

The politics of knowledge: knowledge management in informal settlement upgrading in Cape Town

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Abstract

In situ solutions, participatory practices and the inclusion of community knowledge have become key ingredients in urban upgrading policies across the world. Knowledge, however, is not neutral, but value-laden, representing different and conflicting interests. Including community-based knowledge, therefore, is far from straightforward. To understand the politics of urban development interventions, a deeper conceptualisation of the relationship between knowledge and power is required. This article tries to contribute to this conceptualisation through an empirical analysis of political mobilisation and knowledge in slum upgrading. Specifically, it problematises the role of community knowledge in urban development through a study of two informal settlement upgrading projects in Cape Town. Findings from this qualitative research contradict the notion of a unified community whose 'community knowledge' can be engaged with. In both settlements, knowledge politics have resulted in tensions within the settlement, creating new interests groups and knowledge alliances, showing the complex interconnectedness of knowledge, power and mobilisation. As knowledge has been built, used, exchanged and contested to upgrade livelihoods, this knowledge has been standing in a mutually constitutive relationship with collective action. Although this analysis supports, rather than contradicts, the assumption that including different types of knowledge enhances rather than weakens urban governance, its final argument is that this can only be achieved through substantive democratic and participatory processes.

Keywords

Urban governance, urban development, mega-projects, housing, participation, knowledge

Introduction

In situ solutions, participatory practices and the inclusion of community knowledge have become key ingredients in urban upgrading policies across the world, both as they are articulated by international development organisations and, gradually, as they are expressed in

urban policy frameworks. Including community-based knowledge, however, is far from straightforward. Our theoretical framework will show that knowledge is not neutral, but value-laden, representing different and conflicting interests. This article problematizes the role of community knowledge in urban development through an empirical analysis of informal settlement upgrading in a Southern African city, thereby contributing to a deeper conceptualisation of the relationship between knowledge and power. According to Leach and Scoones (2007) this conceptualisation is required to understand resistance to urban development interventions.

In this article, we employ a critical lens on inclusive knowledge management based on empirical research in two informal settlements in Cape Town. First we will briefly review the existing literature on knowledge and power in urban governance. We will use this debate in order to develop a knowledge framework to understand the political nature of knowledge in the context of social mobilisation. We will then present findings from qualitative research on two informal settlements, where the role of knowledge has been contested during recent upgrading and development initiatives.

The politics of knowledge

As no single definition of knowledge exists in academic literature, the concept itself has been subject to debate (see Fischer 2000; Bruckmeier and Tovey 2008). An important distinction can be made between 'knowledge' and 'information'. Information consists of data and facts which can easily be transferred or shared; to build knowledge from information, context is required. Thus, knowledge involves applied experience and rests on the values and meaning of different actors (Hordijk and Baud 2006). This means that knowledge is political by nature. To further a notion of knowledge as relational, pluralist and political, we make a conceptual

distinction between processes of knowledge building, knowledge use, knowledge exchange and knowledge contestation.

Knowledge building

Two main analytical approaches to knowledge-building processes can be identified in literature (Baud *et al.* 2011). The first approach assumes scientific codified knowledge to be built up in linear processes of experimentation, verification and codification (Gibbons *et al.* 1994). This process relies heavily on expert knowledge systems and is the assumed model of knowledge-building in government-private sector relations. This model is criticised, as it assumes that knowledge is universally applicable and therefore ignores context. The second approach to knowledge-building assumes different types of knowledge to interact through social processes, in which various paradigms compete with each other through institutions (Baud *et al.* 2011). Here, knowledge building is not only seen as expert-led, but as balanced and confronted by community-based knowledge and working experience (Fischer 2000; Van Ewijk and Baud 2009). Moreover, Bruckmeier and Tovey (2008) distinguish the 'knowledge embedding' model, based on the idea that knowledge processes are built through social institutions and power struggles between groups for recognition of their definitions of problems. In this way, knowledge building is seen as a conflict-prone process. This type of meaningful knowledge construction is important but unruly, especially in governance arrangements in which different actors participate (Baud *et al.* 2011).

Van Ewijk and Baud (2009) have identified different types of knowledge in such governance arrangements. They distinguish tacit, contextual-embedded and codified forms of knowledge. Tacit knowledge is built through experience and practise and often remains non-codified. This type of knowledge comes into existence through individual practise and experience and can only be transferred from person to person. Contextual-embedded

knowledge is also built through practice, but is more widespread and recognised than tacit knowledge. Van Ewijk and Baud (2009) distinguish three sub-types of contextual embedded knowledge: technical-economic-sectoral embedded through mainly professionals; community-based, spread by local networks; and political knowledge embedded in political and social networks. Van Ewijk and Baud (2009) also identify codified knowledge, which is systematically expressed and codified through written documentation.

Knowledge use

Knowledge use, or the appropriation of knowledge by policy-makers, is explained by Hordijk and Baud (2006) with reference to competing scientific paradigms. The positivist paradigm posits scientific knowledge as objective and free of values. From this perspective, policy makers are supposed to take decisions supported by ‘neutral’ knowledge. The positivist paradigm supports a technocratic view on policy-making, seen as a logical sequence of steps based on the use of scientific knowledge. Critical theory, in contrast, postulates that knowledge always serves someone’s purpose (Epstein 1996). Instead of being ‘neutral’, knowledge is considered value-laden and representing different views (Haraway 1988). Accordingly, Hordijk and Baud (2006: 669) argue that there is a “connection between fact and value, between knowledge and practice, and between the knower and the known”. Knowledge can seldom be reproduced, as it is filtered according to the perspective of different actors, reflecting their context and understanding (Hjorth 2003). Consequently, Hordijk and Baud argue that “research needs to reflect the variety of knowledge existing among actors involved in urban governance, and the conflicts in interpretation and valuation of knowledge sources” (2006: 669). The notion of a variety of knowledge types shaping urban politics, all value-laden and embedded in particular localities, will be adopted in this analysis.

Knowledge exchange

While knowledge can be exchanged between actors, Hordijk and Baud (2006) uphold that knowledge tends to stay where it is generated. For instance, research results are often retained by universities and organisations funding the research. Scientific insight does often not reach authorities and practitioners, but remain in academic circles. Conversely, local communities can be unwilling to share their experiences with policymakers, afraid that it will be used against them (Patel, Baptist and Cruz 2012). Both powerful and marginalised actors might have rational reasons for not engaging in knowledge exchange. Nonetheless, this reduces the potential for mutual learning when actors bring in complementary resources (Baud and Post 2002). Therefore, Hordijk and Baud (2006) have argued that urban governance arrangements should be constructed in ways that encourage the exchange of different types of knowledge between researchers, policy makers, civil society actors and community members (see also Corburn 2003).

Knowledge contestation

The potential for knowledge exchange notwithstanding, not every type of knowledge is valued equally in urban governance arrangements. While various ‘communities of interest’ can make knowledge claims regarding urban development processes (Scott 2011), the legitimacy of such claims tend to rest with the status of different types of knowledge as identified by van Ewijk and Baud (2009). Knowledge contestation occurs when actors attempt to use their knowledge strategically for particular interests. An illustration is given by Hordijk and Baud (2006) by naming the controversy over numbers; while numbers initially seem ‘objective’, they can also become a political factor. For example, in projects concerning sub-standard settlements, population size can be contested as governments exclude people who live illegally in houses (Patel 2001).

Generally, it is argued that there is a tendency in urban governance to focus on factual information rather than on contextual knowledge, which means that the use of science is considered more legitimate than the use of other types of knowledge (Hordijk and Baud 2006). Even in deliberative processes, meant to include knowledge of all actors, expert scientific knowledge often has greater power and legitimacy (Scott and Barnett 2009). Government officials and business actors often use scientific knowledge to claim authority and increase their influence in decision-making (Hordijk and Baud 2006). This perceived legitimacy of science also means that science is often brought in to settle controversies, which Epstein (1996: 6) calls the 'scientisation of politics'. Epstein (1996) argues that this simultaneously leads to the 'politicisation of science', as different stakeholders will bring in their own experts to support their interests, and political disputes tend to become technical disputes. This struggle over the legitimacy of data has implications for all stakeholders, and often create internal and external challenges, also with regard to community leadership (Patel, Baptist and Cruz 2012), which we will be demonstrated through our two cases.

Whose knowledge?

Despite contestation of non-scientific knowledge in practical policy-making, increasing attention is given in academic literature to the potential contribution of alternative types of knowledge to governance processes, particularly from civil society and local communities. During the last two decades, decentralisation and democratisation have taken place in neoliberal societies, increasing the authority of local governments (Rakodi 2003). Attention for alternative types of knowledge resonates with this decentralisation agenda, which acknowledges the potential of decentralised governments to be knowledgeable about local situations, and promotes the incorporation of citizen knowledge in decision-making (Rakodi, 2003). Locally produced knowledge can contribute to more realistic planning decisions

sensitive to the needs of targeted groups and increase a local sense of ownership (Corburn 2003). Also, when local knowledge is included, Hordijk and Baud (2006) have observed that policy agendas tend to become more problem-oriented. In short, the inclusion of community knowledge has been upheld as a path to better decision-making, more legitimate governments and an expanded notion of citizenship (Boulding and Wampler 2010; Cornwall and Coelho 2007).

Literature has documented cases where scientific knowledge has been challenged by alternative types of knowledge, leading to the repositioning of science in political affairs (Fischer 2000; Scott 2011). Civil society organisations (CSOs) often employ scientific technologies to formalise or spatialise community knowledge in order to be taken more seriously. This so-called ‘civic science’ is defined by Scott (2011) as knowledge production by civil society which claims to be valid and reliable scientific knowledge. Such exercises might lead certain citizens to acquire expert status, what Epstein (1996) labels the ‘expertification of lay activists’. Scott (2011) argues that ‘civic science’ has the potential to democratise knowledge production in urban decision-making processes. This type of knowledge building enables communities to mobilise knowledge about themselves in a manner that can advance their own rights, resources and claims (Appadurai 2012). Moreover, through these processes, boundaries between experts and communities become fluid, hybrid identities emerge, and the way contested issues are understood by the public change (Leach and Scoones 2007). Jamison (2001: 136) even suggests that a new kind of scientific pluralism has emerged in terms of worldview assumptions and technical application.

The politics of knowledge in informal settlement upgrading

Labelling informal settlements as ‘informal’, meaning that they lack formal recognition and often represent blank spots on formal planning maps, lead to a particularly acute knowledge

asymmetry. Flows of knowledge between marginalised communities to authorities are vulnerable to interference from powerful actors, who can exclude alternative types of knowledge by contesting their legitimacy (Hordijk and Baud 2006). Community knowledge, often presented in the form of narratives and experiential accounts, is often regarded as 'too subjective' (Scott 2011). At the same time, communities can be strategically denied access to scientific knowledge by officials, if it is perceived to threaten their agenda.

When excluded from knowledge processes, citizens can present their alternative knowledge through mobilisation and protest. Scott (2011) has called these sites 'claimed spaces', contrary to the 'invited spaces' where citizens are invited by authorities to participate in decision-making processes (cf. Cornwall 2004). The latter have been criticised for becoming part of a strategy for defusing citizen protest without real engagement (Scott 2011; Healy 2008), and allowing government officials and politicians to selectively engage those community representatives or forms of knowledge which benefits their interests.

In the struggle to obtain acknowledgement of local knowledge, communities often form strategic alliances with experts or CSOs, such as legal advisors during court cases (Author 2013). By conducting their own analysis, citizens are able to define their own priorities (Chambers 1995). Often, actors draw on science, experience, culture and several types of contextual knowledge simultaneously (Leach and Scoones, 2007). In decision-making processes, therefore, actors often 'shop' for knowledge that fits their interests, and form alliances accordingly. These knowledge alliances are always shaped by social interests, interacting in highly politicised fields (Leach and Scoones, 2007). In other words, knowledge alliances are not static, but subject to change.

The above discussion on knowledge politics has shown that while different knowledge types are formally acknowledged in urban policies and programmes, this does not guarantee that community knowledge is always meaningfully included. Even in inclusive urban

governance processes, a gap often remains between normative expectations and empirical realities of participation (Cornwall and Coelho 2007). The extent to which power relations constrain knowledge use and exchange in particular governance arrangements must therefore be determined through empirical research. This is the task of the remainder of this article, through focusing on contested urban upgrading initiatives in a South African city where strategic knowledge alliances have had particular implications for the mobilisation of informal settlement dwellers.

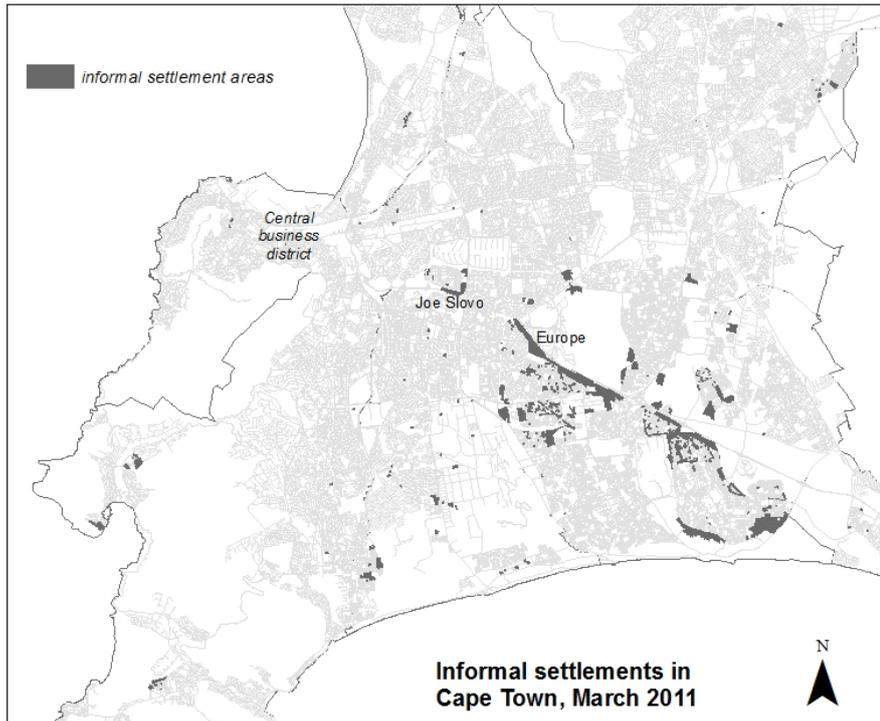
Two informal settlements along the N2 highway

In South Africa, post-apartheid housing policies have slowly become more inclusive and, at least on paper, more attentive to community consultation (Huchzermeyer 2011). We will use the experiences of two informal settlements along the N2 highway in Cape Town, to see how knowledge management strategies have met various responses from local communities.

Joe Slovo forms an outer band surrounding Langa, the oldest black township in Cape Town. The Joe Slovo informal settlement was established in 1990 by people from Langa who were residing in backyard shacks, and by migrants looking for jobs (Eppel 2007). Joe Slovo is closest to the city centre of all Cape Town's major informal settlements and is therefore, in relative terms, an attractive destination for poor job seekers. Electricity, communal toilets and waterborne sewerage were installed by the municipality in 2003 (Huchzermeyer 2011). In 2004, the N2 Gateway Project was initiated by all three tiers of government, and conceived as a pilot for the national government's new housing policy, *Breaking New Ground*. It aimed to upgrade settlements visible from the N2 highway, with the development of the Joe Slovo settlement as a showcase. In September 2004, residents were presented with these plans through local media. In 2005, Phase I was launched, and resulted in relocation of shacks and the construction of 700 rental units. In 2006, Phase II was launched, consisting of some

subsidy houses for poor residents and mortgaged housing for a higher income bracket. In 2011, Phase III was launched which offered almost 3000 fully-subsidised units for informal settlement dwellers. Protests and court cases led up this significant change in housing allocation for Phase 3, as Joe Slovo's residents had become angry about the first phases not benefiting them (Author 2014).

The Europe informal settlement in the Gugulethu township, together with three other settlements, forms a continuous strip of shacks stretching several kilometres along the N2 highway near Cape Town International Airport. According to an enumeration research conducted by the Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC) in 2010, inhabitants claim to have lived there for more than 20 years. The site is deemed unsuitable for rehabilitation by planners, and life in Europe is marked by environmental hazards such as flooding, drainage problems, high density building and a lack of basic infrastructure and services. Europe is a chronically under-serviced area, and benefits from NGOs including health and church-based organisations.



Source: Author (2014)

The wards where Europe and Joe Slovo informal settlements are located are among the poorest in the city, according to the City's socio-economic index. Hence, it comes as no surprise that residents in Europe and Joe Slovo have taken part in service delivery protests that have become widespread across urban South Africa. Both in 2007 and in 2013, the informal settlement population made use of their strategic location in Cape Town to blockade the adjacent N2 highway as a political protest against poverty and exclusion.

Researching informality

Our primary data is drawn from two main sources. First, we use the qualitative interview material from an MA research project (Author 2013), which includes interviews with project managers and political authorities related to the N2 Gateway Project, as well as local leaders and representatives. Secondly, we use interviews with key informants of both settlements,

including 25 interviews with residents of Joe Slovo, from a comparative research project in which the two other authors have been involved. In addition, a series of interviews with local political leaders and city managers have been conducted since 2009.

In preparation for the resident interviews, conversations with different stakeholders in Joe Slovo have been undertaken. Residents interviewed were asked to nominate friends and neighbours to participate through a 'snowballing technique'. As people in different zones of Joe Slovo were faced with different prospects regarding the planned development, interviewees were sourced from all three zones. For most interviews, a local assistant helped translating from isiXhosa to English, and these translations were edited and quality-checked.

A similar study in Europe informal settlement was attempted, but could not be realised due to access problems. Initially, our point of entry was through establishing rapport with local leadership. This leadership also collaborated with an NGO and other external knowledge communities. When the original leadership was subsequently voted out of office and replaced by a young group of leaders, we were met with suspicion. The new leaders eventually came to the conclusion that they did not want further research to be conducted in their constituency. While this process was frustrating on the part of us as a research team, it was very indicative of the politics of knowledge in informal settlements which we have intended to analyse.

Hence, we were therefore left a series of interviews with previous and current community leaders in Europe and a small number of resident interviews. These were supported by interviews with NGOs and academic representatives involved in this settlement. In addition, Winkler's (2013) published reflections on the engagement between community members and students at the University of Cape Town represents an additional source of data for our discussion.

Knowledge management in Joe Slovo and Europe

Informal settlement residents have, ever since the first plans for the N2 Gateway Project were unveiled, been caught up in contestation surrounding the development of formal housing in Joe Slovo. Their mobilisation has accompanied the various phases of the project, but since 2011, the most important form of organising has been through the Joe Slovo Task Team, which consists of young leaders from the community. The Task Team facilitates community consultations, relocations, demolition of old shacks and the allocation of new housing units in a relatively technocratic manner, almost to the point of demobilisation of the local community (Author 2014). Residents in Joe Slovo have been confronted with different types of expert knowledge in each phase of the project – legal, political, bureaucratic – and have, as will be shown below, sought recognition for their community knowledge since the project started.

In the Europe settlement, the pattern of contestation has differed. Early on in the N2 Gateway Project, Europe and adjacent settlements were ruled out of the development as they were deemed to be located on hazardous land, a previous municipal landfill site. Thus, in a period when Joe Slovo residents have seen a fundamental transformation of their built environment, there has been very limited upgrading in the Europe settlement. This, however, does not entail lack of mobilisation in the local community. Paradoxically, while residents have disputed experts' claiming their land is unsuitable for rehabilitation, upgrading initiatives in Europe have also faced community resentment. In both cases, expert and community knowledge have become politicised. In the following sections, we have tried to identify six dynamics of knowledge contestation which we have observed across our two cases.

Limited and late inclusion of community knowledge

The N2 Gateway Project in Joe Slovo has been marked by a narrow use of knowledge since its initiation and planning phase. Project objectives were mainly formulated by senior

politicians wanting to make it their personal prestige project (Author 2013). As a consequence, the desire to ‘beautify’ the N2 highway and the ability to showcase speedy housing delivery were prioritised over local concerns (Newton 2009).

Because fast implementation was identified as a political objective, consultation was neither done with external expertise nor with representatives of the target community during the planning phase. According to Piper (2012), this is symptomatic of development interventions, reducing the role of communities to mere ‘token’ participation in the implementation stages. This exclusion of community-based knowledge has led to several problems in later stages, such as a mismatch in housing supply and demand, contested ratios for beneficiary groups, and continuous alterations in implementation plans (Author 2013).

The narrow use of community knowledge continued into the implementation stages of the project. At this point, responsibility for the project had been transferred from high level politicians to a governmental housing agency. While a social compact had been signed and community members had officially been included in the Project Steering Committee, many residents expressed their discontent with the extent of participation in practice. The following statements reveal this disgruntlement.

“We have no influence. Decisions are made elsewhere, we just get agree on what is already planned.”

“Decisions are made up there, what we do is to “rubberstamp” (various Joe Slovo residents, June 2013).

Another problem which arised from such exchange is that even *if* knowledge was shared, interviewees expressed how English language and planning jargon acted as barriers. Although

public meetings were held during the first phases, they have been marked by a one-directional communication from project management *to* the community, and not vice versa. As confirmed by project managers, the explicit aim of these meetings was to inform the community. Rather than asking for their input and ideas on the project, project managers admitted that knowledge sharing was a way to prevent community mobilisation.

“Communicating with the community helps us when we need to rethink certain strategies. Because if there is a loud voice that says, we don’t want this, we can mitigate in terms of managing risk.” (senior project manager 1, February 2013)

“If you don’t address them, they stop the project [...] But if you constantly address all of their issues, you’re not going to go anywhere.” (senior project manager 2, March 2013)

Arguably, the real purpose of knowledge sharing by project managers has not been to cater for inclusion of affected groups, but rather to prevent delays as a risk management strategy.

Defining the community

While several stakeholders of the N2 Gateway Project have been advocating for ‘including the community’ in planning and implementation (Author 2013), this led to another challenge: what exactly is ‘the community’? Frazer (2000:76) describes a community as a *value*, which brings together elements such as solidarity, commitment and trust. A community can also be defined as a *place*, where people have something in common, such as historical networks, a locality, a religion, an interest or a cause. In our two cases, community value and place do not always overlap. When people arrive in urban areas, their sense of community often remains

with their village, clan or language. In areas such as Joe Slovo and Europe, a majority of the residents are first generation urban dwellers, meaning that their sense of community is torn between historical networks and geographical location. For example, recurring tensions between informal settlement dwellers in Joe Slovo and backyard dwellers in the surrounding Langa township throughout the project has been conceived by Eppel (2007) as a conflict between newcomers and poor people born in the city.

Within the Joe Slovo settlement, ‘the community’ has slowly disintegrated into factions with different stakes in the project. By 2011, the community was split between rival leadership groups, roughly corresponding to those eligible and those not eligible for housing. In this sense, Joe Slovo represents a fragmented community where different groups and representatives stand in a conflictual relationship to each other. How each of these different actors was accepted by project management and other authorities determined their access to information and the appropriateness of their knowledge base.

Similarly, the Europe informal settlement was also drawn between different representations of the community. On the one hand, statements from interviews gave a clear indication that the residents of Europe have behaved as a collective and suggest they see themselves as a community, even vis-à-vis adjacent Barcelona which is not separated by visible boundaries. The community had long organised itself for fear of being moved to another site, and a typical term that has come up regularly in the interviews is “thina abahlali base Europe”, meaning “we are the residents of Europe”. Moreover, engagements with external actors, such as NGOs and councillors, who wanted to engage with representatives of clearly defined communities in order to coordinate their interventions, has also shaped the way the Europe community views itself. But despite a strong sense of solidarity in face of relocation, evidence shows that the possibilities offered by several small upgrading initiatives have created tensions between different groups and their claims to represent community

knowledge. These experiences in Joe Slovo and Europe indicate how difficult it is, if not outright impossible, to locate a unified community whose ‘community knowledge’ can be engaged with.

Mediating community and expert knowledge

Both cases have shown how certain community members, drawing on various levels of democratic legitimacy, were invited into positions as mediators between the community and project managers. We label these community-expert mediators as *local knowledge brokers*, as our research finds knowledge claims to be central to this mediation.

In Joe Slovo, the most prominent knowledge broker has been the Joe Slovo Task Team, which had been set up as a direct consequence of the N2 Gateway Project and the need for a community liaison. Sometimes called the ‘government of Joe Slovo’ by residents, they were granted privileged access to decision-making and information regarding the project. In the process, they became bearers of procedural and technical knowledge which put them in a powerful position in the community. The Task Team was a particularly important source of knowledge for those who were eligible for a house, and were waiting for news on their allocation. Many were highly supportive of the Task Team and viewed them as legitimate leaders and trustworthy knowledge brokers. Others complained that they seemed unwilling to share knowledge with community members.

“The leadership does not share the information easily. It’s as if they own the project. If you can ask me anything about the plans for this project I will not be able to tell you.”

“Reporting to the community is selective and we cannot question any malpractices, we live in fear of being eliminated from the list if you criticise.” (Joe Slovo residents, June 2013)

Given the conflict-laden nature of the project, a gap evolved between what was decided and known by managers and politicians, on the one hand, and what was decided and known by those living in Joe Slovo, on the other. The Task Team, the Project Steering Committee, and appointed community liaison officers (CLOs) filled the mediation roles, sometimes through the same individuals. Responsibilities could involve relaying information about waiting lists, updating inhabitants on the construction process, recruiting people to casual jobs with the different contractors and facilitating community meetings.

As the divide between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries became more articulated, community mass meetings increasingly became contested spaces. Bitterness by those who could not get a house also translated into claims – justified or not – that the Task Team handled the allocation process in a nepotistic manner. Even some project managers questioned the motivations of community representatives:

“[T]here is always a grey area where it is community interest or whether it is self-interest. Because pretty often it is self-interest expressed as community interests.”
(project manager, February 2013)

Hence, it comes as no surprise that the role of local knowledge brokers was disputed. In the case of Joe Slovo, privileged access to knowledge has also meant having one’s legitimacy questioned. In the Europe settlement, similar allegations were made against community leaders cooperating with external NGOs. These representatives were accused of not wanting

to share their knowledge with all members of the community, rather portioning out knowledge to their own networks and relatives.

Appropriate and inappropriate knowledge

In Joe Slovo, the Task Team faced opposition from at least one other organisation, the Joe Slovo's Residents' Association. Originally, it had represented various street committees in the settlement, but had been marginalised since the start of the project. At the time of research, the Residents' Association represented people who were critical towards the project. Among their supporters were people who had been deemed ineligible for a house, and who wanted the process to be halted or fundamentally altered. In a group interview with the leadership of this group, they claimed they had "rejected a medium-density, multi-storey solution", as planned in Phase III of the N2 Gateway Project. Rather, this group demanded freestanding houses and stated that they believed the constitutional court case had granted this as a legitimate claim, justified by the "RDP standard" (referring to a programme for formal housing launched in the 1990s) and cultural values.

"African traditional practices prohibit us from living in flats. At times when we have to slaughter for sacrificial purposes we need a kraal to do the slaughtering, space to cook our traditional brew, and space for community members who would be attending the ceremony." (leader of social movement, March 2013)

The Xhosa saying "ukwazisa indlu yakho kwabaPhantsi" means making the location of one's home, known to one's ancestors. This traditional cultural practice requires both land and home ownership. This explains why some residents of Joe Slovo said that although they accepted the project managers' plans for medium-density housing, they were not entirely

happy with the decision. Cultural practices, however, were dismissed by project management, not least due to the fact that this claim was contrary to the densification policy of the City, which would prevent the relocation of a larger number of people to other areas further away from the city. This meant that to the N2 Gateway Project managers, the Task Team represented an acceptable form of community knowledge, while the Residents' Association represents an inappropriate and unrealistic form of community knowledge.

Arguably, community representatives in project management were selected with an expectation that they would both represent residents eligible for the new housing *and* would have an appropriate understanding of the project.

“We would want to have the people who are still living in the shacks in the Project Steering Committee. Because then at least we know they will address the need of the community. Those people that live in the new houses, they don't really care anymore. And the non-qualifiers that are sitting in the committee, don't want the progress in the project because that means that they have to live somewhere else. Sooner than later.” (senior project manager, March 2013)

A similar dynamic could be observed in Europe, relating to the assessment of the area's suitability for upgrading. The City of Cape Town (CoCT), as the owner of the land, relied mainly on a technical assessment conducted by engineers to test the feasibility of the land. According to local government, the community had invaded land illegally. Hence the government was concerned about the legal aspect and the financial viability of an upgrading solution. What the CoCT did not do was to take into consideration the viewpoints of people who moved to Europe, their socioeconomic needs, and their lived experiences, which were excluded from the knowledge system. So, decisions were made by the City for the residents,

but not with the residents. Conflict started when the City of Cape Town declared Europe uninhabitable and a danger to the health and safety of its residents. One of the city officials commented on the development of the site.

“To develop the site would present danger to the residents and the environment – water will be contaminated and the emissions of methane gas from the rubbish underneath would endanger people’s lives. The City of Cape Town can be held liable. Lastly developing the land would cost the City a fortune” (senior city engineer, April 2014).

Europe residents, on the other hand, did not see the same threats from continuing to live in Europe. The so-called hazards have been openly questioned by community leaders.

“I was born here in Europe, I have not seen nor experienced any threat from living in this area, except for flooding during the rainy season” (former community leader, March 2013).

Conflicting knowledge claims over the habitability of Europe has continued to this date.

Who owns the knowledge of a community?

In the Europe, the Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC) employed experts to work with the community, giving residents the opportunity to acquire new skills. This is a typical example of Epstein’s (1996: 293) ‘expertification of lay activists’: community leaders who came through grassroots organisations and street committees were given the opportunity to receive training from external organisations. Through a so-called enumeration, community

members in Europe were equipped with tools to help them participate in their own settlement planning for the upgrading and development, allowing them to report on their current living conditions in order to engage constructively with the state (CORC, 2010). The enumeration administered by some of the residents in Europe promoted the value of community knowledge.

Ambiguous responses to these efforts from the municipal authorities led different groupings to compete for recognition of different kinds of knowledge. The community leadership of Europe has changed several times since 2012, complicating the political dynamic. At least two competing rationales could be discerned: one centring on mobilising the community to demand free services and houses from the political wing of government, another focusing on local self-reliance and engagement with external expertise and administrative municipal staff. The latter approach characterised the leadership who had engaged in enumerations and other collaborative efforts with NGOs in 2010-11, but this group was replaced by a young group of ANC Youth League activists in 2012 favouring a more political approach. They were described by their political opponents as follows:

“The newly elected leadership was a group of young people, who were passionate about politics but did not have the vision, skills and knowledge to take the community to the next level of development. Hence they had to forge a relationship with the leadership in Barcelona [adjacent settlement]. Some of the leadership were politically aligned and were not in favour of the enumeration report” (former community leader, September 2012)

This new leadership was never properly acquainted with the community mapping and surveys, and this product of community-generated knowledge was therefore not communicated to local residents in this period. Again, language and technical jargon prohibited a local sense of

ownership. Instead of sharing knowledge, this shift in leadership caused a move to using public protest and their settlement's strategic location in the urban landscape to be heard.

We, the residents of Europe, together with those who live in informal settlements, we have no other way to express our grievances to get government to listen to our demands for upgrade in our area. One ability we have is to toyi-toyi, which means a visible, public protest. We bring normal life to a standstill in order to draw attention to our plight. We won't give up until the government responds to our demands. (Europe resident during a protest, October 2013)

In a recent development, the original leadership again emerged as dominant in the Europe community, and pressure from this group led to the stepping down of the 2012-2013 leadership. Subsequently, CORC revived their engagement with Europe, initiating a plan for a crèche and a new multi-purpose community hall. This implies that residents have again favoured a more pragmatic approach, although recent efforts to engage in joint projects with external NGOs and academics have led to renewed tensions over the habitability of the land and the purpose of generating community knowledge.

Perceived risks of knowledge exchange

Another issue surfacing in the Europe case was how knowledge exchange between community members and local government was vulnerable to breaches of trust. The initial leadership, ousted in 2012, had encouraged partnership meetings with service departments in the City of Cape Town. However, the new leaders were hostile towards these engagements, and alleged that the previous leadership withheld information with regards to the development

of the area. The new chairperson also claimed that the enumeration document had been used by authorities to identify newly built shacks and extensions for demolition in their area. This new leadership came through political networks and suspected that the old leadership worked closely with the CoCT in monitoring and governing the community. The fact that members of the community had failed to differ between the partnership meetings with managers responsible for service delivery, on the one hand, and the actions of the City's Anti-Land Invasion Unit (ALIU), on the one hand, testified to the high degree of mistrust and miscommunication. To be sure, the ALIU is organised under the City's Informal Settlements Department, the same department responsible for upgrading of Europe and other settlements. This goes some way in explaining why people have conflated the different roles of local government.

In the same way as sharing knowledge with government officials was treated with suspicion, so was the act of conducting research in Europe during the 2012-2013 leadership period. In fact, the leader of Barcelona, the adjacent settlement, who was the de facto highest authority in Europe settlement during this period. said in a meeting "we have been researched enough by [the university] and CORC", indicating research fatigue on part of his constituency. Winkler (2013) describes the dilemmas of collaborative research in a self-reflexive way based on her experiences from Europe settlement. Aiming to facilitate a community plan developed by local residents, students and supervisors hosted workshops in the settlement and developed a series of tools and documents envisaging a development of the built environment. However, this collaboration, like previous initiatives, did not yield concrete results. A lack of response from authorities, experts' assessment of the stability of the ground, and the short-term engagement from students enrolled in academic programmes, are arguably all to blame for this. Winkler (2013: 10) provocatively states that while both students and academics could benefit from this engagement through coursework and publications,

“... the residents of Barcelona and Europe do not derive immediate benefits from knowing that issues pertaining to tenure security are not merely political issues. They therefore continue to fear evictions by the state. They also continue to live in shacks without adequate public services and infrastructure, on a contaminated site.”

In addition, Winkler claims that this particular engagement played a part in the ousting of the original leadership described above.

A similar suspicion towards working with NGOs could be identified in Joe Slovo in the early phases of the project. Here, residents have generally been reluctant to work with NGOs, irrespective of their stated intentions, with the exception of legal advice. Although an enumeration report by CORC has contributed to a more realistic planning of the N2 Gateway Project, the active generation and exchange of community knowledge through engagement with external experts has been limited in Joe Slovo.

It is often assumed that inclusion of local knowledge is lacking in urban governance, but that the inclusion of such knowledge will empower local populations and make interventions more sensitive to their needs and concerns. However, the abovementioned experiences show that scepticism towards such information exchange might, justifiably or non-justifiably, be caused by the assumption that sharing knowledge about livelihoods and settlements can be used to the community's *disadvantage* (also see Patel, Baptist and Cruz 2012). This implies that one should pay more attention to the establishment of accountability and trust in such exchanges. Likewise, the resistance towards community planning and engagement with authorities by oppositional groups in the community shows how important an analysis of power is to understand the processes behind mobilisation and demobilisation.

Concluding discussion

This article has addressed the role of knowledge in urban governance through an empirical analysis of political mobilisation and knowledge in slum upgrading. Research in the Joe Slovo and Europe informal settlements shows a complex interconnectedness of knowledge, power and mobilisation during upgrading interventions. In recent literature, many arguments have been made for including local knowledge in urban development projects. However, the literature review also indicated that knowledge is not neutral, but value-laden, representing different and conflicting interests. The knowledge base for the N2 Gateway Project has been largely expert-driven, with limited input of community knowledge.

Including community-based knowledge is far from straightforward, however, and local knowledge politics in Joe Slovo contradicts the notion of a unified community whose 'community knowledge' can be engaged with. In both Europe and Joe Slovo, diverse knowledge alliances have been at work, and residents have been included and excluded from knowledge exchange, partly with reference to the appropriateness of their claims and viewpoints. When local knowledge brokers gained exclusive access to information and procedures making them more powerful, this simultaneously triggered competing knowledge claims by other community actors. These knowledge politics have resulted in new tensions within Europe and Joe Slovo, creating new interest groups and leading to new phases of mobilisation.

Knowledge politics shapes, and is shaped by, struggles over space and material resources. As knowledge has been built, used, exchanged and contested in the efforts of Joe Slovo and Europe residents to upgrade their livelihoods, it stands in a mutually constitutive relationship with collective action. Although this analysis supports, rather than contradicts, the assumption that including different types of knowledge enhances rather than weakens

urban governance, it also implies that this can only be achieved through substantive democratic and participatory processes. Further empirical and contextualised research is needed on how this knowledge inclusion can be established in concrete cases of urban development. While this study both offers concrete examples and highlights some potential key dimensions of the challenges that must be overcome, we support Leach and Scoones' (2007) call for a deeper conceptualisation of the relationship between power, knowledge and mobilisation in contentious politics.

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