

HEAD IN SAND COUNCILLOR

B2 POWER BROKER

SHOWS UP FOR
BIG MTHS

DONT BOTHER ME WITH
YOUR SHIT

DONT

Method

50+ people participated in either interviews or the workshop

A workshop held with five NGOs

- International Budget Partnership
- Community Organisation Resource Centre
- Development Action Group
- Social Justice Coalition
- PlanAct

Interviews conducted with 40+ organisations

Semi-structured exploratory interviews

Organisations Interviewed

- Afesis-Corplan
- Asiye Itafuleni
- Built Environment Support Group
- Centre for Municipal Research and Advice
- Community Organisation Resource Centre
- Constantia Christ Church
- Constantia Heritage & Education Project
- Democracy Development Program
- Development Action Group
- Diakonia Council of Churches
- Dullah Omar Institute
- Eastern Cape NGO Coalition
- Fed Up
- Good Governance Learning Network
- Grahamstown Residents Association
- Grassroot Soccer
- Ground Work
- Housing Assembly
- Hout Bay Solution Seekers Association
- Ikhayalami
- Informal Settlement Network
- Isandla Institute
- Lawyers for Human Rights
- Mandela Park Backyarders
- Mobisam
- OpenUp (aka Code For SA)
- People Against Suffering Oppression and Poverty (PASSOP)
- People's Environmental Planning
- PlanAct
- Public Service Accountability Monitor
- Right to Know
- Sex Work Education and Advocacy Taskforce
- Shack/Slum Dwellers International
- Social Justice Coalition
- South African Catholic Bishops' Conference Justice and Peace Commission
- StreetNet International
- Treatment Action Campaign
- Tshwane Barekisi Traders' Forum
- Unemployed People's Movement
- uTshani Fund
- Yowzit

Demand > Power

Councillors have **limited direct authority** over many issues, particularly service delivery.

But they are the **face of the government** to the community. It is there house that gets burned down.

They also face pressure on them from the party, the committees they are on, friends and family, city officials, local businesses, and NGOs.

These networks of actors can be opportunities.

Effective councillors leverage their symbolic position as community representative to **broker deals** for their community

Therefore, effectiveness is dependent on their **personal and informal** set of skills, relationships, and power

Demand > Power

Councillors have **limited direct authority** over many issues, particularly service delivery.

But they are the **face of the government** to the community. It is there house that gets burned down.

They also face pressure on them from the party, the committees they are on, friends and family, city officials, local businesses, and NGOs.

These networks of actors can be opportunities.

Effective councillors leverage their symbolic position as community representative to **broker deals** for their community

Therefore, effectiveness is dependent on their **personal and informal** set of skills, relationships, and power

Capacity is more essential than engagement

Low Capacity

Basic and technical **skills**

Understanding of systems they are a part of:

- local community politics
- party politics (“language of politics”)
- the bureaucratic system
- civil society organisations

Deprived of **government information** (may be deliberate by officials)

May have roles in Council with **none of the background necessary** for these positions

Indication that more rural municipalities (Grahamstown) are more susceptible to lack of capacity

Effect of Lack of Capacity

More **dependent on officials**

More easily **influenced by party** leaders

Less willing to engage in the community due to

- (1) Feeling incapable of effectively responding to community needs: from community to city
- (2) Feeling incapable of conveying the information to the community, either because they do not have it or because they do not understand it: from city to community

Insecure and therefore **hostile** to outsiders and challenges to their authority

Less idealistic: failing to achieve for the community may lead councillors to reevaluate their “role”

“Incidental” corrupt: missteps committed through ignorance are covered up, leading to a slippery slope

Reliance on the power they do have – **to block action**

Sources of Capacity

Personal

- **Experience:** Knowledge and understanding of systems, community, and policy
- **Pre-government activities:** May provide transferable skills and knowledge of systems and community
- **Position in the party:** Ability to wheel and deal
- **Support from the community:** Ability to stand up to party and local dissenters
- **Personal schooling/education:** Ability to understand policy
- **Willingness to seek out capacity development**

Structural

- **Capacity development opportunities:** Receive only initial training, with little follow-up. Training is now done by the party and has been described as party indoctrination
- **Consolidation of community support:** Feuding factions may make no action safer/preferable to action and may make councillors less willing to take risks
- **Consolidation of party in municipality:** Opposition councillors have little influence (and their wards may be targeted to receive fewer resources)

Capacity is issue specific!

The Party

Sources of party influence on councillors:

- People **vote on party**, rather than individual
- The **deployment of councillors** to wards they have little connection to
- Councillor may have further **political ambitions**
- Ability of party to **politically deploy city resources**
- May **not be highest ranking party member** in the community
- **Politicized bureaucracy** staffed with party loyalists
- Lack of **right to recall**
- **Security** concerns

Councillors have more influence / are more accountable when:

- They have **influence** within the party
- They have **independence** from the party. This can be due to high levels of local support, standing in the party, and reputation (e.g. “Revolutionary Credentials”)
- They are in the party that has **control of the municipality**
- **Lack of factional divisions** within the party

Opportunism

Opportunism: Motivation by personal “material” benefits

- The **income** of councillors is often far higher than they could earn otherwise. This makes losing their position particularly dangerous and causes them to be highly dependent on the party for job security
- **Status** provided by being a councillor and sense of superiority this creates
- Desire to **climb the ladder** within the political system for greater income and status
- **Short-termers**: don't see themselves as in it for the long haul – “get what you can while you can”
- Opportunity to **dispense resources / advocate** for friends, family, and allies. For example ward committee members also receive a stipend, posting friends to these positions

Capture

A segment of the constituency who has disproportionate influence on the councillor, creating explicit or implicit bias in official activities.

- **Nepotistic pressure** from friends and family
- Dependence on a part of the constituency for **political support**
- The councillor is **embedded** in part of the constituency
- The community shares an **identity** with a segment of the community

Examples:

- Factions – more common in KwaZulu-Natal (ANC v SACP/COSATU)
- Ratepayers association – more common in economically diverse communities
- A racial block – more common in more diverse communities

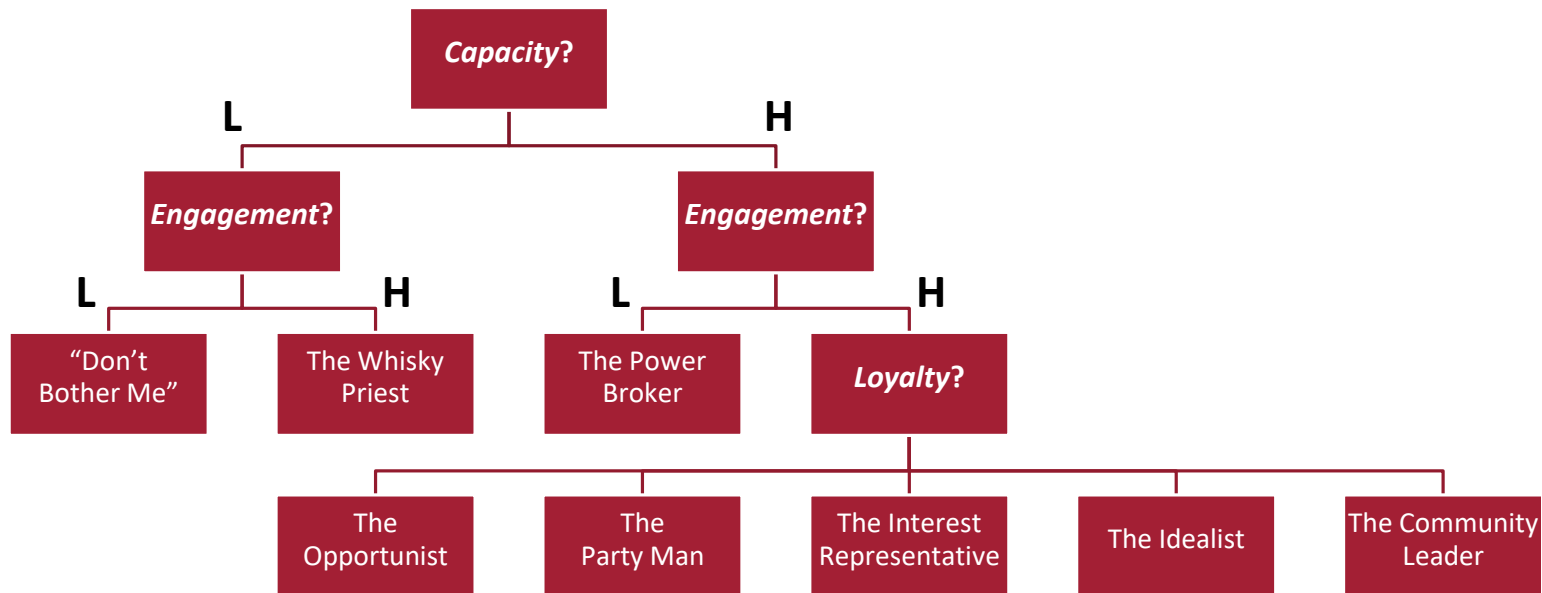
Dimensions of Councillor Quality

Capacity – The councillor's ability to get stuff done

Engagement – The councillor's willingness to listen and to take action

Loyalty – Who has influence on the councillor

Conceptualising Councillors



Types of Strategies

Collaboration – Work with / entice the councillor to achieve a mutually beneficial outcome

Coercion – Pressure councillor through threat of some harm to achieve a preferred outcome

Bypass – Work with other institutions, either within or outside of government, to achieve outcome; seeking to limit as much as possible engagement with the councillor

Collaboration

Engagement

- Inviting them to **events**
- **Meetings, presentations, and communication** (+ regular check ins)

Non-threatening and respectful

- Cultivating a **positive reputation**; example: councillor exchanges
- Using the councillor as the **first point of contact** in a community
- Participating in **official structures**, such as ward committees and IDP meetings
- Remain **“apolitical”**
- Make **small asks**
- Break large projects into parts; get them **piecemeal** invested

Providing resources

- Provide **research support** and **learning resources** to the councillor (often indirectly)
- Get access to **“public” documents**
- **Capacity development** for councillors

Providing wins

- Phrasing work in how it fits into **existing agenda** and how it **benefits the councillor’s community / reputation / party standing**
- Get project as **close to the finish line** as possible
- Be **supportive**: how do we help you succeed
- Coming into the community **with tangible resources**
- Allow councillors to **take credit**
- Target councillors **when they particularly need public wins** (i.e. election season)

Low-coercion pressure

- Get support of **the community, the party, or bureaucratic officials**
- Get **public commitments, document commitments**, and get **timetables**
- Double check promises with **budget reviews** to ensure that commitments have follow through
- Develop **personal relationship** with councillor
- Get **members elected** to official positions

Coercion

Make agenda visible through **events**

Training community to protest and picket but remaining “apolitical”

Taking councillors to **court**

Threaten to go / going to the **press**

Threatening to / supporting **opposition parties**

Organising **protests** and pickets

Appeal to party to remove councillor

Threatening to **assault** councillor

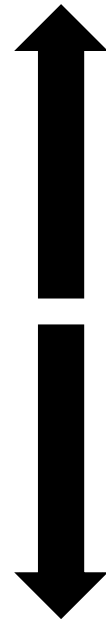
Occupying buildings

Blockading office buildings

Holding officials **hostage**

Burning councillors’ homes or public buildings

**Less
Hectic**



**More
Hectic**

Coercion

Coercion (particularly more “extreme” versions) are more likely to be adopted when CSOs are

- Ideologically committed to **contestation**
- More **local**
- More **informal**
- **Member driven**
- Identify as a **movement** rather than as an **NGO**
- Affiliated with the **opposing political party**
- Affiliated with the **opposing political faction**
- Are actively or passively **blocked by** the councillor in their work

Bypass

Adopted when councillors are seen as

- **Hostile** or potentially hostile
- **Useless** (often demonstrated)
 - Irrelevant: the party decides policy and the bureaucrats administer it; the councillor effectively has no power
 - Incompetent: they lack capacity
- **Difficult to contact** / engage with
- **Illegitimate** representatives of the community
- **Corrupt**

Alternatives

Up the ladder

- Bureaucratic officials
- Party leaders
- The mayor
- Provincial leadership
- Parliament

In the community

- SANCO
- Street committees (some CSOs will help these form)
- Other NGOs and CBOs
- “Influential people” such as pastors, principals, or traditional leaders
- Schools
- Member branches
- Local churches (particularly for religious orgs)
- Ratepayers associations
- Local businesses
- Peace and Mediation Forum

Final Note

There were several civil society organisations who were very excited by this research, who are looking forward to seeing our findings

Final Note

There were several civil society organisations who were very excited by this research, who are looking forward to seeing our findings

This project has an audience