelas (slums) that strive to redefine governance in more inclusive and egalitarian directions (Holston 2008).
These ideas of participatory democracy, the right to the city and insurgent citizenship resonate across the Global South and beyond, and are evident in a range of institutional innovations and democratic experimentation. While some of this relates to rural development work, such as Robert Chambers’ (1992) Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), most is focused on the urban. In addition to tracking rapid urbanisation across the Global South, the rise of participatory democracy and insurgent citizenship also parallel the growing inequality of urban life, in particular the contrast between the burgeoning slums of the poor and gated communities of the wealthy (Davis 2006). Indeed insurgent citizenship and family conceptions like ‘spectacular politics’ (Robins 2014), ‘occupancy urbanisms’ (Benjamin 2008) or ‘subaltern urbanisms’ (Roy 2011) are associated with the peripheral, informal and ‘grey’ spaces (Yiftachel 2009) of the city.
Yet a paradox endures. The rise of participatory democracy, social movement politics and insurgent citizenship has not reduced the levels of democratic deficit that Norris (2011) has tracked for over a decade. Indeed, according to her, levels of democratic satisfaction remain largely unchanged in states like Brazil where participatory democracy is relatively advanced. While dissatisfaction is often linked to the 2008 global economic crisis, research confirms that it directly includes frustration with democracy itself. As Ortiz et al. (2013: 6) point out:

... the most sobering finding... is the overwhelming demand ... not for economic justice per se, but for what prevents economic issues from being addressed: a lack of “real democracy”, which is a result of people’s growing awareness that policy-making has not prioritized them—even when it has claimed to—and frustration with politics as usual and a lack of trust in the existing political actors, left and right.

At the same time though, advocates of participatory democracy have pronounced on its growing success (The Hunger Project & UN Democracy Fund 2014). There is over ten years of research confirming the positive real world impact of participatory democracy including participatory budgeting (Baiocchi et al. 2011; Gonçalves 2013), health councils (Coelho 2006), and even participatory impacts on national policy (Pogrebinschi & Samuels 2014). This is further to the extensive and often profound impact of direct resident participation in development projects on citizenship, participatory practices, state accountability and social cohesion (Gaventa & Barrett 2010).

What are we to make of this paradox? How can participatory democracy be working and yet satisfaction with national democracy remain low? Granted, cities are not states, and Norris relies on World Survey data that specifically asks respondents for their views of democracy at a country level. Are we then comparing apples and oranges? Perhaps participatory democracy is enhancing popular perceptions of local democracy while not influencing national perceptions? While there is some evidence to support this claim (Johnson 2015), we cannot explain away this paradox exclusively in terms of the distinction between national and local democracy. The main reason for this, as Pierre (1995: 38) points out, is that local government has a dual role, on the one hand ‘to act as the vehicle of local democracy, providing services responsive to local needs and conditions’, and on the other hand to ‘constitute the local branch of the nation-state’s administrative apparatus, executing state policies in key-policy areas’.

Further, it is a global trend that citizens participate less in elections for local government than for national, and see local government as a junior partner in a larger system of government (Morlan 1984; Frandsen 2002; Hajnal & Lewis 2003). Given this integration of local government into the
national state in practice and in perception, it makes sense to assume that when asked about the health of a country’s democracy, as in the World Values Survey that Norris draws upon, respondents will indicate a general impression of the system of government as a whole, including local government. Thus, we can treat satisfaction with democracy as a general assessment of a complex system of democratic governance from the national to the local level.

If assessments of local democracy will always figure in satisfaction with democracy in general, can we conclude then, that participatory democracy is not making a significant difference to country-level assessments of the supply of democracy? The main argument here is that the new institutions of participatory democracy are simply not widespread enough to impact on popular perceptions of democratic governance. In this regard, Sônia Gonçalves (2013: 96) estimated that in 2004 ‘30 percent of the Brazilian population lived in municipalities that used participatory budgeting as a means of deciding the allocation of local resources’. Further, while it is found across the Global South, participatory democracy exists more as the exception than the rule. Often associated with development projects, or limited to sections of some cities, participatory democracy is simply not the norm.

There is clearly something to this argument. Despite this, we still hold that there is more to our paradox than limited implementation of participatory democracy, for, even in those countries and contexts where it is well implemented, satisfaction with democracy remains low (Norris 2011). We argue that participatory democracy can and is making a positive difference to local democracy across the Global South, but also that, for most citizens, the promised changes in governance are not being fulfilled. Further, we suggest an important reason for this is that local democracy is disconnected from, or only partially connected to, many of the important forms of governance that shape urban rule. Simply put, because key forms of governance over the urban are beyond the control of elected representatives, democratic institutions have little means of keeping those who govern accountable.

There are further challenges for democratic rule associated with the inability of democratic institutions to hold certain forms of governance accountable. Central here are the undemocratic logics of certain forms of governance, and the fact that multiple and contending forms of governance coexist in spatially contingent ways that might segregate and disorder urban systems of rule. This we term a topological (Collier 2009) framework of multiple and contending forms of urban governance (FUG). From the perspective of urban residents, especially the urban poor, this creates a frustrating situation where growing democratic opportunities offer limited to no influence over the multiple forms of governance and diverse sets of authorities who decide how they must live. The consequence is that, from a governance point of view, democratic citizenship exists episodically around elections and participation in public forums, but in daily existence, most of the time, residents are treated like consumers of services, clients of the state, or are
marginalised from the formal system altogether. Spatially, too, different suburbs are governed in different ways with the wealthy relying on market means, while the poor wait for developmental projects or meet their livelihood and shelter needs themselves.

**The mainstream model of urban democratic rule**

In making this case we begin with the paradox of more participation but less satisfaction with democracy. To refine this problem into a set of research questions, we first outline the mainstream assumptions of urban democratic rule before identifying the key challenges confronting this model, drawn from current literature on the urban South.

In general terms, liberal democratic rule is imagined as a virtuous feedback circle between politics, democracy and government. This model is an ideal-type from which various instances will diverge to some extent. However, it is useful nevertheless as it is developed from existing forms in the North spread around the world by colonialism, and the later political ideas exported globally after the end of the Cold War under *pax Americana*. Consequently, it is reasonable to expect a strong resonance between the model and the forms of city rule in most democracies around the world.

![Figure I.2 Model of democratic rule](image-url)
The first of the three components of this model, politics, is conceived of in terms of individuals or groups, equal in principle and in law, forming critical views on issues that they identify as important for rulers to address, and organising and mobilising around these (Dahl 1989). A core assumption of liberal politics is that different people will hold contending views to those of rulers, or to each other, and should be able to express these in public. For liberals this process of politicisation requires the guarantee of certain individual rights to speech as well as free press, academic freedom, and freedom of religion. Also important are rights of association and movement, and the mobilisation of groups to contest office or influence policy is further protected by rights to assembly and peaceful protest (Mill 1859).

Key to linking political issues and groups to government are political parties that help define collective interests, educate citizens, shape group identities, recruit future leaders, develop policies, organise the contestation of power, and help legitimate the political system (Dalton & Wattenberg 2000). Also important are civil society organisations for, although they usually do not contest office, they assist in organising citizens, developing and lobbying for policy positions, recruiting and training leaders, and building democratic practices among citizens (Almond & Verba 1989; Putnam et al. 1994). In short, liberal politics is based on a set of rules that are intended to allow any individual or group to politicise an issue, and organise and mobilise around it.

The second component, democracy, is understood primarily in terms of institutions through which individuals and groups can contest the offices of rule, or influence the decisions of rulers, in ways that uphold the values of equality, freedom and fraternity. In terms of contesting office, not only is any citizen entitled to run for office, but also the choice of official is made through free, fair and frequent elections. As a result, electoral outcomes reflect the real choice of the majority of voters (Dahl 1973, 1989). As already noted, political parties are usually central to contests for office, and almost all rulers are leaders of political parties. In a democracy, any group may form a political party and membership is open to all citizens. Critical to all of this is a free, diverse and independent press that offers multiple means through which to report, examine and comment on the decisions of rulers (Dahl 1973, 1989).

Furthermore, in addition to contesting office, citizens and groups may seek to influence office-bearers through a range of formal mechanisms from legally required consultations on draft budgets, laws and policies, through representative forums such as citizen assemblies, to communication one-on-one with office bearers through, for example, personal lobbying. In many parts of the Global South, new institutions of participatory democracy have been introduced to formalise citizen influence over decision-making by rulers between elections, such as
participatory budgeting or requirements for consultation on development projects (Cornwall & Coelho 2007).

Lastly, in the mainstream model, the making and implementing of decisions is enacted by government led by elected officials ‘in that they are not subject to the tutelary control of military or clerical leaders’ (Levitsky & Way 2002: 53). Thus, a key feature of democratic rule is that elected leaders do actually make the important decisions. These decisions come in three common forms. First, rulers must deal with events that confront the state, for example whether to bid for the Olympics or to retaliate to a military incursion. Second, they must develop policies or plans of action for the economy, education, health, security and so on. Third, they must introduce new laws to enable these decisions and policies, subject to some form of judicial or constitutional oversight (Dahl 1989).

While the capacity of representatives to govern is an essential element of the model of contemporary liberal democratic rule, it is also deliberately limited. This limitation exists both in terms of the framework of law, especially the constitution, and in the separation of powers within the state to prevent the abuse of power by rulers (Hamilton, A. et al. 1961). At the heart of the mainstream model then is a balance between constituting a government that reflects the choice of the majority of citizens, and empowering it to act, but not in ways that threaten individual and group rights that make democracy possible. Indeed, should government make illegal choices then it can be challenged through the law, and should it make unpopular choices, it can be changed at the next election. This self-correcting capacity aims to make liberal democratic rule a virtuous circle of politics, democracy and government.

In respect of local democratic rule the same model of democracy applies but with an important qualification. This is that local government is never self-governing but always part of a larger state system. This opens the possibility that City Hall may take positions on issues that conflict with the positions of the national government. Depending on the design of the system, one level (usually national) will prevail over the other. The existence of conflict between national and local is thus not evidence of a lack of democracy in and of itself. It is possible for both levels of state to represent the views of the majority of citizens in both of their domains authentically, and for their divergent groups of citizens to hold different views. Hence, the mere fact that one level of the state can impose its will on another is not intrinsically undemocratic.
The realities confronting urban democratic rule in the Global South

Having outlined the mainstream model of urban democratic rule, we identify some key challenges in the Global South that confront the idea of a virtuous circle between politics, democracy and government. This is important to do because it alerts us to possible reasons why local democracy is disappointing residents of cities of the South. Before doing this it is useful to sketch some general features of the urban South that mark it as distinct from the North.

Perhaps the most widely observed point about the urban South since the end of the Cold War is the fact of rapid urbanisation. From 1950 to 2015, the urban population of the world increased 500% from 746 million to 4.9 billion, and at some point in 2007, the world’s population become more urban than rural for the first time in human history. By 2014, 54% of the globe was urban, and this number is expected to grow to 66% by 2050. Critically, most of this growth has been in the urban South, and especially the smaller cities of less than 500,000 people. By 2050, 90% of the world’s urban population will live in Africa and Asia (UN 2014: 1).

A key challenge associated with rapid urbanisation in the Global South is that migration has outstripped the growth in urban jobs, with a few exceptions, such as China. According to Davis (2006: 15), this is in part due to global neo-liberal deregulation of the agricultural sector that has created ‘surplus’ rural labour who now move to the cities for new opportunities. Consequently, urbanisation has brought with it the growth of slums, although as UN Habitat (2016) points out, slums were down from 39% of the urban South in 2000 to 30% in 2016. Alongside informal settlement in slums come informal ways of securing an income, through street trade, retailing food or alcohol, manufacturing components at the start of a commodity value chain, providing services such as hair care, sex work and so on. Much of this is without the required licenses, outside of designated trading zones, and not to industry standards (Ledeneva 2018). In addition, many migrants cross national boundaries to seek economic opportunities, and some are asylum seekers from political or social persecution.

In addition to reshaping human settlement and livelihoods, urbanisation in the Global South profoundly affects the environment too. This is because those who live in urban areas have very different consumption patterns than rural residents (Parikh et al. 1991). The result is fresh water scarcity, deforestation, air and water pollution, much of which results in climate change. Indeed, meeting the challenge of climate change globally in many ways requires addressing new forms of urban rule (Hughes 2017). Lastly, the rapid pace of social change brought about by urbanisation in the Global South has not been met with an equally rapid and appropriate policy response. As Watson (2009: 2259) points out, much planning theory is based on Northern assumptions that do
not accommodate the reality of ‘the problems of poverty, inequality, informality, rapid urbanisation and spatial fragmentation particularly (but not only) in cities of the Global South’. Key from a policy perspective, she concludes, is recognition of ‘increasingly marginalised urban populations surviving largely under conditions of informality’.

As we shall argue in what follows, the failure to include the (often migrant) poor in formal systems of urban rule reflects the lack of productive power held by City Hall, indeed any formal or informal authority to create the urban South. This quest for productive power, we suggest, is the key challenge that will confront rule in the urban South into the future. Against this background of the distinctive but general features of life in the urban South, we now focus on what we take to be key empirical realities that pose challenges for the virtuous circle of liberal democratic rule outlined above.

**Politics and the exclusion of the urban poor** In terms of politics, the key challenge to the mainstream model of democratic rule in the urban South is one of exclusion from democratic citizenship. This means that, either formally or informally, residents of the urban South are overtly excluded from, or find it difficult to participate in, activities to politicise an issue in the public domain, and organise or mobilise around it. Three kinds of exclusion from democratic citizenship are commonly observed: the exclusion of the foreigner, both legally and in terms of belonging; the exclusion of women and minority groups who enjoy legal standing but lower social status; and the exclusion of the urban poor who may belong to the city but cannot live fully by its rules. Of these, the latter is by far the most commonly observed, and it is widely remarked upon how the politics of the urban poor is exceptional to the model of liberal democratic rule.

To begin with a more positive account of the exclusion of the urban poor, we start with Holston’s (2008) account of insurgent citizenship in Brazil. Reflecting on shifts in politics over a generation following the advent of democracy in 1988, Holston identifies the emergence of an insurgent citizenship from the peripheries of the city that, in the name of democratic equality, challenges the traditional exclusion of the poor from political life. This he frames as a tactically disruptive but ideologically positive politics originating among residents of favelas (slums), who literally make their own life in the city by building their own homes and making new livelihoods, and who assert their right to belong and participate in public life as equals. Another positive account of the politics emergent from the exclusion of the urban poor is Robins’ (2014) account of the ‘slow activism’ of rights-based social movements in South Africa in contrast to insurgent ‘politics of spectacle’, which burn bright for a moment but often have limited policy impact. Based on an alliance across class lines, ‘slow activism’ combines the tactics of the ‘spectacular’ with substantive policy engagement through democratic channels, indicating a long-term strategy for social change.
While Holston and Robins offer relatively optimistic accounts of the politics possible for the urban poor in the Global South in the name of democratic equality, most commentators are more pessimistic. A famous account is Partha Chatterjee’s (2004, 2011) contrast between ‘political society’ and ‘civil society’, originating in India. Chatterjee argues that conditions for democratic politics from the poor in ‘political society’ are undermined in two ways. First, following Foucault, he holds that bureaucracy regards the urban poor as ‘bio-political’ objects of development in ways that render them as ‘populations to be governed’ rather than as citizens bearing rights. Therefore, some organisations present themselves to the state in terms of populations of the needy rather than entities fighting for rights to secure key resources. Second, Chatterjee observes that many members of political society cannot live fully by the rules of the city, and this illegality makes them vulnerable to legal prosecution and police harassment and so less likely to engage the state democratically.

Chatterjee’s insights alert us to forms of ‘subaltern’ or poor people’s politics that operate more in terms of the logics of developmental governance of groups rather than democratic rights of citizens, and resolve into some form of clientelism or patronage mediated by political parties. As we have argued in respect of South Africa (Piper 2015; Piper & Anciano 2015; Anciano 2017), the mediation of the governed is enabled by a dominant party that seeks to control not just the state, but also the key forms of social representation to the state. In this context, popular protest may sometimes be a product of mediated politics, not just insurgency, such as when elite networks compete for control over key positions to mediate access to state resources (Piper & von Lieres 2015). Thus protest in and of itself is not necessarily a sign of political empowerment or a desire to disrupt in the name of equality.

Perhaps the most pessimistic account of the exceptionalism of the politics of the urban poor is found in Asef Bayat’s work. Writing of non-democratic contexts in cities of the Middle East, Bayat (2000, 2013) develops the notion of ‘quiet encroachment’, where poor migrants settle in areas illegally or pursue livelihoods practices through stealth, trying to avoid the gaze of the state altogether. If enough are able to settle in a place before the state notices, they may be able practically to defend their right to live in that place. It is only at the moment where encroachers are confronted by the state that they might organise collectively to resist. This then is the first moment of conscious politics in the practice of ‘quiet encroachment’. While Bayat’s account is drawn from undemocratic cities in the Middle East, his views have wider resonance, as many of the urban poor cannot afford to live by the rules of the democratic city. This exclusion through poverty means that many live in what Yiftachel (2009) terms the ‘grey space’ between legality and illegality. For these groups, participation in mainstream politics from a position of legal, social and political vulnerability is a difficult option.
The constriction and capture of democratic spaces by elites While the exclusion of important social groups from politics, most notably the urban poor, has clear implications for the democracy component of the liberal democratic model, there are two important additional challenges that face democratic institutions in the urban South. The first is the constriction of democratic institutions from elections through to participatory spaces by authoritarian rulers and social groups. Democracy is constricted when, for example, elections are cancelled or postponed, or some political parties or leaders are banned from participating. The significance of the constriction of the liberaldemocratic model is confirmed by a quick review of the regimes across the Global South. This reveals that around one-third are authoritarian, mostly the poorer countries of Africa and Asia such as Algeria, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Laos and Vietnam. Another one third are identified as hybrid or illiberal regimes (Bolivia, Bhutan, Benin, Morocco, Thailand, Turkey), with only the final third being democratic in some form (Argentina, Botswana, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, South Africa) (Democracy Index 2017).

If accurate, this means that in approximately two-thirds of all countries in the Global South there are significant constrictions of democratic institutions in that elections are not free, fair or frequent; there are no opposition parties or they are harassed; there is a weak judiciary; and there is limited to no press freedom. This pattern is echoed in the list of the top twenty mega-cities in the world where around half also have hybrid or authoritarian governments including Beijing, Cairo, Karachi, Moscow and Shanghai (Democracy Index 2017; Demographia 2017). Again, we can assume constriction of elections, civil and political liberties, freedom of the press, and the capacity of the bureaucracy to implement policies. Lastly, as one would expect although with some exceptions, in the Global South the majority of authoritarian and hybrid regimes have little participatory democratic innovation in their cities. Rather, the vast bulk of democratic innovation with participatory democracy is found in the middle-income democracies of Argentina, Brazil, India, Mexico, and South Africa (https://participedia.net/).

The second concern with democracy is the capture of democratic institutions, especially participatory institutions, by powerful social groups, whether political parties, corrupt officials and their wealthy sponsors, patrons and clients, or middle-class networks. Important to understanding why this matters is that much of the impetus behind the introduction of participatory democracy in the Global South is to ensure better influence of citizens over decisions that affect them directly, especially on grounds of poverty and marginalisation (Pateman 1985; Held 2006). This is especially the case in the Global South given more recent histories of ‘differentiated citizenship’ and the struggle for the ‘right to have rights’ (Dagnino 2003; Holston 2008: ).
However, despite this intention, significant evidence is emerging of how new participatory institutions are captured by local political, economic or social elites (Piper & Deacon 2007; Kundu 2011; Teeffelen & Baud 2011; Patel et al. 2016). In addition, recent literature suggests that some middle-class groups have effectively supplanted poor and working-class groups in participatory spaces in India and Brazil (Chakrabati 2007; Avritzer 2017). Divided from poorer groups over issues such as security, the environment and aesthetics, wealthy and middle-class groups use these spaces to advance their particular vision on these issues. In addition, these groups often also have the resources to combine this capture with forms of ‘legal democracy’ favoured by the right (Held 2006: 264). (This is where rights are defended through the courts, which tends to be an expensive and slow process.) The capture of new participatory spaces in these ways undermines their capacity to deepen democracy by better including the traditionally under-represented urban poor in local rule.

*The limited power of City Hall over local governance and informal life* The third set of challenges for democratic rule in the Global South concerns the capacity of elected officials to take the important decisions that affect the city. While City Hall is nominally the highest authority over the people and places that constitute the urban, this power is often limited in the Global South, both by new forms of ‘co-governance’ and by enduring informality. As we have already suggested, the question of the power of City Hall is the key challenge that faces both inclusive and effective governance, and impactful democracy in the urban South.

A key trend in global politics post-Cold War is the decentralisation of various forms of authority from the central state to local levels, as part of the democracy export business. Indeed, decentralisation is often linked to democratisation, from the introduction of multi-party politics at the local level through to the innovations around participatory democracy described above (World Bank 2004). In addition to these forms of political decentralisation, other forms of decentralisation also exist, namely administrative, fiscal, and market. According to the World Bank (nd: np):

... all of these forms of decentralization can play important roles in broadening participation in political, economic and social activities in developing countries. Where it works effectively, decentralization helps alleviate the bottlenecks in decision making that are often caused by central government planning and control of important economic and social activities.

Most arguments for decentralisation are grounded on ideas of building a more inclusive, capacitated and efficient system of governance at the local level. Notably, a key part of this
framing is the option of shifting traditional government functions to quasi-independent organisations or the private sector. Indeed, for most observers, decentralisation is part of a wider package of policy measures alongside privatisation and deregulation that characterises the dominant framework for governance in the Global South after the Cold War. Considered together, these policies arguably create conditions for the decentring of political power at the local level from City Hall, facilitating the rise of ‘governance’ rather than ‘government’ as multiple actors collaborate to co-ordinate rule, giving rise to notions of ‘co-governance’, as well as ‘network’ and ‘nodal’ governance (Blanco 2015: 123).

The emergence of these forms of co-governance is seen as weakening the relative power of City Hall over local rule for three reasons. The first is that that co-governance is an ideology that conceals neo-liberal rule of the urban in the interests of business (Offe 2009). As Blanco (2015: 124) points out, critics of the governance paradigm hold that ‘rather than the development of new plural, horizontal and inclusive forms of network governance, critics say, what we observe in European cities is the increasing concentration of urban power in the hands of a few political and business elites’. A similar set of arguments proliferate across the Global South including accounts of neo-liberal governance of solid-waste collection in Cape Town (Miraftab 2004), garment production in Mumbai (Mizzadri 2008), education policy in Latin America (Torres 2002), and housing in Istanbul (Lovering & Türkmen 2011) and Jakarta (Yunianto 2014). Key to most accounts is the asymmetry of power between market and other social actors that means co-governance tends to be market-friendly governance. This theme echoes Stone’s (1989) account of the resource advantage of business in the gathering the power required to produce the city.

The second reason co-governance weakens the relative power of City Hall is that new forms co-governance may work according to logics antithetical to democracy (Brown 2015; Swyngedouw 2007). Central to this idea is that forms of co-governance could have an ontology of the social, a mentality and a set of objectives and rules that run against democratic principles. Thus, neo-liberal or market governance might imagine the distribution of housing as an issue of individual choice, formalised through contract law upheld by the state, and operationalised through the metric of economic exchange for profit. On this view there is limited to no space for the idea of housing as a collective good, meeting an enduring and contextual human need, and subject to collective decision-making through a political process (see Brown 2015). Conversely, the co-governance of housing framed in developmental terms might imagine the problem as one of the distribution of shelter to maximise the well-being of a needy population (see Chatterjee 1994). On this view, residents are not citizens bearing rights but a group without the capacity to govern itself productively, and thus in need of external patronage. The general point is that different forms of co-governance might have different logics, not all of which are consistent with
democratic principles.

The third reason for concern is the potential for erosion of the democratic relationship between elected officials and the citizens who elect them by new partners in co-governance. This issue includes the corruption of government officials by particular businesspeople, but also the transformation of governance in more systematic ways as expressed in theories of patronage, clientelism, prebendalism and neopatrimonialism. These accounts centre on a ‘gap’ between the formal rules of governance and the actual practices of government officials, which is better explained in terms of theories of reciprocal political exchange under some conditions of dependency (Lemarchand & Legg 1972; Scott 1977). The problem from a democratic point of view is that these forms of rule reduce the accountability of elected officials to voters. This is because the distribution of goods may not happen through formal institutions but rather through personalised networks in exchange for support from key groups (Daloz & Chabal 1999).

In addition to the limitations on the power of elected officials posed by the rise of forms of co-governance, City Hall in the urban South must also confront the problem of large numbers of urban residents, mostly the very poor, living partially outside the rules of the formal system. As noted by Ledeneva (2018: 343), informal political relations are characterised by both techniques of co-option and control. Co-option includes special access to state resources through informal means such as corruption or patronage, often expressed in popular vernacular in terms associated with food. For example, kormlenie (Russia) literally means feeding, kula (Tanzania) means eating, and uhljeb (Croatia) means bread. Simply put, you pay or play along and you ‘eat’. Conversely, control is exercised through what Gel’man terms ‘the politics of fear’, where selective repression is used to dissuade residents from resistance, often by making an example of a key figure. Examples include ‘politically driven arrests... exile... torture, the disappearance of people and political assassinations’ (in Ledeneva 2018: 420).

Furthermore, informal power is not just about informal influence over formal institutions, but also about forms of power that exist outside the formal realm, in the grey zone between formal system and private life. It is possible for both informal actors, such as gang members, to make key decisions about the distribution of key resources on an ad hoc basis, and for informal systems of rules to be administered by these informal actors too (Wheeler 2014). Thus, Arjona (2014) argues that even in war zones rebel groups may set up informal institutions, understood as sets of publicly known rules, to distribute key social goods. Indeed, her study of dozens of cases in Colombia revealed that rebel groups often establish informal institutions that cover issues beyond security and taxation, including the local economy, social relations, and private conduct. These she terms rebelocracy and contracts with aliocracy, where armed groups seek to monopolise violence and tax residents to support this.
Lastly, it may even be possible to identify institutions, or more accurately sets of rules (North 1990), that are informal but not enforced by any clear ruler, such as when social norms guide forms of behaviour in ways contrary to the rule of the formal system as expressed in Simone’s (2004) idea of ‘people as infrastructure’. Cases like this would arguably also include the popular enforcement of conservative norms around sexuality such as ‘corrective rape’ (Bartle 2000). More compelling examples of informal rules without rulers are found in Ostrom’s (1990) *Governing the Commons*, where public resources are managed collectively through rules drawn up not by the state but by local voluntary organisations, and which are sometimes informal but observed. Notably, such examples of ‘rules without rulers’ are rare.

In summary then, a central theme in the literature on governance in the urban South is the limited power of City Hall over the urban, both due to the tendency to share power with business and civil society, but also due to the emergent forms of informality of the urban poor, made more common by rapid urbanisation.

**Theorising a framework for analysing democratic rule in the urban South**

We began our argument by identifying the paradox of the emergence of participatory institutions, mostly but not exclusively in the global South, at the same time as satisfaction with rule by democratic government is declining. Noting the mainstream model of liberal democratic urban rule as one of a virtuous feedback circle between politics, democracy and local government, we identified three key empirical challenges to this model across the urban South. There are the exclusions from city politics, especially of the urban poor, the constriction and capture of democratic institutions, and the limits on the power of City Hall posed by both the rise of new forms of co-governance and enduring forms of informality. On this basis, we can refine our general problem into the following research questions:

- How democratic is local rule in the Global South, conceptualised in terms of a liberal democratic model of a virtuous circle of politics, democracy and government?

- More specifically, in light of the current literature:
  - Is city politics inclusive of all major groups?
  - Are democratic institutions operational and open to all?
  - Do elected officials have the power necessary to govern?
To further develop an analytical framework for our study, we need to operationalise the key concepts in these questions in light of appropriate theory. To this end, we engage two distinct theories of power, tempered with insights from Foucault. The first is power as domination drawn from Steven Lukes (2005), and the second is urban power as social production from Clarence Stone (1989). Lukes helps operationalise both political marginalisation in the urban South, and elite closure and capture of democratic institutions in terms of repression, concealment and depoliticisation. In turn, Stone helps frame the power of city officials in terms of the capacity to or ‘power to’ create the city under conditions of rapid social change, especially urbanisation.

Lukes and domination To help conceptualise relations of domination we use Lukes’ (2005) account of power that identifies three dimensions or ‘faces’ of power. The first dimension of power involves overt repression when one individual or group can impose their will on another (A has power over B when A can get B to do something B would not otherwise do) (Lukes 2005: 16). The focus is on ‘behaviour in the making of decisions on issues over which there is an observable conflict of (subjective) interests, seen as express policy preferences, revealed by political participation’ (Lukes 2005: 19).

The second dimension of power involves agenda-setting power, where a group can manipulate the political process so that their rivals are unaware of decisions being made that would harm them, or a powerful group can prevent certain issues becoming public knowledge (A has power over B when A controls the agenda of decision-making to A’s advantage/B’s disadvantage). In contrast to the one-dimensional view of power, this account sees power as exercised not only through decision-making but precisely through the act of ‘non-decision making’ too (Lukes 2005: 22). Thus, in addition to moments of overt conflict over issues in decision-making, this two-dimensional view also considers power to be exercised when ‘decisions are prevented from being taken on potential issues over which there is an observable conflict of (subjective) interests, seen as embodied in express policy preferences and sub-political grievances’ (Lukes 2005: 25).

The third dimension of power involves the establishment or maintenance of power-relations by affecting preferences so that some groups do not understand that they are repressed (A has power over B when A affects B contrary to B’s interests). In contrast to both preceding accounts of power, this view holds that power may be exercised not only through winning at decision-making, or controlling the agenda of decision-making, but also through preventing people from understanding that their interests are being harmed. Indeed, this transformation of consciousness might work so they neither the beneficiaries not victims of this form of power are fully aware of how their interests are advanced or harmed, respectively (Lukes 2005: 28).
Using Lukes’ three-dimensional account of power as domination, we can operationalise the concept of exclusion from politics in the urban South in terms of repression, manipulation and depoliticisation. These three concepts correlate to Lukes’ three faces of power. Thus, domination as repression refers to instances where rulers or dominant groups overtly prevent groups who are trying to speak, organise or mobilise from doing so. Examples could include banning political meetings, arresting opposition leaders, and refusing permission for political marches or peaceful protest. Domination as manipulation proceeds when the oppressed group is kept ignorant about decisions that affect them negatively, or is kept unaware of issues that harm them; thus, they do not politicise these issues. Examples could include when rulers conceal their interests from the public, fund rivals to critical civil society organisations, or secretly harass activists.

Lastly, domination as depoliticisation occurs when certain groups do not self-consciously participate in public debate, organise or mobilise to advance their cause because they fail to perceive that they have common interests at all. A reason for this could be mechanisms of governance that, following Foucault (1980, 2000) embody particular forms of knowledge/power that shape subject positionality and subjectivity in depoliticising ways. Key here is the framing of the problem of power in knowledge terms. Thus, if the problem for power is the most efficient means to enable exchange, actors need to be framed as individual subjects such as consumers, rather than in collective terms of the nation or the people. This framing of political subjectivity makes political organisation more challenging. Examples include when issues of public distribution are constructed as problems of individual choice, when organisations present as pro-poor but in reality are accountable to wealthy donors, and when outsiders are scapegoated through direct action for problems inherent to the local system of governance.

Similarly, we can operationalise elite control of democracy in the same terms of repression, manipulation and depoliticisation. Repression refers to those instances where rulers or dominant groups prevent citizens from criticising rulers, or from organising opposition political parties, or fail to hold free, fair and frequent elections. In all these instances there is overt conflict where the powerful dominate the will of opposing groups. Manipulation, on the other hand, typically avoids direct conflict by: concealing the true interests or actions of rulers from voters; secretly leaking damaging information on political rivals; deliberately failing to implement democratic reforms such as enabling participatory space properly; and cherry-picking decisions from democratic forms that suit the rulers and avoiding those that do not. Lastly, depoliticisation refers to political belief systems that serve to undermine potential opponents’ claims to rule by, for example, portraying radical political parties or social movements as undemocratic and thus outside of normal political bounds. Used in this way, even the discourses of human rights and democracy can serve an ideological end (Hamilton, L. 2003, 2014; Wood 2006), preventing marginalised
groups from identifying with, joining or voting for radical movements and parties.

*Stone and social production* Lukes’ account of power is one that focuses on relations of domination. A key reason for this, as Foucault points out, is that until the twentieth century power was associated with a central sovereign state exercising control through law under the threat of punishment (Rose 1999). However, in recent times, alternative conceptions of governance beyond this notion of sovereignty emerged, not least through Foucault’s account of disciplinary and regulatory/security power (Collier 2009). In addition, these alternatives raise questions about the adequacy of a Lukesian conception of power as domination. In respect of urban politics, a parallel shift has occurred in thinking about the problem of power and governance as not simply one of sovereign control but more one of co-operative social production. Key here is the work of Clarence Stone (1989).

In *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta 1946 - 1989*, Clarence Stone hypothesised that city power in America should be conceived in terms of a distinction between ‘power over’ decision-making and ‘power to’ implement decisions. This was because while cities had the authority to make local laws and policies, business had the resources to implement many key decisions through having the capital that generates jobs, tax revenues and project financing. Effective cities, therefore, were those that could form an informal alliance or ‘regime’ between political and economic elites to combine City Hall’s formal control over law with business’ resources. For Stone, the power required to rule the city is not so much one of control but more of social production. It is about developing the capacity to create the urban where it does not exist through an informal partnership between political and business elites.

While urban regime theory is regarded as specific to US cities in the 1980s and 1990s, the discourse of governance as cooperation between actors where the state ‘steers rather than commands’ (Stoker 1998: 17) is also found in urban governance theory advanced mostly by European scholars (Davies 2003; Le Gales 2002; Pierre 2011, 2014). Pierre points out that urban regime theory was not a popular theory in Europe as many cities there enjoyed increasing powers to tax versus the national state, unlike in the USA. The national policy framework was also stronger, reducing the tendency both for cities to rely on business for capital, and to compete with each other for business investment. Thus, many of the assumptions underlying urban regime theory in the USA simply do not apply in Europe.

Taking this into account, urban governance theory also moves from the assumption that the local government cannot rule entirely by itself, and thus partnership with other actors is required, resulting in ‘governance’ or ‘co-governance’. Indeed, it is evident from the large urban population living under conditions of informality that urban rule in the global South is facing a
challenge of social production – literally the power to create the city. Urban governance theory is thus the idea that the city shares ‘power with’ other actors by combining ‘power over’ decision-making with ‘power to’ implement decisions in multiple ways. Notably, urban governance theory is more flexible than urban regime theory on who makes decisions and who implements them, and identifies four variables as key (civil society, national versus local authority, political economy, and globalisation) considerations in any analytical framework.

Similar to urban governance theory is the idea of network governance that posits an alternative ‘horizontal’ model across ‘vertical’ political and economic hierarchies. Thus, Newman (2005: 85) writes that ‘the idea of a shift from markets and hierarchies towards networks and partnerships as modes of coordination is a dominant narrative’. This ‘third way’ narrative is embraced by a variety of authors who see networks as holding the potential to overcome ‘the limitations of anarchic market exchange and top-down planning in an increasingly complex and global world’ (Jessop 2003: 101–02). The idea is that network governance potentially extends the realm of public debate and engagement, empowering urban residents through inclusion in new relations of power, thus building new spaces for policy-making.

Another theoretical take that resonates with network theory is the ‘nodal’ theory of security governance (Shearing & Wood 2003; Wood & Shearing 2013). Noting the rise of privately owned but publicly used spaces such as shopping malls and airports, and non-state provision of security in these spaces, nodal theorists hold that governance is better understood in terms of ‘nodes’. In these nodes public and private actors network together to form ‘institutions with a set of technologies, mentalities and resources – that mobilize the knowledge and capacity of members to manage the course of events’ (Drahos et al. 2005: 33). Again, this can be seen as a form of power as social production, but not one that necessarily directly involves the local state at all. Thus, all these accounts of urban power draw attention to the plurality of ways that City Hall might be involved in urban rule, from governing directly through partnering to deliver services, to creating the enabling environment for others to act.

The argument concerning urban power as social production through co-governance in some forms assumes that governance is well-ordered into systems with rationalities, albeit in complicated, even contradictory, ways. While this approach might make sense for theorists of Northern modernity like Foucault, it makes too many assumptions about the urban South. Key here is the observation above of the limits of formal rule altogether, especially given the large populations of the urban poor in most cities around the world. The question of order arises in the context of the urban South separately from the question of authority, in other words, who governs, or whether they govern democratically or in an authoritarian way. Thus, in addition to the problem of power as social production in the urban South, the issue of power as social control
endures through informal life.

To illustrate this claim more systematically we note that a well-ordered form of governance is one with well-known rules, whereas disorder is the lack of a set common rules akin to Hobbes’ account of the state of nature. Indeed, some even argue that certain elites in the Global South have an interest in disorder of a degree, as it enables them to camouflage their self-aggrandisement, and maintain their status and power (Daloz & Chabal 1999). This granted, it is important not to overstate the extent of disorder, for as Arjona (2014) notes, even in war situations some kinds of institution (conceived of as explicit rules) exist, often far more extensively than commonly assumed. Similarly, it is a mistake to assume that informal life in the urban has no rules, or that these rules are not related to the formal in some way.

Thus, one way of thinking through the relationship between the formal and informal is through the idea of meta-rules. These can be the foundational rules, even informal constitutions that govern when decisions will follow formal or informal rules as Newton argues (in Ledeneva 2018). Thus, meta-rules will ‘tell civil servants when they can relax, suspend or modify rules, in respect of which persons, and in which circumstances. Those meta-rules can also be considered part of the informal constitution’ (Ledeneva 2018: 475). This example refers to instances like corruption, or patronage linked to formal office. But much of informal life in the Global South proceeds without the state, even though it may still be governed by a rule, such as one that designates who the non-state authority is in a certain context. An example: when poor migrants move into Cape Town and rent a place in the informal settlement in Imizamo Yethu they may be required to approach an informal local leader with a letter of character reference. Thus, even contexts with limited formal rules might have meta-rules or processes that define who governs.

This insight means that to the urban governance challenge of the social production of power that Stone notes, in the urban South we must add the problem of formal control. Simply put, where informality exists, no one regime of rulers or even system of governance can ever fully be in control of decisions on either key events or the rules of social practice. Governance in the urban South is always in some lesser or greater part a story of excess, as it always confronts the limits of governability.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Exclusion from politics?</th>
<th>Repression</th>
<th>Manipulation</th>
<th>Depoliticisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Public debate</td>
<td>Is speech banned, access to meetings or public debate prevented?</td>
<td>Do political groups conceal their interests or activities from their rivals or the public?</td>
<td>Are subjectivities or interests framed in non-political ways?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Organisation</td>
<td>Are organisations banned, leaders arrested?</td>
<td>Do elites secretly funding rival groups, or establish ‘sweetheart’ organisations to divide base?</td>
<td>Do leaders present as pro-poor when really accountable to wealthy donors?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Closed or captured democracy?</th>
<th>Repression</th>
<th>Manipulation</th>
<th>Depoliticisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Elected office</td>
<td>Can residents criticise rulers? Can residents form new political parties? Are elections free, fair &amp; frequent?</td>
<td>Do rulers conceal their interests of activities from the public? Do rulers secretly leak damaging information on their rivals?</td>
<td>Do rulers criticise rival contenders as undemocratic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Influence officials</td>
<td>Are the legal requirements for participation implemented? Do rulers repress social movements? Do rulers threaten critical media outlets?</td>
<td>Is participation poorly implemented on purpose? Do rulers cherry-pick from participatory forums or civil society submissions?</td>
<td>Do rulers criticise radical social movements as undemocratic?</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>3. Empowered elected officials?</th>
<th>Limited control</th>
<th>Dependency on social production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Events</td>
<td>To what degree do local officials decide on significant events (disaster response, land invasions, sport tournaments)</td>
<td>Who must co-operate, and how, to ensure the adequate implementation of key events?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Rules</td>
<td>To what degree do local officials decide the rules for social practices by themselves, in partnership or not at all?</td>
<td>Who co-operates, and how, to enable processes and rules for social practices?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure I.3: Analytical framework for democratic local rule in the Global South (with sample questions).
How is local democratic rule experienced? Ask the residents of the city By now it is clear that exploring democratic rule in the urban South is a multi-dimensional and complex undertaking that must involve probing politics, democratic institutions and government, and the relationship between them. It is also clear that to understand the problem of a democratic deficit citizen’s views must be a central focus of enquiry. Indeed, it is precisely the difference between the popular demand for democracy and the experience of democratic government that instigated our enquiry in the first place. Hence, to meet these multiple research objectives, we intend exploring the operation of democratic rule in one study site and from citizens’ point of view.

Exploring local democratic rule from citizens’ point of view implies a largely qualitative research design as the project explores complex relations between perceptions and experiences of politics, democracy, and governance. Perhaps an emergent theory of urban democratic rule can be operationalised for quantitative study in the future, but for this project, the evaluative and exploratory nature of the research problem required ethnographic case-study research at the local level. Further, to accommodate the emergent effects of a system of rule it is important that the case study is large enough to include the potential diversity of forms of governance, as well as local democratic institutions. At the same time, it needs to be manageable in terms of the scale of research required.

To accommodate these ends we decided to explore the politics, democracy and governance of a settlement, or group of settlements, in Hout Bay, part of the City of Cape Town. Historically a village in a valley adjacent to the city centre, Hout Bay now has a population of around 35,000 residents which makes it a manageable size, but it comprises a diversity of residents and residential areas, including a business and shopping district, that make it something of a microcosm of Cape Town. In racial, socio-economic and nationality terms, Hout Bay includes the majority of the key racial and social groups found more widely in the city, and indeed the country. In addition, by focusing on the suburban level we are able to investigate urbanisms more effectively, as it is at this micro-level that people live, work and interact (or do not).

If the politics is inclusive and the institutions of local democracy work, this is the level at which we would expect them to have purchase. Indeed, Hout Bay’s suburban boundaries correlate mostly with local government electoral ward boundaries; it has a lively civil society and political party branches with diverse groups living in close proximity, and significant local resources, all of which should enable local agency. Lastly, we focus on the suburb of Hout Bay for a significant period, from 2011 to 2017. This period covers several iterations of local and national government elections, and allows us to explore many key incidents, conflicts and dynamics in sufficient detail to construct an account of the different forms of governance that manifest at the micro-level, the
relationship between them, and that with local democracy.

In terms of research design, we have already made the case for why a qualitative study using an exploratory case study method is appropriate. However, we need to say more about the strategy for answering the research questions. Given our focus on politics, democracy and governance, we decided to begin each chapter with an instance of political conflict as a way into the exploration of democracy and governance in Hout Bay and the relationship between them. Although this follows the logic of our framing, it is also a choice made in homage to Robert Dahl’s (1961) *Who Governs?* In this iconic text, Dahl attempts to repel Wright Mill’s theory of the power elite by examining, in behavioural terms, conflict over formal decision-making in New Haven, Connecticut. Referencing Dahls’ starting point of a power analysis as observable conflict, we thought we would start by identifying the main points of public conflict in Hout Bay, and then work backwards historically to work out what they tell us about politics, democracy and governance.

Studying state-society relations from the perspective of public conflict invokes another tradition, the ‘contentious politics’ of social movements made famous by Charles Tilly (1986, 1993, 2006, 2008). Noting that democratisation creates the conditions for contentious politics through the civil and political rights of freedom of speech, assembly, association and protest, Tilly locates contentious politics in the context of the local evolution of popular politics linked to democracy. Informed by Lukes (2005) and Rossi (2017), we note the importance of analysing local politics beyond moments of public contention. Thus, while we start with these we trace the history of conflicts in Hout Bay through both contentious and constructive, as well as public, semi-public and private moments. Consequently, we start with instances of observable conflict, yet we also strive to surface power relations beyond observable conflict insofar as they shed light on politics, democracy and governance.

Furthermore, in exploring the politics around issues in Hout Bay, we look to unpack the democratic institutions at play, exploring instances of repression, manipulation and depoliticisation, and the forms of governance that shape political engagement. In respect of the latter, we start with the actual rules of conduct around an issue, working to identify how governance happens, and by whom. This approach follows both Ostrom in defining institutions in terms of rules, and Foucault in placing practice and patterns of behaviour at the heart of governance, opening space for more various and nuanced accounts of who governs, but just as importantly how they govern. This sheds light not just on the role of elected officials in the urban, but also on the various substantive ways in which the urban is ruled.
**Reading Democracy Disconnected** The chapters of the book are designed according to the key issues that have dominated local politics in Hout Bay over the many years of our fieldwork, but also so as to offer keen insights into the large range of issues that frame the right to the city in this context. Issues such as water, human waste and the environment; property, housing and urbanisation; transport, and private development; education and public development; fishing, employment and livelihoods; security, criminality, drugs; and the media, race and nationality all feature in the book.

We suggest that you read Chapter 1 to get a clearer background on Hout Bay, its history, its people, and key features of local democracy and government. We also suggest referring to the conclusion for the integration of the findings of each chapter into the most sophisticated version of the ‘democracy disconnected’ argument. Then dip into the chapters that grab your attention.

We have taken care to bring the politics around each issue to life in an engaging way, as well as using these to shine a light on the disconnect between democracy and governance in Hout Bay.

We have also taken care to ensure an even spread of chapters across the people and places that constitute Hout Bay, from the densely populated, poor, and black settlement of Imizamo Yethu with its diverse nationalities, vibrant street life, significant informality and strong identification with the African National Congress political party; through the spacious, wealthy, white ‘Valley’, with its security estates, malls, ‘European swallows’ and residents associations; to the picturesque but depressed ‘coloured’ settlement of Hangberg, with its fishing, smuggling and drug gangs.

Hout Bay is a fascinating and intriguing place that hosts many characters good, bad and in-between. We have changed names and protected the identities of respondents and local leaders as best we can, unless explicit consent to be named was requested. We do this not just for ethical reasons but also because our objective is to reflect on the implications of politics in Hout Bay for understanding urban politics more widely. Thus, while this book would be impossible without the people and places of Hout Bay, the larger analysis about ‘topological governance’ and its implications for democracy in Cape Town more widely, and arguably in every major city in South Africa. Indeed, we would suggest that the story of democracy disconnected is, at least to some extent, the story of every city in the Global South.
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