THE MORPHOGENESIS OF HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

A SOCIAL REALIST EXPLORATORY JOURNEY

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

RHODES UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Education

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April 2023

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study underpinning this thesis was to explore the tensions experienced by university leaders as they balance politics, power and the academic project whilst pursuing their ultimate concerns in the world.

Universities are undergoing constant change, particularly in the present time of hypercomplexity, where the discourses of globalisation and neoliberalism condition higher education institutions and their leaders. This predisposes universities to operate as a market economy rather than as a public good. University leaders are under immense pressure as they seek to reposition themselves and exercise their agency in steering their institutions in a landscape fraught with complexity and contestation about the very nature of the modern university.

The study was located in a traditional university in South Africa, which added another layer of complexity given the history of Apartheid and, the use of education as a means of discriminating against the black majority population, and the subsequent attempts by the government to transform the system following the first democratic election of 1994.

Bhaskar's (1989) critical realism and Archer's (1998, 2000) social realism were used to frame the study theoretically. Bhaskar argues for the understanding of the world as an 'open system' in which experiences and events emerge from the tendential interplay of mechanisms at a layer of reality not directly accessible to empirical observation. Archer's (2000) social realism draws on critical realism to provide a set of tools that allows an exploration of the social world in more detail. This study draws on the tools of analytical dualism, or the temporary separation of structure, culture and agency for analytical purposes, and Archer's (1998) morphogenetic framework, which allows for the exploration of change, or non-change, over time.

The overarching goal of the study was to explore how leaders at one South African university were enabled and constrained as they exercised their agency in the pursuit of projects they had identified to address their ultimate concerns about the world more generally and higher education in particular. However, the study also sought to explore the construct of leadership itself in a specific context by using Archer's (2007, 2012) theoretical work on reflexivity.

The study drew on in-depth interviews with senior leaders at the institution, including two vice-chancellors. The interviews were subjected to analysis, and the inferential tools of abduction and retroduction were used to identify the interplay of mechanisms located at the level of the Real, the

deepest layer of reality posited by Bhaskar (1978), which led to the events and experiences reported by leaders. A literature review was used to identify additional theories that were used in the processes of abduction and retroduction.

The study revealed that change, or rather non-change, is often concealed in cultural rhetoric veiled in leadership practices in acts assimilating past ideology and codified rules and practices with new codified rules and practices. Leaders often draw on powerful relational networks as they reflexively exercise their agency, and these networks can also work to constrain change.

Keywords

Higher Education Leadership; Critical Realism; Social Realism; Morphogenesis; Reflexivity; Relational Networks; Social Change.

DECLARATION: ORIGINALITY

I declare that the entire body of work contained in this electronic document is my own, original endeavour; that I am the sole author thereof; that the reproduction and publication thereof by Rhodes University will not infringe any third party rights; and that I have not previously submitted it, in its entirety or in part, for obtaining any other qualification. Where I have drawn on the words or ideas of others, these have been acknowledged using complete references according to Rhodes University Guidelines.

Ruth Andrews

10 April 2023

DEDICATION

TO THE GOD OF THE REAL

I am eternally grateful. (Phil 1:6)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Chrissie, thank you for everything. This study emerged because of your enduring commitment and belief in the public good. You have helped me in so many ways to grow as a scholar and as a human being in making my way through the world.

To the Research Participants, thank you for granting me the opportunity to explore the emergence of your leadership with its triumphs and challenges. I have learnt so much from you.

To my fellow researchers, colleagues, friends, loved ones and those who joined towards the closure of this study, you are a gift and blessing and have enriched my life in so many ways. Thank you.

To my daughters Blanche and Adele – thank you for your steadfast encouragement. This PhD is for you and because of you.

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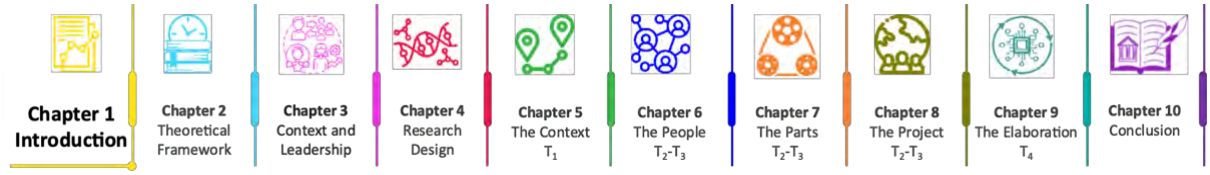
ABBREVIATIONS

AT	Agency theory
CEP	Cultural emerging properties
CESM	Classification of Educational Subject Matter
CHE	Council for Higher Education
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
HBUs	Historically black universities
HDI	Historically disadvantaged institutions
HEMIS	Higher Education Management and Information System
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HWU	Historically white universities
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NFF	New Funding Framework
NPHE	National Plan for Higher Education
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEP	Personal emerging and properties
PRT	Property rights theory
RET	Radical economic transformation
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SEP	Structural emerging properties
TCE	Transaction cost economics
UNIBO	University of Bophuthatswana
UCT	University of Cape Town
UNITRA	University of Transkei

1 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION



Social realists have to be a great deal more precise about the properties and powers of human beings and how they emerge through our relations with the world – Archer (2000, p. 7)

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH INTENTION

This thesis explores the way senior leaders[1] balance the tension between academic autonomy, power, and politics in the field of higher education in an era of paradox and complexity (Samier, 2008). Globalisation and its protégé, managerialism, have resulted in numerous external and internal demands upon senior leaders at universities. In an increasingly politicised and market-driven context, the dimension of leadership is assumed, and the paucity of scholarly research in this field is noted (Glanz, 2010).

At a time when the South African government is grappling with issues of nepotism, corruption and greed, the nation's universities are struggling with transformation imperatives, poor governance, and maladministration. Dominating higher educational discourse is the replacement of an ageing academic workforce in addition to meeting equity targets. With 80% of the ageing academic workforce predominantly white and male, finding role models that black students can relate to is stymied by the disproportionate racial balance between lecturers and students (CHE, 2009). Compounding the above are challenges of funding linked to subsidy, poor throughput and graduation rates (see, for example, CHE, 2021) and the need to increase research outputs, particularly at universities without strong research records. All these challenges need to be addressed within the context of an ever-burgeoning administration load placed on academic staff who need to monitor and record progress against targets. As a result, the need for research that explores the way globalisation, politics, policy and

1 The renowned Leadership theorist Burns (1978), describes leadership as activity directed towards the 'accomplishment of goals established by or for a group/organisation/society' the leader forms part of (Price, 2006: 96).

institutional culture condition the way senior leaders exercise their agency as they deal with ethical dilemmas[2] and decision-making within South African universities has never been greater.

1.2 RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

Universities are paradoxical in their ability to reproduce as well as transform social relations, being able to counter racialism and prejudice yet reinforce ideology through institutional practices (Boyer, 2010). In South Africa, one of the most unequal countries in the world, education is being transformed back into an oligarchic good (ibid), and progressive experimentation in educational methods is being replaced by a set of reinvented traditional pedagogies (Ball, 2010). What is overlooked and underestimated in this context is the need for a social analysis of South African higher education leadership.

The study on which this thesis reports aims to understand how university leaders exercise their leadership to further their own concerns about higher education and the projects they identify to pursue them. In order to do this, it draws extensively on the concept of reflexivity as detailed in the work of British sociologist Margaret Archer (1998a, 1998b, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2010a, 2010b, 2012, 2016, 2017, 2020). More specifically, the study aims to explore the ontology of leadership, thereby aiming to contribute to a deeper and more complex understanding of the construct itself. It is hoped that, in the future, researchers will be able to draw on the study's findings to further the field of leadership studies within the higher education sector in South Africa.

1.3 RESEARCH CONTEXT

This study underpinning this thesis focused on a historically white South African university that, under apartheid, conformed to legislation which restricted access to black South Africans. After the first democratic election, the new government was tasked with ensuring equity and social justice[3] for all citizens. Higher Education, one of the divisive tools of the Apartheid regime's policy of segregation, was identified as a lever to effect redress in the form of access to and success in higher education for all. Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 and the White Paper (DoE, 1997) that preceded it resulted in

2 Ethical dilemmas can be defined as decisions 'that require a choice among competing sets of principles, often in complex and value laden contexts' (Ehrich, Cranston & Kimber 2005: 137).

3 Social Justice carries various definitions in literature making it a contested, complex concept in theory and practice. The definition of Gerwitz (2002) which expresses the plurality of Social Justice is representative of this terminology in the study. According to this definition, Social Justice is multi-faceted, speaking to the equal redistribution of socio-economic resources as well as recognising and promoting cultural diversity and social difference (Gerwitz & Gribb, 2002 499; Taylor, 1997: 128). The root of this definition is explicated from the enlightenment ideals of freedom and equality of humanity (Ibid) which in turn echoes the South African Constitutional ideology .

policy-driven educational reforms intended to effect transformation and social change (Hall and Symes, 2005, p. 202).

During the period following the shift to democracy, the institution on which this study focuses (hereafter called 'The University' to ensure institutional and research participant anonymity) retained its status as an unmerged traditional university. The University embraced state legislative requirements and, between 2007 and 2014, saw a restructuring of institutional administration and management functions. This encompassed the creation of new positions and the development of new policies. In a document called 'Critical Reflections', the Vice Chancellor in this period stated that change often results in tension between values and goals, leading to ethical dilemmas and difficult choices. He further noted that this restructuring did not affect the supremacy of structures such as faculty boards, senates, or councils in relation to governance.

However, institutional restructuring was not without challenges. At an institutional imbizo, the then Vice-Chancellor stated that the Institution's approach to transformation was laissez-faire and amateurish and demonstrated an aversion to democracy and peer accountability. A study undertaken by the University's Equity and Institutional Culture Office found the governance structures to be efficient. However, issues of accountability were not being addressed. The voices of senior leaders charged with holding the Institution accountable reflected the dissonance between transformational praxis and practice. Samier (2008) speaks of conditioning within institutions, giving rise to conditions that constrain agency and legitimate inaction. The brief outline of conditions at the University at the onset of the period on which the study focuses indicates the situation at a local level. However, more is at stake than the local as, in a globalised world, individual institutions are all conditioned by what is happening at a much wider level.

1.3.1 Global Context

The impact of globalisation on higher education has resulted in higher education reform in line with managerialism (Marginson, 2009). Discourses promoting measurement against key performance indicators and accountability through the use of a strong focus on outcomes have become predominant. These discourses can have a direct impact on resource allocation. Macfarlane (2010) speaks of a competitive environment marked by fierce competition for research funding, student enrolments and research publications thanks to the introduction of an incentive-driven funding formula in 2004 (Department of Higher Education, [DoE] 2004). Mouton (2013) compares the shifting roles of academics in response to neoliberal practices to academic capitalism.

This is likened to the commodification of universities, where education as a product is offered for a fee, and university employees are seen as human resources contracted until they are no longer needed.

Pring (cited in Fitzmaurice, 2008, p. 341) states that universities are in danger of becoming morally detached from their core purpose of creating critical thinkers and an ethical citizenry. In spite of the fact that the 1997 White Paper identifies four purposes for higher education, the purpose of contributing to economic development arguably predominates, which means that two other purposes of i) meeting the learning needs of individuals and ii) contributing to the development of a critical citizenry are overlooked. The fourth purpose of producing knowledge is privileged in the context of what is termed the 'commodification' of knowledge, or the idea that knowledge itself can have monetary value.

In South Africa, most challenges within higher education are closely linked to our history and the imperative for transformation (Boughey & McKenna, 2016). Events that emerged from these phenomena include the #FeesMustFall and #TheUniversitySoWhite campaigns, which were driven by university students who were dissatisfied with the pace of institutional transformation. With social justice receiving extensive academic interest, there needs to be more research pertaining to higher education leadership within the South African context. Given the state's social justice imperative and the direct link to resource allocation, the current focus is on student access and throughput rates, with very little thought given to higher education leadership or the leaders' contribution to social transformation.

1.4 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The methodological framework used for the study on which this thesis is based is discussed in the next section.

1.4.1 Critical Realism as Meta-theory

Critical realism, framed within the tradition of philosophical science, seeks to address the limitations of Hume's classical empiricism (Bhaskar, 1979). It also seeks to address the limited view of the world and knowledge as a construction of the human mind as expressed through Kant's philosophy of transcendental realism (ibid). Critical realism overcomes the limitations of positivism and relativism in stating that objects of knowledge are neither empirical nor human constructs but are real structures that operate independently of our knowledge and experience. Critical realism allows me to explain

social phenomena and events by identifying structures and causal mechanisms that produce them (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 1). Bhaskar's (1989) theory of critical realism requires one to identify the structures and mechanisms at work to understand the social world and effect change within the social order.

Bhaskar (1998a, p. 5) posits reality as stratified, multidimensional, open and differentiated. Reality consists not only of events and experiences but also of structures, powers, and mechanisms hidden from empirical observation. For Bhaskar, reality consists of three domains: the Real, the actual and the empirical. The empirical encompasses our experiences and observations relative to the observer. The second layer is the domain of the actual, which is evidenced through an event that emerges when structures and mechanisms located at the level of the real are activated by people. The empirical and actual are deemed transitive or concrete (Danermark et al., 2002), changing when acted upon and also directly accessible through the senses. Most understandings of higher education leadership stem from the empirical and actual domains. This is evidenced by the plethora of research that focuses on the development and practice of leadership. The third layer is the intransitive or abstract layer, the Real, which exists independently of our knowledge or experience (Bhaskar, 1998a, p. 17). The Real encompasses structures and mechanisms from which events at the level of the actual and experiences and observations at the level of the empirical emerge. The interplay of generative mechanisms under certain conditions at the level of the real will result in the emergence of events and experiences in the domains of the actual and empirical.

Historically, studies of higher education leadership have approached the subject from a narrow epistemological or theoretical view (Eacott, 2008, p. 354). In critical realist terms, studies of leadership tend to focus on the empirical and actual domains of reality. This is evidenced by the vast array of research that explores concerns, projects, and practices of leaders without interrogating the structures and generative mechanisms that give rise to these activities and without exploring leadership itself as a construct.

Bhaskar (1989) states that it is difficult to identify underlying structures and mechanisms in the domain of the Real until they are realised in the domains of the actual and empirical. This is perhaps one plausible explanation for why the area of leadership in higher education offers limited research on the concept of leadership itself. Selecting critical realism as the meta-theory underpinning the study allowed me to address the epistemological framework that dominates the field of higher education leadership as marked by the concerns, projects, and practices of the leader.

More crucially, it led to the development of an understanding of the generative mechanisms and structures that enable or constrain higher education leadership within the University and to an understanding of leadership as an ontological construct.

1.4.2 Higher Education Leadership through the lens of Archer's Social Realism

Archer (2003) states that Bhaskar's stratified reality is permeated by structure, culture, and agency, which form distinct strata of reality. In the context of the study underpinning this thesis, examples of structure would be institutional policies, positions, funding and curriculum. Structures distribute access to power and material goods (Boughey & McKenna, 2021). Beliefs, values and ideologies constitute the domain of culture. Agency represents the human being or senior leader acting in relation to structure and culture.

For Archer (1998a, 2000, 2003, 2007), structure, culture, and agency are distinct from and irreducible to each other, and at each level, the principles of emergence apply. This means that structure, culture and agency each have their own powers and emergent properties, structural emergent properties (SEPs), cultural emergent properties (CEPs) and personal emergent properties (PEPs), and it is the interplay between the existing powers and properties within each stratum that result in change within the domains of structure, culture and agency (Archer, 2000, 2003, 2007). Change occurs over time, with properties and causal powers emerging independently of each other and exerting independent causal influence.

Archer (2013) vehemently opposes work that conflates structure, culture and agency, arguing instead for the theoretical separation of structures from agency and culture from agency for analytical purposes in a process called analytical dualism. By separating structure, culture and agency, it becomes possible to see "whose conceptual shifts are responsible for which structural changes, when, where and under what conditions" (Archer, 1998a, p. 361, original emphasis). By isolating the structural and cultural conditions that influence leadership, it becomes possible to analyse conditions that reproduce or transform contexts and institutions.

The morphogenetic framework used to structure the study underpinning this thesis draws on Archer's (1998a, 1998b) claim that change occurs or does not occur in never-ending cycles. As an explanatory analytical tool, the morphogenetic framework seeks to identify the conditions that existed prior to agents, in this case, leaders, exercising their PEPs in relation to SEPs and CEPs (ibid). For Archer, agency is always conditioned and not determined by society.

The morphogenetic cycle consists of three phases:

i. Structural or Cultural conditioning at T_1, the beginning of a cycle. Agents draw on their structural and cultural conditioning as they exercise their agency.
ii. Socio-cultural or Social interaction occurs at T2 – T3, the second phase of the cycle. Social interaction occurs between structure and agency and culture and agency, which can lead to socio-cultural change or stasis (Ibid).
iii. Socio-cultural or Social elaboration/reproduction at T_4, the final stage of the cycle. At this stage, the conditioning for the next cycle is established.

In the context of the study underpinning this thesis, the morphogenetic cycle runs from 2014, the year in which a new vice chancellor was appointed, to 2020, when the final interviews on which the study draws were conducted. The second phase (T_2-T_3) explores the way leaders at the institution exercise their powers and properties in relation to transformation. More specifically, the study explored the constraints and enablements they encountered in the form of CEPs and SEPs as they made decisions and addressed dilemmas that were often ethical in nature. The third and final phase of the cycle (T_4) is analysed in order to explore the extent to which change or non-change has occurred.

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The original intention of this study was to explore university leaders' ethical leadership practices in a small South African university. However, this narrow focus on leadership ethics posed many challenges. Firstly, there was a problem in defining 'ethical leadership' in a higher education context characterised by the schisms of the past and the diverse ideological positions related to, for example, the purpose of higher education in a late modern society. Once I had identified Bhaskar's critical realism and Archer's social realism as theories to frame my study, I soon realised that a focus on ethical leadership would run the risk of locating the study in the domains of the empirical and actual without being able to identify the structures and mechanisms in the domain of the real. Another challenge posed by a focus on leadership ethics involved the intransitive and tendential nature of mechanisms and their emergence and the implications for my use of the morphogenetic cycle, which explores emergence over time and not a single snapshot of ethical behaviour. In addition, ignoring the generative mechanisms would involve overlooking the leader's internal voice or reflexivity. As a result, my research questions were amended to focus on leadership more generally.

The refocused intention of this study is thus to explore structural and cultural mechanisms that either enable or constrain the leadership of senior staff in a small traditional university.

Following Archer, I understood leadership to involve a leader i) identifying *concerns* about society more generally and higher education more specifically and ii) identifying *projects* and *practices* to address those concerns. A project would involve intentional actions, conceptualised as events at the level of the actual in critical realist terms that emerged as a result of the interaction of mechanisms at a deeper layer of reality, the real. In order to identify projects and pursue the actions to achieve them, leaders were understood to need to engage in reflexivity.

As I have indicated, the timeframe for the morphogenetic cycle for the study was approximately seven years (2014 – 2020). In the middle of 2014, one vice-chancellor was replaced by another. The new vice chancellor had served in a senior leadership position at the same university for many years and was understood to have been subject to the social and cultural conditioning in place within it during the previous vice chancellor's tenure. Both vice-chancellors were interviewed for the study.

As this study focused on the interplay of structural and cultural emergent properties leading to the emergence of leadership, senior leaders were key research participants. The criterion for the selection of participants was that all must have held a senior position in the institution during the time frame specified for the study.

1.5.1 Overarching Research Question:

How is university leadership enabled or constrained within higher education in South Africa?

i. **Sub-question 1:**

   How do structural mechanisms enable or constrain university leadership?

ii. **Sub-question 2:**

   How do cultural mechanisms enable or constrain university leadership?

iii. **Sub-question 3:**

   How does reflexivity as a generative mechanism enable and constrain morphogenesis and morphostasis?

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study draws on interviews that, in terms of critical realist thinking, are understood to be suited to probing the experiences and observations of leaders. Although all critical realist research intends to explore the interplay of mechanisms at the level of the real that lead to the emergence of events at

the level of the actual and of experiences and observations at the level of the empirical, this deepest layer of reality can only be accessed empirically. Critical realist researchers then use their reasoning (as I will explain in Chapter 3) to reach the level of the Real.

The study also involved a single case. Walsham (2006) writes that single case studies allow for an in-depth exploration of phenomena, providing a "rich description and understanding". The case study design followed a holistic single case study approach with embedded sub-case studies or units (Yin, 2003, cited by Baxter and Jack, 2015). This simply means that the overarching case was located within a single university, and the respondents at the institution each formed a sub-case study linked to the overarching case. After that, the sub-cases were subjected to an overarching across-case analysis.

As will be explained in Chapter 4, the interview transcripts were then analysed using abduction and retroduction. Critical realists favour these two modes of inference as a means of reaching the generative mechanisms located at the level of the real.

1.7 RESEARCH ROADMAP

Each chapter of the study begins with a visual representation of the research journey that is placed at the top of the page. The purpose of this chapter's representational diagram is to act as a progress tool as well as a guide to the preceding and acceding chapters. A brief description of each thesis chapter is outlined as follows:

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

This Chapter covers the meta-theory of critical realism and the explanatory theory of social realism, unpacking the key tenets of each theory and their significance for the research process. In addition, important elements of social realism in relation to leadership as ontology are outlined.

Chapter 3: Contexts and Leadership

Following the work of Clarke and O'Donoghue (2017), context is explored through four levels: the external context, the situated context, the professional context, and the material context, each of which is linked to the theoretical constructs underpinning the study. Chapter 3 also constitutes a literature review and provides the explanatory theory used from Chapter 5 to Chapter 9. Critical realists make a distinction between substantive theory and explanatory theory. In this study, the substantive theory is Bhaskar's critical realism and Archer's social realism. Explanatory theory comes from the work of theorists. Substantive theory is the 'engine' for the research in that it provides

ontological and epistemological positions. Explanatory theory can be conceptualised as the fuel that makes the engine function.

Chapter 4: Research Design

The research design process for the study is discussed in detail in Chapter 4, outlining how substantive theories are utilised within the study as tools that allow for the exploration of the three layers of reality identified by Bhaskar. The use of abduction and retroduction as analytical tools is also discussed. The qualitative case study approach is explained, as well as the way in which the theoretical and analytical tools are applied in the data analysis process.

Chapter 5: The Context (T_1)

For Archer, underlying sociocultural and structural mechanisms at T_1 condition the activities of higher education leaders. This sociocultural and structural conditioning in place in 2014, therefore, forms the focus of this chapter. Chapter 5 draws on the thesis data analysis gathered through the literature review, document analysis and participant interview analysis, all of which are now viewed through a social realist lens.

Chapters 6-8 Arrangements

Chapters 6-8 (People | Parts | Projects) are purposefully named and arranged to denote the ontological distinction between *Chapter 6: People* (university leadership) and *Chapter 7: Parts,* or between system and social integration where the interplay between the two account for socio-cultural transformation or replication. The parts refer to the emergent properties that arise from the relations between (emergent) structures and the people. Chapter 8: *Projects* are the concerns of agency that are expressed through their interactions with structure and culture over time. Projects would involve intentional actions, conceptualised as 'events' at the level of the actual in critical realist terms that emerged as a result of the interaction of mechanisms at a deeper layer of reality.

Chapter 6: The People (T_2-T_3)

The interplay of leaders' personal emerging properties with the structural and cultural emerging properties is discussed as the study explores T_2-T_3 of the morphogenetic cycle. Identity formation, emotions, and reflexivity are explored as the chapter analyses the way leaders exercised their powers and properties to engage with constraints and enablements as they pursued the projects they had identified for themselves.

Chapter 6 draws on the thesis data analysis gathered through the literature review, document analysis and participant interview analysis with an exploration into the generative mechanisms located in the domain of the Real.

Chapter 7: The Parts (T_2-T_3)

For Archer, 'the parts' consist of structure and culture. Chapter 7 deals with structure. It discusses leadership as a structure exercising SEPs in T2-T3 of the morphogenetic cycle by identifying mechanisms related to politics, power, and knowledge. Chapter 7 draws on the thesis data analysis gathered through the literature review, document analysis, and participant interview analysis.

Chapter 8: The Projects (T_2-T_3)

This chapter engages with the cultural system in place as leaders exercised their agency in pursuing projects they had identified for themselves. Chapter 8 draws on the thesis data analysis gathered through the literature review, document analysis and participant interview analysis.

Chapter 9: The Elaboration (T_4)

The question: *What matters most and why?* was posed as the final interview question to the research participants. The third and final phase of the morphogenetic cycle at T_4 signals the end of the exploration of higher education leadership and signals the start of the next morphogenetic cycle. The question was intended to allow for insights into how change or non-change occurred. Chapter 9 draws on the thesis data analysis gathered through the literature review, document analysis and participant interview analysis.

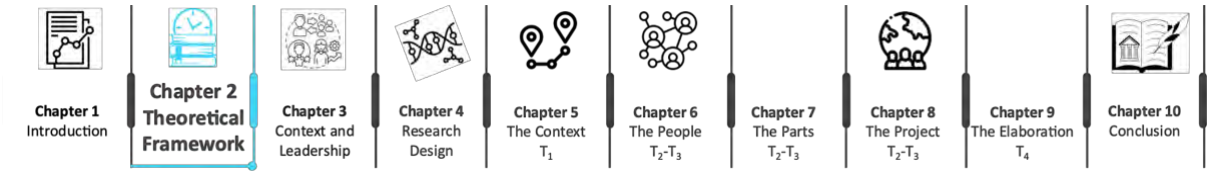
Chapter 10: Conclusion

The study draws to a close in Chapter 10, where the morphogenesis of leadership is discussed in response to the overarching research question and the related sub-questions.

1.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has introduced the purpose of the research, the context of the study, and the research questions that guided the study underpinning this thesis. I will now move to a deeper explanation of the substantive theory underpinning the research.

2 CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



Theories making education systems unimportant – Archer (2016)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 outlines the rationale for identifying critical and social realism to develop a meta-theoretical framework for the research on which this study is based. The research approach encapsulates a layered ontology of critical and social realism as substantive theory and leadership theory as explanatory theory, with the potential to explore the emergence and impact of leadership within the higher education sphere.

Saldaña and Omasta (2018, p. 257, cited in Collins & Stockton, 2018) view research as making claims about "social life that holds transferable applications to other settings, contexts, populations, and possibly epochs". In research, theories help to make sense of complex social interactions that are often unseen. Merriam (2009, p. 68, cited in Collins & Stockton, 2018) states that every aspect of a research process needs to be informed by theory that is dialectically connected to the purpose of the research.

2.2 CRITICAL REALISM AS META-THEORY

The roots of critical realism as a version of realism can be traced to the work of Roy Bhaskar, spanning the period 1970 to 2014 (Archer, 1995; Bhaskar, 1998b; Brant & Panjwani, 2015; Sayer, 2000). The term 'critical realism' emerged from the philosophical schools of critical naturalism and transcendental realism to form basic critical realism (Bhaskar, 1978). Transcendental realism posits the world as real and as existing independently of observers and directly inaccessible to humans. However, unlike scientific practice, this reality is not understood through the empirical study of

patterns and events but through exploring structures and mechanisms[4] that can operate in open and closed systems alike (Brant & Panjwani, 2015).

Critical realist theory allows me to explain social phenomena and events by identifying the structures and causal mechanisms that produce them (Bhaskar, 2009; Danermark et al., 2002, p. 1).

Critical naturalism, as a theory of social science, seeks to understand to what degree society can be studied in the same way as nature (Bhaskar, 1979). Bhaskar debunked the notion that natural science and social science can be studied by means of the Humean laws of positivism (Bhaskar, 2011, cited in Brant & Panjwani, 2015). For Bhaskar, positivism presupposes the world as a closed system with humans as submissive receivers of predetermined facts.

Contrasting with the positivist approach, interpretivism presumes humanity's experience of the world is sufficient to know, explain, and make sense of society. Bhaskar finds neither approach adequate in explaining unseen structures and mechanisms in natural sciences and their relationship to humans. Instead, he sees science as a social process involving scientists as causal agents interacting in a social world (Bhaskar, 1979).

Bhaskar (1978) argues for an ontology (the study of being), which must be distinguished from epistemology (the study of knowledge), thereby avoiding the epistemic fallacy of confusing the nature of reality with our knowledge of reality (ibid). Sayer (2000) also cautions theorists against confusing the critical realist approach with the positivist Humean approach of empiricism. Brant and Panjwani (2015, p. 8) summarises Bhaskar's position succinctly by noting that "Critical realism offers an understanding of the world that has an ontology of human action and the structures and mechanisms that enable or constrain it; and a relativist epistemology in which human understanding is seen as hermeneutical".

Critical realism argues for a reality independent of human consciousness (realist ontology) and orients the social sciences towards an emancipatory role. Therefore, critical realism fulfils the role of underlabourer or meta-theory in the social sciences and sciences (Price, 2015).

According to Archer et al. (2013), defining critical realism is not an easy task as there is no singular framework or methodology that unites critical realists such as Archer (1982, 1995), Bhaskar (1975,

4 Structures are internally related objects that would not have their recognised form without relation to another structure or object. A mechanism is the means by which something occurs in the world (Danermark et al., 2002).

1979), Elder-Vass (2005), Lawson (1997) and Sayer (2000). The section below from 2.2.1 to 2.2 6 draws on the work of Archer et al. (2016) to explain core aspects of critical realism that form part of the critical realist meta-theory of this thesis.

2.2.1 Explanatory Critique and Values

An important distinction in the research underpinning this study is the concept of explanatory critique, which addresses the issue of values and facts, showing that values can be deduced from facts (Brant & Panjwani, 2015). Facts are deemed value-laden, and less noticeably, values are more often fact-laden. Values, therefore, have a factual component grounded in ontological accounts of people or social relations describing the nature of the world.

Theoretically, it becomes possible to explore and critique values both empirically and ontologically to explore the good of society and what conditions allow humans to flourish. The social world is inextricably and irreducibly historical, concept-dependent, and embroiled in power relations, and exploring and critiquing values is a complex task. A cautious, critical naturalist approach makes this possible when combined with ontological realism, epistemic relativism and judgemental rationality (concepts that will be explained as this chapter proceeds). The use of a cautious naturalist approach makes it possible to explore values empirically at an ontological level (Archer et al., 2016).

2.2.2 Epistemic Relativism

Archer et al. (2016) state that, notwithstanding a belief in objective reality, individuals have to accept that their knowledge of the world is always relative to who they are and what they are doing to acquire an understanding of it. Accepting that their knowledge of the world as always relative is termed epistemic relativism. This limited view of the world is always mediated by people's "perceptual and theoretical lenses" (Mingers et al., 2013, p. 2). Knowledge about reality is always culturally, socially and historically situated. However, not all knowledge needs to be viewed as equally valid. The identification of what is valid involves the use of judgement and is, therefore, relative (Archer et al., 2016; Mingers et al., 2013).

Knowledge is articulated from various standpoints according to various interests and influences and is transformed by human activity. Knowledge is, therefore, context, concept, and activity-dependent. People's accounts are fallible. Realism entails a commitment to truth, truth values and criteria of rationality that exist independently of historical time. As such, all representations and perspectives conceived by people have limitations. Science is fallible, and scientific knowledge is always formulated

in terms of conceptual frameworks, which are themselves not exceptional in explaining the empirical world. Critical realists, therefore, insist that the production of knowledge is a human activity situated within a social context, and this knowledge is fallible, as it may be refuted. New knowledge builds upon and transforms existing knowledge and is, in this sense, a social product (Archer et al., 2016; Archer, 2012).

Realism assumes that truth exists and that this truth can be known (Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000, cited in Wilson & Greenhall, 2004). Critical realism holds in tension the existence of social realities (ontological realism) and the temporal understanding of how these social realities are constructed (epistemological relativism) (Collier, 1994, cited in Kahn, 2009).

2.2.3 Judgemental Rationality

Judgemental rationality, as opposed to judgemental relativism, speaks to ontological realism and epistemological relativism. Critical realists state that there are criteria for judging which accounts about the world are better in the sense of providing more plausible models for an inquiry. The goal of any inquiry is the creation and relative stabilisation of a descriptive or explanatory account. It is necessary to determine relatively objective reasons for affirming one account of the world over another. It becomes possible to improve knowledge about the real world, even if the contingent nature of that knowledge is realised (Collier, 1994, cited in Kahn, 2009).

2.2.4 Open Systems

A core feature of the critical realist social ontology is the assertion that the social world consists of open systems, which means that consistent regularities in the form of constant conjunctions of events generally do not occur (unlike in closed systems). Critical realism views society as a set of open systems activated by people (Archer, 1998a, p. 190).

2.2.5 Causality

Critical realists approach causation critically, using the partial regularities, facts, and events encountered in the social world as an entry to understanding the complex, layered, and contingent processes or structures that cause the phenomena. This must be done without reducing causation to constant conjunction forms in which event A is always followed by event B. To accomplish this, a thick and robust account of causation, structures and processes is required to do justice to the complexity and multiplicity of the social world (Archer, et al., 2016).

2.2.6 Emergence

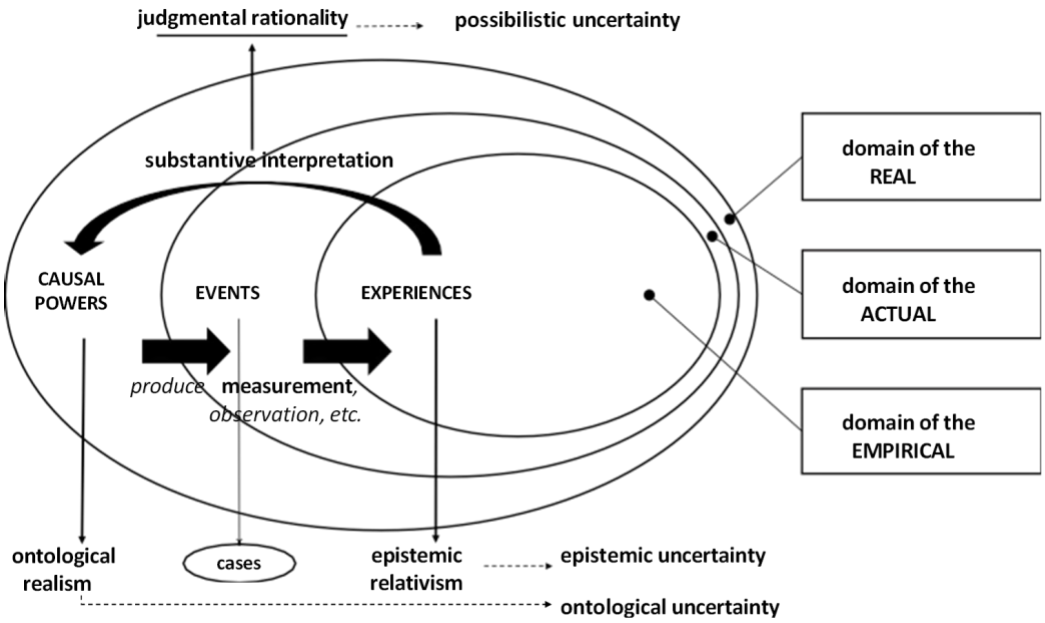
Emergence within critical realism denotes "situations in which the combination of two or more structures or parts gives rise to new phenomena, which have properties which are irreducible to their constituents, even though the latter are necessary for their existence" (Sayer, 2000, p. 12).

2.3 THE THREE DOMAINS OF CRITICAL REALISM

Bhaskar (1979, 1978) and Archer (1998, p. 41) posit reality as a stratified, layered ontology that is multidimensional, open, and differentiated. Reality has three ontological strata, namely the Real, actual and empirical. See Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

The Three Domains of Critical Realism



Note. Reproduced from Rutten (2021).

Figure 1 illustrates the three domains of critical realism: the Real (causal powers), the actual (events), and the empirical (experiences) and their relationship with ontological realism, epistemic relativism, and judgemental rationality. Causal power resides in the domain of the Real and is only actualised when humans act on it. Figure 1, depicting the tenets of critical realism, is replicated in Chapter 4, together with a detailed explanation outlining the theoretical framework applied to a case study methodology in the research design process.

2.3.1 The Domains of the Real (Intransitive), the Actual and the Empirical (Transitive)

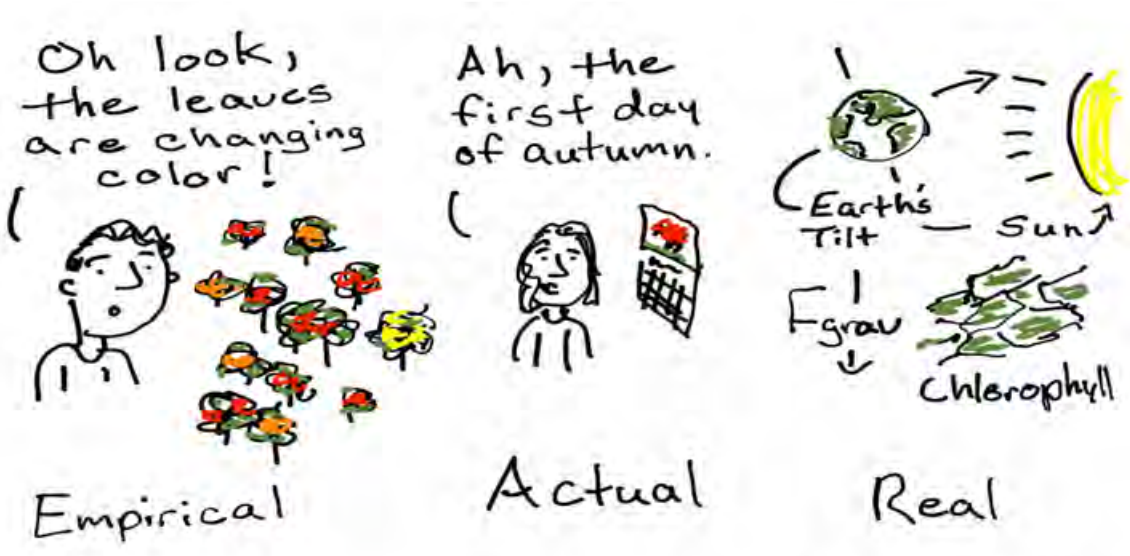
The first layer, the empirical, encompasses people's experiences and observations relative to the observer, including those that are historical or prior to current human activity. The second layer is the actual, evidenced through an event when structures and mechanisms located at the level of Real are activated by people (Danermark et al., 2002; Mingers et al., 2013). The empirical and actual are deemed transitive or concrete (Danermark et al., 2002), changing when acted upon and directly accessible through the senses.

The third layer is the intransitive or abstract layer of the Real that exists independently of people's knowledge or experience of it (Bhaskar, 1998a, p. 17). The Real encompasses structures and mechanisms from which events at the level of the actual and experiences and observations at the level of the empirical emerge. In relation to the phenomenon of 'emergence', each stratum is understood to have its own structures and mechanisms that cannot be reduced to the other. The interplay of generative mechanisms under certain conditions will manifest properties and powers leading to events and experiences in the domain of the actual and empirical.

Figure 2 describes the interplay of the emergent powers and properties at the level of the Real. The mechanisms and structures at the level of the Real (intransitive) affect the observable events and experiences at the level of the actual and empirical (transitive).

Figure 2

Emergent Powers and Properties of the Real



Note. Adapted from ramesesproject.org

At the level of the empirical, people observe that the leaves of trees change colour, and they feel a drop in the air temperature. When looking at the calendar, they realise that an event, the changing of the seasons, has occurred. This happens at the level of the actual. What people cannot observe directly through their senses is the impact of the force of gravity on Earth's magnetic field, together with the tilt away from the sun – mechanisms that are intransitive. The mechanisms and emergent properties from the level of the Real, in this instance represented by gravity and the Earth's axial shift, generate an event at the level of the actual, marked by a seasonal change. At the level of the empirical, people observe and experience the phenomena of leaves turning brown and the air becoming cooler – phenomena that are transitive.

Bhaskar (1998a) states that it is difficult to identify underlying structures and mechanisms in the domain of the Real until they are realised in the domains of the actual and empirical. This is perhaps one plausible explanation for why the area of leadership in higher education remains undefined. Critical realism embraces both the ontological as well as the epistemological aspects of structures, entities and mechanisms (ibid). Selecting critical realism as the meta-theory leads to developing an understanding of the generative mechanisms and structures that enable or constrain education leadership in a higher education setting.

2.4 SOCIAL REALISM

As a critical realist, Archer (1988, 1995, 2000, 2003, 2007, 2012, cited in Mingers et al., 2013) used the work of Bhaskar to develop a social realist theoretical approach over an extensive period. Archer's research focuses on a second realm of stratification between objects as causal powers operating at one level and, in turn, affecting another level (Archer, 1998, p. 66; ibid). Bhaskar terms these as generative mechanisms, painting a picture of the Real as dynamic, open and complex interactions occurring in a stratified system (1979, p. 170). Social structures are located at the level of the Real, whether this is fully known or unknown (ibid).

Archer (2007) states that Bhaskar's stratified reality is permeated by structure, culture and agency, forming distinct strata of reality. In the context of this study, examples of structure would be leadership positions, funding, curricula and the Higher Education Management System (HEMIS). Structures distribute access to power and material goods.

The domain of culture constitutes beliefs, values and ideologies in the form of discourses[5]. Agency in this study represents the human being or senior leader acting in relation to structure and culture.

Structure, culture and agency are distinct from each other and irreducible to each other, and at each level, the principles of emergence apply (Archer, 2007, 2012). This simply means that each stratum has its own powers and emergent properties (structural emergent properties (SEPs), cultural emergent properties (CEPs), and personal emergent properties (PEPs), and it is the interplay between the existing powers and properties within each stratum that results in change within the domains of structure, culture and agency (Archer, 2000, 2003, 2007).

Emergence occurs over time, with properties and causal powers emerging independently of each other, exerting independent causal influence. Either structure or agency could be dominant in the process. Social realism, therefore, posits that the parts and the people are inseparable, cannot be reduced to the other, and are mutually constitutive (Archer, 2003, 2007).

Archer describes the world as relational, encompassing the natural (fauna and flora), social (society), and the practical (projects and activities people engage in), each with inherent structural and cultural emerging powers requiring human interaction if they are to be activated (2003, p. 2). Structure and culture exist prior to any human involvement, although the inherent powers and properties of structural and cultural mechanisms are dependent on human interaction if they are to be activated. For example, faculties and departments exist before the appointment of any new leaders, such as deans, and their leadership tenures. The faculty draws on beliefs and values that are discursively constructed. The dean, as a new leader, has to work with the structures and culture of the faculty, departments and schools, and its hierarchy of professors and departmental heads, as well as the pre-existing ideology of what leadership is and should be in this space. These structures are inert until the new dean tries to transform or bring about change. The dean's efforts, when and if enabled, will effect change and, when and if constrained, will lead to stasis. Simplistically put, humans have the capacity to think, decide, believe and act – which cannot be attributed to structure and culture. As indicated above, institutional leaders will invest in projects and activities to further their interests.

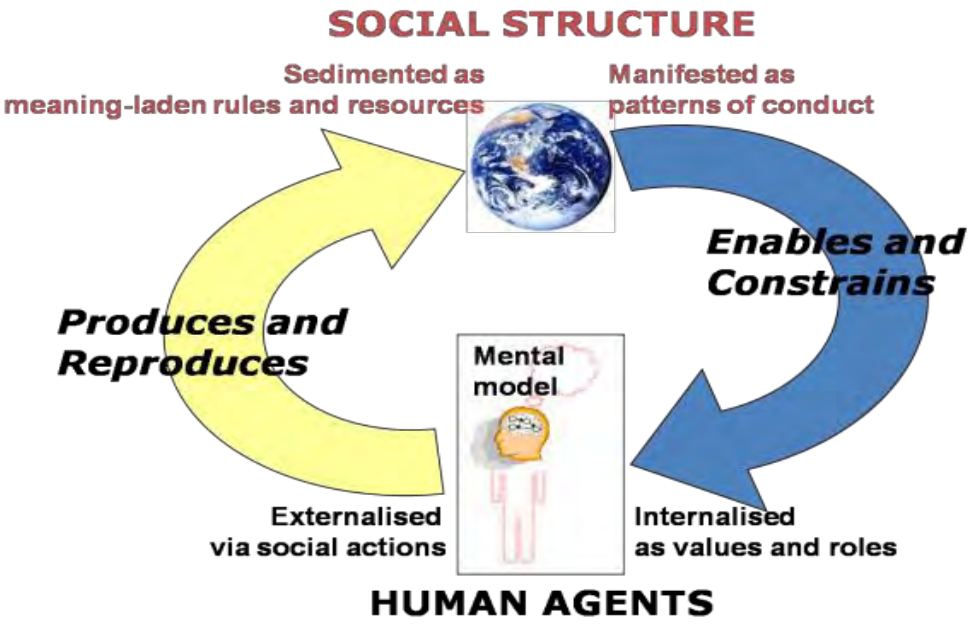
5 Following Boughey and McKenna (2021), I understand discourses as 'clumps' of ideas existing in language and other sign systems that constrain and enable what is possible and not possible within a particular sphere.

They will draw on the structural emerging properties in the structural domain or the cultural emerging properties in the cultural domain to effect the change they wish to see. Education leaders are also conditioned by structure and culture which predates their activities.

Figure 3 shows the relationship between social structure and agency, with structure as meaning-laden rules and resources and culture as patterns of behaviour and conduct internalised as values and beliefs that shape culture. Structure and culture serve to enable or constrain agency. Agency, through participating in projects and social interactions, will draw on structure and culture to either cause structural elaboration or reproduction. This occurs in never-ending cycles, which Archer (1998) calls morphogenetic cycles.

Figure 3

Morphogenetic Cycles: Social Structure and Agency



Note. Reproduced from Lane (2002).

2.5 ANALYTICAL DUALISM

Archer (2007, p. 39) writes that a mature morphogenetic framework stands in contradistinction to any form of social theory that endorses the conflation of structure and agency: upward conflation (methodological individualism), downward conflation (methodological holism, whether Marxist or functionalist in orientation), and central conflation (the then fashionable Structuration theory).

Methodological individualism, also known as 'modernity's man', which argues that humans are able to change structure, has its roots in the Enlightenment period (Archer, 2000; Boughey & Mckenna, 2021). Humankind is deemed capable of creating society, thereby having power over structure and culture. Archer views this as upward conflation (ibid). Methodological holism, also termed downward conflation by Archer, considers humanity as a product of society with no freedom or self-determination owing to culture and structure. Central conflation or structuration theory, popularised by theorists such as Giddens, views structure, culture and agency as one indistinguishable concept (Archer, 1996)

Archer (2013) firmly opposes work that conflates structure, culture and agency, arguing instead for the theoretical separation of structures from agency and culture from agency for analytical purposes in a process called analytical dualism.

By separating structure, culture and agency, it becomes possible to see "whose conceptual shifts are responsible for which structural changes, when, where and under what conditions" (Archer, 1998, p. 361). By isolating the structural and cultural conditions that influence higher education leadership, it becomes possible to analyse conditions that reproduce or transform contexts such as a university.

2.5.1 Social Realism and Agency

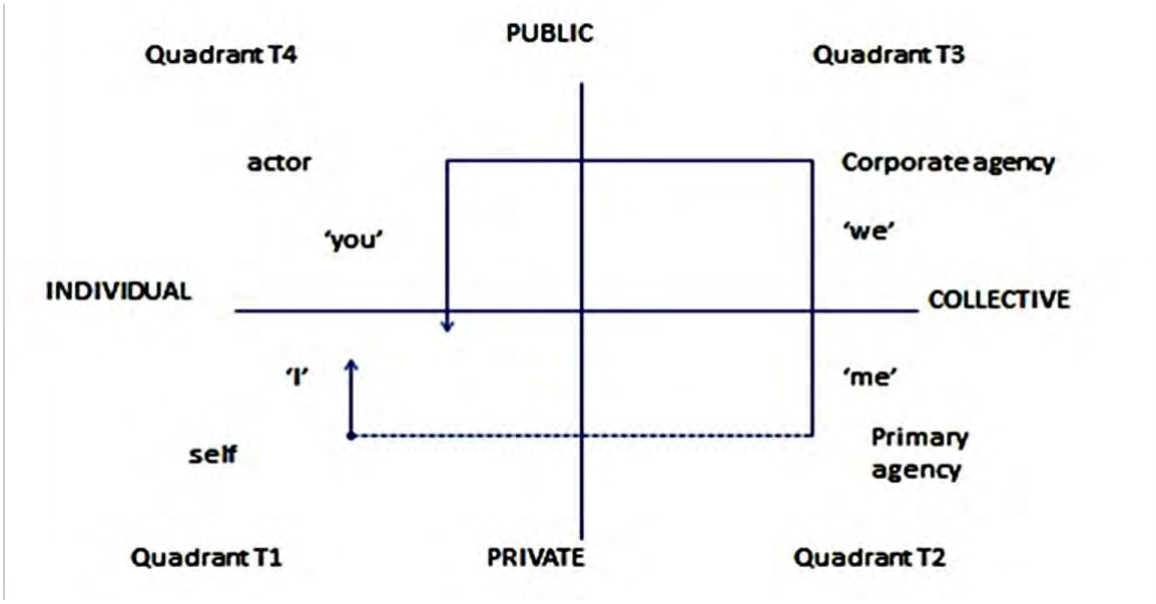
Archer (2000) distinguishes between different forms of agency. All humans are born as primary agents and become members of a collective that shares similar life chances. The transformation of the primary agent depends on the desire for change in the environment they inhabit. This is achieved by the primary agents becoming a collective with like-minded individuals and forming corporate agency working towards the same projects and goals. Corporate agency's personal emerging properties (PEPs) draw on cultural emerging properties (CEPs) in the domain of culture and structural emerging properties in the domain of structure to effect change in their circumstances (Archer, 2000). The South African Students Organisation (SASO) is an example of university students exercising their PEPs as a collective in order to further their project of a more equitable and just education system.

Change is affected in the domain of culture and structure through the exercise of corporate agents' personal emergent powers. As stated, sociocultural configurations have their own emergent properties, cultural emerging properties (CEPs) and structural emerging properties (SEPs), that can either constrain or enable the transformation of primary and corporate agents' projects (Archer, 2010a).

When corporate agency seeks social transformation, structural elaboration of the current role of agency occurs, resulting in new positions being created or occupied and new roles being formed (Archer, 2013). This elaboration of agency, as personified by an institutional position, results in a new social identity of social actors**.** Social identity is attained through the roles held by the individual, who then sets about fulfilling these roles (Archer, 2000, p. 11). An illustration of the formation of social identity is the appointment of a senior leader, such as a vice-chancellor or registrar. In this instance, corporate agents exercise personal emerging properties (PEPs) by drawing on the structural domain through an institutional process of recruitment, nomination, selection and appointment to fill the vacant position. This process, according to Archer (2010), is called socio-structural morphogenesis, in which both structure and agency are transformed.

Figure 4

The Emergence of Social Identity



Note. Reproduced from Archer (2000).

Figure 4 above illustrates the morphogenesis of agency and the emergence of social identity. Archer (2000) has a stratified view of agency where different powers and properties emerge at each level. In Figure 4, the actor and corporate agent are the social self, the part of a person that is in the public domain. Social selves are dependent on the emergence of a sense of self and are co-dependent on the emergence of personal identity (Archer, 2000, p. 255).

The sense of self is who people are at birth with the emergence of becoming a primary agent (Archer, 2000; Cinoğlu & Arikan, 2012). According to sociologists Stets and Burke (2000, p. 224, cited in Cinoğlu & Arikan, 2012), it is through reflexivity and relationality with other social beings and categorisations within social structures that personal identity emerges. Cinoğlu and Arikan (2012), Stets and Burke (2000) and Archer (2000) therefore concur that the self, the 'I' at birth, is distinct from the primary actor, the 'me', and that the self precedes personal identity. Stryker (1980, cited in Cinoğlu & Arikan, 2012) further explains that the notion of identity is socio-structurally related in that identity is shaped by context and positionality (see also Archer, 2000). Furthermore, each position the individual finds themselves in at birth and beyond carries its own social status (Styker, 1980, cited in Cinoğlu & Arikan, 2012; Archer, 2000).

Critical to this study is the social realist understanding that the formation of the social self occurs as a result of the interplay between structure and agency. It is precisely the relationality between agents, social actors, CEPs and SEPs that forms the nexus for this study. The leader and leadership formation exists as a result of the interplay between structure, culture and agency and the emergent powers and properties inherent in each stratum. Archer (2000) calls this "the stratified view of humanity" (p. x) where structures, culture and agency are stratified, "constituted by a variety of strata schematically, mind is emergent from neurological matter, consciousness from mind, selfhood from consciousness, personal identity from selfhood, and social agency from personal identity" (p. 87). This is a "continuous sense of self which is formed non-discursively through our practical action in the world" and exists prior to our sociality (Archer, 2000, p. 153, cited in Chernilo, 2017). Personal identity is complete in adulthood because only then have people developed a fuller and more stable set of relations with the three orders of reality: the natural, the practical, and the social (Archer, 2000; Chernilo, 2017). Primary agency, also referred to by Archer as personal identity, informs the choices and projects of the corporate agent and social actor (ibid), the private informing the public persona.

To recap on Quadrants T_1 and T_2 in Figure 4, Archer (2000) explains how personal identity is dependent on the prior emergence of self and how this personal identity is forged through the natural, social, and practical order, constraining and enabling activities in the present that will shape future choices. The natural order refers to the individual's embodied nature, physicality and well-being in a physical environment. The social order refers to the individual's social positioning within the order of normative social relations. The practical order refers to the individual's development of competence and sense of achievement through practices and taking up projects. Managing the enablements and constraints of the three different orders is the role of the self (Archer, 2007; Lopez, 2009).

Sociality, structure and culture each impinge on the leader's emergent powers and properties and their ability to transform their context. While social identity is formed in the public sphere, it is the self that regulates the interplay with society (Archer, 2000, p. 257).

Archer states that it is the social actor and, by relation, the role-embodied that will always be regulated by the self or personal identity (2000, p. 257). With regard to this study, the emergence of the social actor or leader is interwoven with the emergent properties of culture and structure, with the interplay thereof leading either to transformation or replication of the higher education context. It is, therefore, always the individual self that will inform the collective identity, and the private persona will inform the public persona of the leader. This research explores the multi-layered complexity of the self, personal identity, and social actor in a complex open system in a higher education setting, which appears to have profound implications for leaders and leadership in higher education.

2.5.2 Agency: Personal Identity and Social Identity

With social identity derived from a role, for example, a dean, personal identity and social identity become dialectically connected (Archer, 2000). Personal identity allows the role to be exercised uniquely through the individual exercising their personification of the role. The personification of the role results in individual self-worth as well as social status attained from holding the social position in society satisfactorily. The amount of self-invested in the social identity and commitment to this will influence the shape and type of social actor that emerges (Archer, 2000, p. 12). This formation/transformation of the corporate agent to social actor occurs when the structural powers and properties (SEPs) of the position and the leader's emerging personal powers and properties (PEPs) combine and find expression in projects of interest.

When considering the leadership of deans of faculty and Heads of departments, these leaders' status and position as social actors should be recognised within a structured sociocultural system representative of South African institutions of higher education. They wield formal as well as informal power and authority, with the potential to apply rules and regulations in an ad hoc manner, which may lead to decisions weighted inconsistently and the emergence of dilemmas. As social actors, these leaders will draw from the structural domain as well as the cultural domain to further their position and practices, thus furthering their social or collective projects. At the university, this is illustrated increasingly by the operationalisation of management structures.

Senior leaders, as social actors, may approve a collective decision by consensus, drawing on the personal emerging properties of their social identity. They will draw on mechanisms, such as policy, as well as on the cultural domain, as representative of positional authority, power, ideas and values that will uphold the decision.

As social actors, leaders may exercise leadership through their personal identity and its inherent PEPs, and this is dialectically linked to social identity and its inherent PEPs becoming visible in the empirical and actual domains.

Archer's (2000; 1998) theory of social realism becomes invaluable in understanding what gives rise to the contestations and paradoxes in educational institutions and what enables and constrains higher education leadership. Archer (2000) and Bhaskar (1978) concur that it is important to make a distinction between organisations, society and people – and, most notably, to recognise that the powers and properties inherent in each are different. Reflexivity is brought to the fore when confronting challenges in the social context, and the interplay between the exercise of agency and the powers and properties of structure and culture either enable or constrain, thereby reproducing, recreating or transforming the social actor's context (Archer, 1995, 1998; Bhaskar, 1979, 1989, 1998, cited in Agbedahin, 2015).

Of importance to this research is the understanding that powers and properties possessed by social structures are very different from those possessed by the individual upon whose activity they depend (Bhaskar, 1989, p. 41; Archer, 1998, p. 200).

2.6 MORPHOGENESIS

Archer's (2013) social morphogenetic framework captures her assertion that change occurs or does not occur in never-ending cycles. As an explanatory analytical tool, the morphogenetic framework seeks to identify the conditions that existed subsequent to and prior to sociocultural interaction. This theory of change describes the interplay between structure and agency as well as culture and agency as the embodiment of the relationality between the three orders (natural, social and physical).

The morphogenetic cycle consists of three phases:

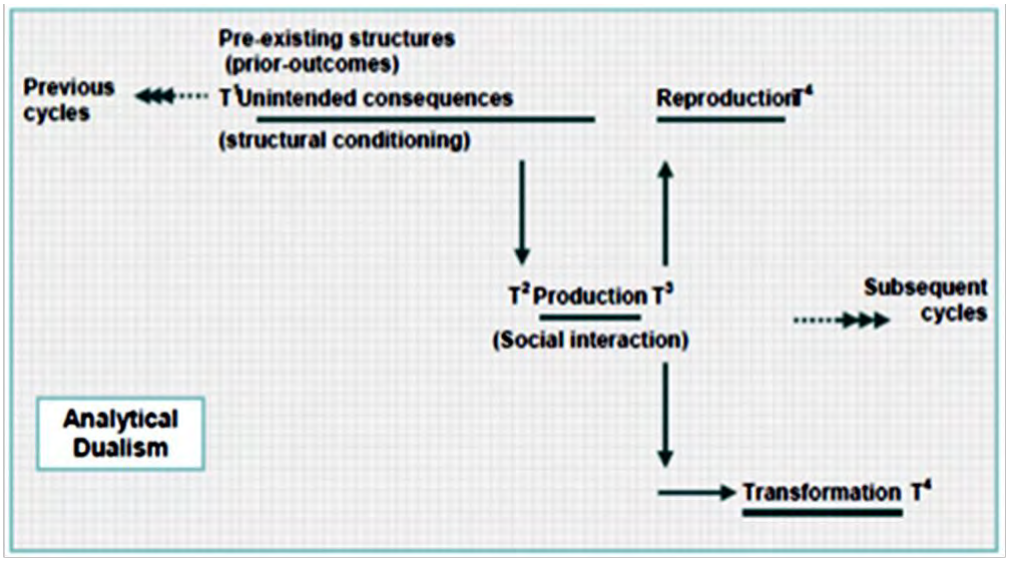
i. Structural or cultural conditioning (T_1): At T_1, structural and cultural interactions exercise generative powers that condition the agency of higher education leaders. As a result, leaders are predisposed to act and think in particular ways.

ii. Sociocultural or social interaction (T_2–T_3) occurs between structure and agency and culture and agency and leads to sociocultural change or stasis. Interaction involves the interplay of the higher education leaders' concerns as manifested through projects and activities in relation to the social, natural, and practical orders.

iii. Sociocultural or social elaboration/reproduction (T_4) sets the conditioning for the entire process to be repeated and for the next morphogenetic cycle to begin. At T_4, the higher education leader determines a new course of action or replicates the existing course. This is done through the higher education leader's reflexive deliberation, who subjectively determines their projects in relation to their objective circumstances (Archer, 2003, p.135).

Figure 5

Morphogenesis and Analytical Dualism



Source: Archer (1998, p.376)

The morphogenetic approach is of utmost importance to this research. This theory holds that people (in this instance, education leaders) always act from the structural and cultural position they find themselves in and on the basis of their conditioning. The very interactions of leaders in the structural and cultural domain ultimately lead to sociocultural stasis or elaboration—social transformation or morphostasis.

For this research, the first phase of the morphogenetic cycle (T_1) is the condition that existed at the time of a particular vice-chancellor's appointment. These conditions are understood to have informed his concerns and the projects he identified to pursue those concerns.

The vice-chancellor has a forthcoming book, *Leading and Transforming the University* 2006–2014, in which he explains his concerns and projects.

The second phase (T_2–T_3) explores the interplay between institutional leaders' agency and mechanisms in the domains of structure and culture. The study explores the structural and cultural properties that social actors draw on as they exercise leadership roles such as decision making.

The third and final phase (T_4) explores the morphogenesis or morphostasis of agency. This final stage draws on the reflections of higher education leaders and explores whether activities and projects lead to cultural/socio-cultural elaboration or reproduction in the structural and cultural domain.

2.7 ARCHER'S THEORY OF REFLEXIVITY

The theory of reflexivity developed extensively over time by Archer (1995, 2000, 2003, 2007, 2012) explains the complexity of agential, institutional and social change. Archer defines reflexivity as the "regular exercise of the mental ability, shared by normal people to consider themselves in relation to their social contexts and vice versa" (2012, p. 1). Reflexivity is linked to people's emotional commitments and ultimate concerns, which sustain the internal conversation (Archer, 2007). When a situation in their everyday lives confronts agents, they draw on their personal powers and properties of reflexivity to determine the best way forward (Archer, 2012, p. 1). Reflexivity can, therefore, result in positive or negative outcomes, depending on the choices made with the potential for unintended consequences.

2.7.1 A Closer Look at Personal Identity and Social Identity

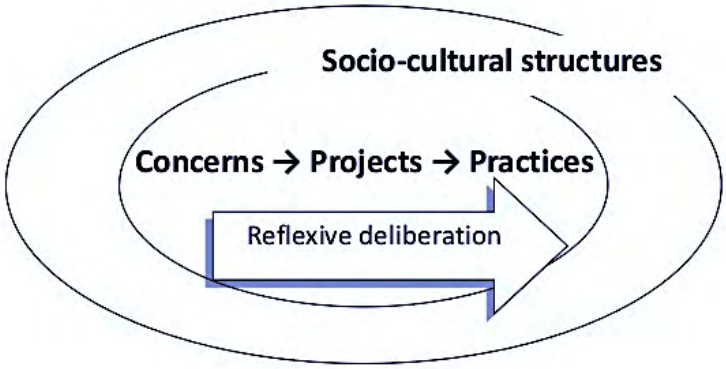
Reflexive human beings exercise influence by choice; that is, they exercise their agency by activating the latent causal properties residing in structure and culture. Choosing not to act is also a choice. A set of beliefs or theories that may be known will have no causation until acted upon. Reflexivity, therefore, amplifies the potential to influence the world. Upon encountering structural and cultural powers and properties, agents have the potential to activate these as powers. A social actor, therefore, can enact or suspend the powers and properties inherent within a position (structure) by drawing on the cultural domain (positional power and authority), as well as the discourses that will support this decision. Structure, in the form of, say, policies or regulatory requirements, and culture, in the form of values inherent in discourses dominant at the institutional level, in turn, either enable or constrain the social actor.

How people choose to act is contingent on the internal voice becoming external or reflexive. This reflexivity, therefore, leads to a decision to act or not, fulfilling the role of mediator between structure and agency and culture and agency (Archer, 2007, 2012).

The reflexivity of the leader/social actor as an internal conversation never ceases with an emergent power that serves to reproduce or transform the social circumstances in which leaders are located (Archer, 2007). Reflexivity enables adaptability and the ability to cope with change as the leader reflects on the wisdom and knowledge of experience in decision-making processes (Archer, 2012). This is expressed in Figure 6 below, showing reflexivity as a continuous process.

Figure 6

The Reflexive Mediation of Agency



Note. Reproduced from Archer (2003).

2.7.2 Reflexivity Contestation – Archer, Bourdieu and Others

Reflexivity belongs to "no particular school of thought, unlike other equally general concepts" (Archer, 2010, pp. 3-4). Current schools of thought on the theory of reflexivity are dominated by Beck, Giddens, Bourdieu and Archer (Davidson & Stedman, 2018). Archer (2012) fervently rejects Bourdieu's concept of *habitus,* which foregrounds the vexing problem of structure and agency, the matter of social integration and the societal influence on agency or downward conflation. Archer's moot point is whether the social is located "entirely within or fully external to agency" (p. 49).

Archer argues that Bourdieu's theory belongs to an ancient period, is historically located, and has little relevance in a changed world, stating that "habit does, indeed, have a particular place in history—it belongs with morphostasis" (2010, p. 278).

She states that reflexivity is contrary to Bourdieu's notion of *practice*. For Bourdieu, action is always *in situ* with the focus on *how* to act, not considering agency's reflexivity on the what or the why of a specific choice. This, according to Archer, renders the individual incapable of such reflexivity (2012, p. 75).

Previously, people were able to follow societal norms and rules. The increased reflexivity in society is indicative of the rapid pace of change. Evidence of this is the technological domain where social media and constant communication impinge on the routinised breaking from the past practices of staying connected and matters of privacy. Archer speaks of the emergence of structures and powers shaping the new millennium and the reflexive interplay of the emerging SEPs and CEPs with agents' reflexivity (2012, p. 5). This shift from an epoch of cultural and structural morphostasis in modernity to structural and cultural morphogenesis has led to the current period of accelerated social transformation (ibid).

Key discourses on *technological disruption* have emerged, and these are welcomed as a means of breaking from traditional ways of doing and being and moving towards new patterns of behaviour. This, according to Archer (1995), is a line of thinking that indicates a society that is shifting from the acceptance and comfort of stability and reproduction to a morphogenetic society where change is constant and accepted as the new normal. The extensiveness and intensity of agents' reflexivity will increase correspondingly to the intensity and pressure exerted by structural and cultural morphogenesis on agency (Archer, 2000, p. 7).

Archer (2010a, 2010b) makes a distinction between *universal* and *extended* reflexivity. She uses the term *universal* to create a distinction between Giddens's structuralist and Beck's subjectivist use of the term. Beck identifies crises created by modernity as the impetus for institutional transformation, using the term "*reflexive modernisation"* to describe the connection between societal crisis and institutional response that often leads to transformation within society and institutions (Adam et al., 2004; Beck, 2010; Beck et al., 1994, cited in Davidson & Stedman, 2018). Akram and Hogan (2015) extend this theory by describing times when institutions are confronted by volatility and ambiguity in society as *breaches* which result in society-wide reflexivity.

The collective response from agents within institutions results in organisational transformation, allowing for new patterns of behaviour to emerge. These, in turn, lead to extended reflexivity being forced on individuals so that they can cope with the uncertainty and perceived threat in the environment (Giddens, 1991, 2004, cited in Davidson and Stedman, 2018).

Giddens further purports that agents can rise above structural impediments that confront them while, at the same time, influencing those structures in a very dynamic, interconnected way (ibid). Archer (2000) would argue that this is upward as well as central conflation, using the term *modernity's man* to describe agency as being able to right all wrongs through the rational exercise of power and influence over structure and culture. She rejects this view as flawed because it denies the fact that humans are emotional beings prone to irrationality.

Bourdieu (1998, 1990, cited in Davidson & Stedman, 2018), however, offers a very different perspective. Although he agrees with the reflexive capacity of agency, he holds that this is secondary to agents' habitus, which is deeply ingrained in values, lifestyle, and social class. Bourdieu's influence is significant in social theory studies that explore how agency is influenced by context (Shove, 2010; Shove et al., 2012, cited in Davidson & Stedman, 2018).

Archer (2000) differs from the views provided above, notably because she sees *downward conflation,* or the view of humanity as shaped and directed by the context she terms "society's being" (p. 86). Humanity is not precast and moulded sociologically in a closed system where agency has no causal powers. Social reality cannot be reductionist or conflationary, for neither the parts nor the people can hold ultimate causality over the other (Archer, 2000, p. 5). This, in effect, is reductionist theory. Reflexivity is inherent within individuals irrespective of context or societal influence, and it may amplify certain characteristics differentiated by agents' capacity and choice (Archer, 2007).

Agents are emotional, intellectual, irrational beings who are not products of culture or structure in the contexts in which they find themselves (Archer, 2000, 2003, 2007). The internal conversation leads agents to determine which actions and projects to take up and which to leave, stirring concerns and values towards action, striving towards what matters most. Reflexivity enables agents to mediate structure and culture by activating personal emergent properties or causal powers in the natural, social, and practical domains (Archer, 1995, 2007, 2012).

2.7.2.1 The Four Modes of Reflexivity

For Archer (2007), reflexivity describes agents' internal conversations that influence individuals' choices of projects and modus vivendi – the way agents choose to be and act in the world. Archer further distinguishes between four modes of reflexives. *Communicative reflexives* are individuals whose internal conversations require completion by others or an external voice in the form of confirmation before they choose to act.

Individuals who can take action on projects by sustaining their own internal conversations without external validation are called *autonomous reflexives*. Archer's third category is *meta-reflexive*s.

These individuals are critical not only of their own actions but also of the activities of others in society. Finally, *fractured reflexives* are considered non-reflexives whose internal voices serve to amplify their distress and disconnect with society rather than leading to purposeful action (Archer, 2012, p. 13). Agents have a preference or dominant mode of reflexivity. Archer, however, does put forward a disclaimer as to the limitations of the four reflexive modes, stating that the four modes are inadequate to fully capture the full range of agency's reflexivity (Plumb, 2008, p. 302, cited in Meriton, 2016). Archer identified these modes of reflexivity in a context very different from South Africa, as her research was based in Britain. This study takes into consideration the tendential nature of the agency's reflexivity and the personal emergent properties thereof, together with different causal mechanisms in the South African context that may or may not affect this study.

Archer's significant contribution to the understanding of agency in society has gained extensive application in various fields of research, from the sciences to management studies and the humanities.

2.7.3 Critiques of Archer's Ideas on Reflexivity

Several scholars have contested Archer's work on reflexivity because it chooses to ignore the psychological dimension of agency, particularly the formation of the reflexive and how this influences the choices made. Bandura (1989) and Klein (2010, cited in Meriton, 2016) have researched the role of psychological resources in human agency. Alan Cicoural (2010), in reviewing Archer's book, *Making Our Way Through the World,* poses the following question:

"What cognitive, emotional, and sociocultural skills and practices are necessary to motivate the young to follow and avoid adult guidance, constraints, and conflict when pursuing educational and practical skills that can lead to occupational achievements and failures?" (p. 1901).

Caetano (2012) poses similar questions about competency formation and its relation to personal reflexivity, asking how competencies influence reflexivity and vice versa (p. 12). A question posed by Mutch (2010) about distinctions between psychology and sociology raises another concern regarding how these disciplinary boundaries are navigated. Furthermore, Archer's work has been criticised for being too theoretical compared to that of Giddens, limiting application to management studies (de Vaujany, 2008).

In addition, it is claimed (Dyke et al., 2012, cited in Meriton 2016) that statements in Archer's Internal Conversation i-Index (ICONI) do not accurately measure what they purport to measure.

A study undertaken by Meriton (2016) that used Archer's ICONI tool to categorise agency into modes of reflexivity revealed inconsistencies in classification when the arithmetic mean was replaced by the weighted mean. Meriton states that this means that some people are included and others excluded from the autonomous reflexive category (ibid).

Akram and Hogan (2015) argue that Archer's position on identity formation is problematic as she does very little to adequately explain how experiences create the frame of reference that creates agents' ability for reflexivity. Who people are and how they modify their personal and social identity in different contexts is given scant attention (ibid). Furthermore, the claim is that Archer's research was conducted in a very specific context, and the results do not address how identities emerge in other contexts (ibid). As already noted, Archer's (2007) research on the modes of reflexivity is drawn from a very specific context in Great Britain, and it is not possible to generalise the results of this research to all people everywhere.

In their critique of Archer's theory of reflexivity, Akram and Hogan (2015) state that agency is privileged over structure when agency is defined exclusively in terms of reflexivity. They argue that reflexivity and change are complex processes with both emotional and moral consequences. This approach implies a preference for routinisation without effort by agency to transform the environment or context (ibid).

Despite criticisms of Archer's theory of reflexivity as overemphasising individual powers of reflexivity over socialisation (Farrugia, 2013; Sayer, 2010, cited in Davidson & Stedman, 2018), social change can only occur through agents' involvement and concern for the world. It is precisely the absence of agential reflexivity that causes social reproduction and problems faced by humanity (Davidson & Stedman, 2018). Given uncertainty among scholars regarding the accuracy of determining the mode of reflexivity, this study has not explored modes of reflexivity nor undertaken to examine agents' level or index of reflexivity. It is precisely the individuation of agency and the divergent approaches to exercising agential PEPs through activities and challenges that create the pathway to the leadership theory used in this study. This heterogeneous way of responding to the socio-structural domain enriches the exploration and synthesis of social realism, extricating the mechanisms that enable or constrain leadership's reflexivity in the higher education context.

Archer's (1998, 2000, 2003, 2007, 2010a, 2010b, 2012) concept of agency is extensively developed through her work in social realism and the morphogenetic approach and forms the explanatory tools for this research.

2.7.4 Institutional Reflexivity

How an institution learns from public dialogue is influenced by how reflective an institution is and how an institution engages in self-reflective practices through the activities of agency (Pallett & Chilvers, 2013). A study done in Britain to determine the impact of institutional reflexivity, public engagement, and transformation reveals that lack of agential reflexivity constrains the institution's ability to integrate policies and politics and its ability to draw from these in a way that influences organisational knowledge production (ibid). This is imperative for acquiring new information and critical to the learning process. Key to this is the synthesis between external mechanisms, such as social processes, and the mental ability of leaders to make sense thereof for themselves and the organisation in order to allow for the emergence of transformation, notwithstanding institutional constraints.

The internal conversation (Archer, 2012) or reflexive dialogues (Gray, 2007; cited in Vickers, 2010) helps to expose unreflective (Stirling, 2006) mental models, beliefs, assumptions and diverse values towards developing generative authentic responses. When an organisation engages in reflexive dialogue, multiple perspectives and innovative solutions become possible. Critical organisation reflexivity requires social actors within organisations to ask themselves and others to become reflexive (Stirling, 2006; Vickers, 2010) in examining the effect of their own beliefs, values and assumptions on colleagues in the internal as well as external community (Cunliffe 2009; cited in Vickers, 2010). What emerges is the authentic, open and transparent interplay between agency, structure and culture in efforts to transform the institution. When organisations become reflexive through social actor's reflexivity, it becomes possible to mitigate structural and cultural constraints through a willingness to build self-awareness, honesty, and transparency in accounting for its actions and monitor beliefs and espoused values (Mazutis and Slawinski, 2008), collectively contributing towards the potential for structural and cultural morphogenesis.

Institutions of higher learning are fraught with contestation and complexity due to competing projects, interests, multicultural values and divergent disciplinary views. This will influence how the institutional reflexivity is interpreted and acted on by agency (Stirling, 2006). This reflexivity can lead to stasis due to analysis paralysis and the need to gain consensus before moving forward.

Institutions will, therefore, need to recognise policies, regulations, and governance processes as constructs that can enable or constrain transformation, depending on the reflexivity of the agency, which determines what gets drawn from, what is applied, and how this is applied. An intentional and explicit reflexive governance system is called for. It becomes possible to link unintended consequences and crises within institutions to the absence of reflexivity (Ibid).

Argyris and Schön (1996) help to explain the importance of learning frames for organisational transformation. They state that single-loop learning involves acquiring new knowledge and understanding. However, it is double-loop learning that leads to a change in values and cognitive framing of the transformed space (Argyris et al., 1985). An example of single-loop learning is when a leader seeks to address issues of conflict in an organisation through skills development courses such as conflict and negotiation skills. This may result in the behaviours that give rise to conflict being suppressed. In the same scenario, double-loop learning occurs when the issues of conflict are addressed by determining the causality giving rise to conflict within the organisation. Single- and double-loop learning is linked to the research done by Watzlawick et al. (1974), which discusses first- and second-order change. First-order change exists when the norms of an organisation remain the same, and changes occur within the frame of the existing norms. The desired organisational position is a second-order change or double-loop learning when the norms of the organisation are challenged and thereby changed in the process (ibid).

2.7.5 Reflexivity and Higher Education

In a higher education context experiencing momentous change and restructuring, reflexivity plays a critical role in helping university leaders manage this effectively. This has also created an opportunity for those who can access and influence culture and structure to further their concerns and projects, either for social good or personal gain. Archer (2007) states that reflexive behaviour will influence actions and vocational positions (ibid). When faced with cultural and structural change, university leaders have an active choice to recontextualise and reframe their reality by drawing on past experiences.

Garza Mitchell (2012, p. 71) supports this view by stating that leadership influences both the leader and the follower and that a leader's perspective cannot be separated from their experiential journey. Reflexivity helps the university leader confront that which constrains and enables the sense-making and decision-making of both structural and cultural domains. Institutional reflexivity is, therefore, an emergent stratum of reality (ibid).

The causal power of reflexivity tensions three sets of emergent properties: personal emergent properties (PEPs), cultural emergent properties (CEPs), and structural emergent properties (SEPs). CEPs and SEPs require the activation of the social actor's personal emergent property. PEPs mediate the impact of both SEPs and CEPs.

Archer's theory of reflexivity becomes core to understanding personal identity (the person) and its influence on social identity (the role) and how this enables or constrains institutional leadership and, by association, institutional reflexivity. The result is the transformation or reproduction of existing structure and culture.

2.7.6 Towards An Increased Institutional Reflexivity

Institutional reflection[6] alone will not transform structure and culture. It is not enough to initiate activities in the form of programmatic interventions, reviews, and audits and then seek to implement recommendations in a system where there is no double-loop learning by considering the role of agential reflexivity jointly with institutional reflexivity. To base decisions on reflection alone discards reflexivity, irrespective of how rigorous and developed the activity or intervention is (Sterling, 2006).

A possible approach to institutional reflexivity is a process called *participatory deliberation* that considers the effects of institutional power and political hegemony (Sterling, 2006). Participation in this context implies an intentional process of dialogue that embraces internal as well as external voices and the inclusion of uninvited spaces and forms of participation (Leach et al., 2005, cited in Pallet & Chilvers, 2013) that typically arise during times of social protest and contestation. This is of particular importance in an institution where consensus as a means to justify decisions is the key mechanism for legitimating institutional strategy and direction. The potential for this is the closing down of reflexive spaces and the shutting out of alternative points of view. Awareness of and sensitivity to diverse disciplinary approaches and the tendential nature of the higher educational context will require flexibility in governance interventions. Participatory deliberation, as a reflexive approach that opens

6 Reflection, according to Stirling (2006), focuses on the salient issues concerning the object of attention. To understand the limitation of reflection is visible in the manner agency poses questions in the institutions, for example: Let's take account of all the possible consequences of changing the minimum requirements for institutional enrolment. Reflexivity engages both subject and object. Reflexivity requires attention to the way in which agency's personal emergent properties help constitute the representations of the object as well as how these representations themselves can cause structural and agential elaboration (ibid).

up new discourses, is necessary to avoid stasis or unreflectiveness in the structural and cultural domain (Sterling, 2006).

Although this study does not focus on leadership traits and dispositions, a theoretical exploration of leadership discourses enables the linking of social theory to leadership theory. This linkage is covered in Chapter 3 on contexts and leadership. Social realist perspectives on the construct of leadership and leadership development in South African higher education are covered in several studies (Andrews, 2011).

2.8 THE CONSTRUCT OF LEADERSHIP

The seminal work of Burns (1978, cited in Price, 2005), *Leadership*, positions transformational leadership as the ultimate form of leadership that embraces the end values of liberty, justice and equality (p. 102). End values are ethical and are placed above modal values, such as honesty, responsibility, and fairness. Transformational leadership, writes Burns, draws followers to "their better selves" (ibid). The moral purpose of leadership, therefore, aims to lift leaders and followers to higher levels of motivation and morality.

Price (2006) states that an assumption underpinning Burns' claim is that the leader has the knowledge and values that the followers need to emulate. Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) extend Burns' (1978) theory to develop the concept of authentic ethical leadership that considers the critique in the above paragraph. However, Price (2006, p. 124) disagrees, stating that even authentic transformational leaders can find themselves facing ethical dilemmas and potential failure. Leaders need to consider the complexity of moral leadership and that it is not about egotism and self-interest. Price (2006) defines self-interest or cognitive limitations as two fallibilities of the ethical leader that need to be considered. Price differentiates between the scope and content of moral leadership. With the concepts of leadership in the preceding paragraph, Price shifts away from the assumption that morality competes with self-interest. The content of moral leadership is concerned with what is morally permissible and what is right in a particular context, whereas the scope considers the moral status of the individual in a community and the extent to which the moral values apply to the individual (ibid).

Leadership is constructed at all three strata of the Real in Bhaskar's (1978) critical realist theory and is located in culture as a set of discourses, each with its own emergent powers and properties. People invariably experience the effects of good or poor leadership in the empirical sphere. The negative or

positive effects of leadership could be possible owing to a decision taken at the level of the actual. Leadership itself is a social construct or structure at the level of the Real with emergent powers and properties that interplay with mechanisms in the domain of culture in the form of various discourses that either enable or constrain the activities of the leader. For this study, the term "good leadership" denotes ethical, values-based leadership in keeping with Ciulla's (1995, p. 5) description.

2.8.1 Transformation and Higher Education

The concept of transformation can be understood as a set of discourses in the domain of culture in higher education. However, the notion of transformation arguably requires a values-based foundation because, at its heart, resides a collective value system (Fullan, 2003, p. 35, cited in Glanz, 2010). Bowen (et al., 2006) state that shared values and beliefs provide the foundation for inclusion, democracy, and social justice to be realised in higher education. Change at an innovative instructional, structural and curricula level must address values and belief systems to be successful (Fullan, 2003; Starratt, 1995, cited in Bowen et al., 2006). Addressing transformation without addressing a change in core beliefs will result in change at a superficial level with transient results. What is required is a change in the dominant culture of the university to instil values-based leadership as inherent and overt (Ehrich et al., 2012).

2.8.2 Emergence and Higher Education

The critical realism of Bhaskar (1979) enables an understanding of the structures and mechanisms that allow for the emergence of experiences and activities that make possible observations of values-based leadership in higher education. It is from the domains of the empirical and actual that observations and experiences, as exemplified by an educational system that practises social inclusion, democracy and social justice, could emerge. This emergence is tendential, meaning that the structures and mechanisms at the level of the actual, where activities such as curricula design, policy implementation, teaching and learning are enacted, may or may not give rise to values-based leadership.

What occurs at the level of the Real, where hegemonic values and beliefs embodied in discourses with their own CEPs are activated by social actors who take up key leadership positions, will determine whether or not institutional transformation occurs. Archer's social realism provides an explanatory theory to explore the structures and mechanisms enabling or constraining the emergence of values-based leadership. The interplay between structure, culture and agency may lead to systemic change and transformation or morphogenesis.

Alternatively, the educational institution will experience morphostasis, temporal change at best, more often manifest at the empirical and actual levels but not at the level of the Real.

2.8.3 Ethics and Generative Mechanisms in Leadership

Seeking to address the good leadership vacuum, researchers state that the development of a code of ethics should be integral to developing a culture of ethics in institutions (Whitten, 1998; Gregory & Hicks, 1999; Preston et al., 2002; Pajo & McGhee, 2003, cited in Ehrich et al., 2012). However, Sumsion (2000) and Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005, cited in Ehrich et al., 2012) caution that a code of ethics does have limitations as complex ethical dilemmas may arise outside the defined ethics code.

In critical realist terms, the development of a code of ethics would involve seeking to address what is observed in the domain of the empirical and actual without identifying and addressing the structures and mechanisms in the domain of the Real. Furthermore, interventions in the domain of the actual, with hope for change in the empirical, discount generative mechanisms which, because of the intransitive nature of the Real, have as yet not been identified. As a result, these generative mechanisms cannot be taken into account when designing leadership interventions.

The most telling omission in the approach of ignoring the generative mechanisms located in the Real domain affecting leadership is the absence of awareness and acknowledgement of the leader's internal voice or reflexivity. By exercising their PEPs, leaders could choose to ignore the proposed intervention. The leader's reflexivity and the innate causal power hold three sets of emergent properties in tension: the leader's PEPs and the CEPs and SEPs of the intervention.

2.9 ARCHER AND LEADERSHIP THEORISTS

Leadership theory is a complex phenomenon that operates across multiple levels or strata (Cho & Dansereau, 2010; Wang & Howell, 2010) with numerous mediating powers and properties at play (DeRue et al., 2011) emerging over significant periods of time (Day & Sin, 2011; Lord & Brown, 2004; cited in Dinh, et al., 2014).

Studies and theories emerging from leadership theorists have focused on singular events located in a specific time frame. This limited approach relies on surveys and leaders' reflections (Gardner et al., 2010; Hunter et al., 2007; Lowe & Gardner, 2000). This approach ignores the leader's emotional and mental state and the reactions resulting from leaders' activities, which are termed transitionary processes (Day & Sin, 2011; Lord et al., 2011; cited in Dinh et al., 2014).

The single snapshot approach to leadership studies ignores the tendential nature of interactions between SEPS, CEPs and PEPs that give rise to a specific outcome or phenomenon observed in a single survey process.

Archer defines this approach to leadership as upward conflation in that when the leader is deemed to be the locus of change, the powers and properties inherent in structure and culture are ignored (Archer, 2000, 2007). Emotions and cognition are emergent properties that are dependent on the relationality of others, not just structures (Archer, 2000, p. 219).

For emotions and cognition to matter (that is, for their emergent properties to come into play), the leader or social actor has to be invested in the project or concern (ibid).

2.9.1 Minding the Leadership Gap

Leadership theory closes the gap between social realist theory in recognition of the interplay at multiple levels, producing top-down and bottom-up emergent outcomes (Yammarino & Dansereau, 2011; Yammarino et al., 2005, cited in Dinh et al., 2014). Top-down leadership approaches would involve efforts by leaders to change the climate and culture of an organisation through the introduction of policies and guidelines intended to promote ethical behaviour. Mayer et al. (2009) and Schaubroeck et al. (2012, cited in Dinh et al., 2014) note that top-down approaches usually involve attempts to enforce codes of conduct (Tyler & Blader, 2005); appeals from leaders for the alignment of values (Brown & Treviño, 2006) or attempts to model the desired behaviours of followers. Archer (2000) would see this as the social actor drawing on structure and culture to further the aims and objectives of the social actor's desired projects and ambitions. However, the followers' perceptions of leaders' attempts to exert their PEPs by drawing on structure and culture will either enable or constrain the efforts of the social actors in what are termed intra-personal dynamics (Dinh & Lord, 2012; Howell & Shamir, 2005; Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2002; Shamir, 2007; cited in Dinh et al., 2014). Researchers term the effects of this as interpersonal complexity that either leads to the adaptability of the leader to varying situations or not (Lord et al., 2011). The social actor's reflexivity and the interplay of the leader's personal identity and social identity are of crucial significance in understanding this.

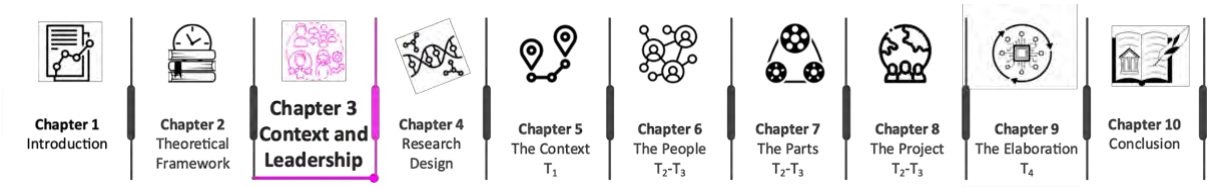
The ability of a leader to adapt to cultural and structural complexity is dependent on the concerns, projects and practices of a leader. It is through reflexivity that the leader can align the personal identity with the social identity through practices or modus vivendi (Archer, 1998, 2000).

In turn, the leader's reflexivity is always constrained or enabled by position, resources, policies, and so on, as well as culture, including discourses shaping the environment.

2.10 CONCLUSION

In this study, Archer's (2000) social realism theory, with Bhaskar's (1978) critical realism, acts as underlabourers. As noted repeatedly, Archer states that social theory gives scant recognition to agents' personal emergent properties and their interplay with structural emergent properties and cultural emergent properties. Such powers can include, but are not limited to, decision-making, the use of language, and leadership (Kahn et al., 2012). Archer's (2007) argument that the realist approach to social theory begins with the account of the self, well before becoming a social being (p. 7), is at the core of the thesis and forms the bedrock of understanding the interplay of leadership with structure and culture in a higher education setting. It is the leader as self dialectically linked to the role of social actor that pursues specific projects driven by the concerns held by the self. It is through these projects and concerns that sociocultural interaction occurs, resulting in sociocultural elaboration or stasis (Archer, 2007). These projects are invariably linked to self-worth in the sociocultural context and both physical and performative concerns (Archer, 2000, cited in Kahn, 2009). It is the internal conversation or reflexivity that impels the process in relation to society (Archer, 2007, p. 3). This theoretical concept forms part of the main argument of the thesis that it is precisely the leader's reflexivity that shapes their responses and behaviours in varying conditions and contexts. Archer's social realist theory becomes pivotal to the exploration of the construct of leadership in higher education in uncertain times and changing contexts.

3 CHAPTER 3: CONTEXTS AND LEADERSHIP



Any practising sociologist has to know about the historical origins – Archer and Morgan (2016, p. 11)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

When considering societal continuity and change, it is necessary to account for the origins of social order and the relationality between structure, culture and agency. According to Archer & Morgan (2020, p. 11), it is important to ask the questions: "*Whose* actions were responsible for this……., through *which* interactions, and *when* and *where* and with *what* consequences"?

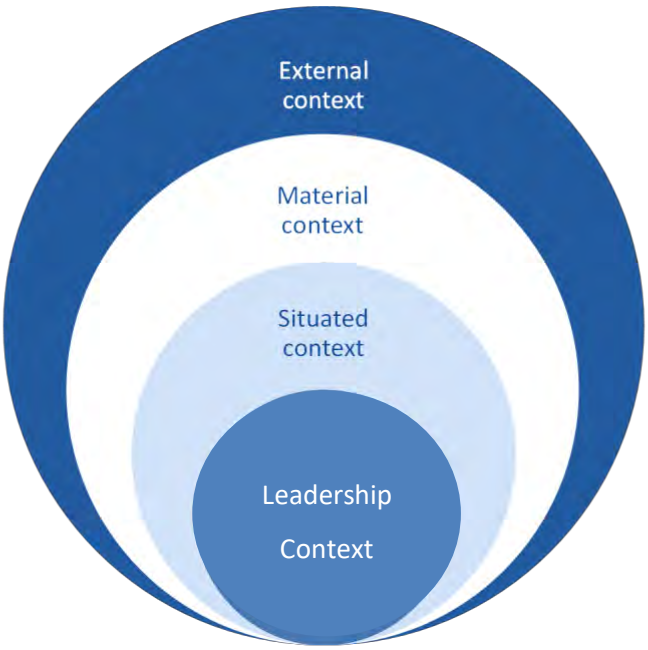
Clarke and O'Donoghue (2017) state that any study of higher education leadership and leadership theory must be contextually located and that there is very little research that seeks to do this. They identify four sets of contexts which need to be considered when conducting research in educational leadership, all of which are interconnected. These are:

i. External contexts, in which pressures and expectations are exerted on leaders by international and national policies (Ball et al., 2012, p. 588);
ii. Situated contexts define aspects of historically located context. An example of a situated context would be the history of the university existing in the collective consciousness and able to influence its leaders;
iii. professional contexts, which include aspects such as the values of leaders and policy managers, and
iv. Material contexts refer to structural concepts that have implications for leadership.

In order to make sense of the complexity of leadership and its interplay with context, this chapter draws on Clarke and O'Donoghue's (2017) classification set out in Figure 7 with a rephrasing of the professional context as leadership context.

Figure 7

The Four Sets of Context shaping higher education leadership



Note. Adapted from Clarke and O'Donoghue (2017).

3.2 THE EXTERNAL CONTEXT

The external context explores the meta-influences exerting pressure on the higher education sector and its leaders, many of which relate to globalisation.

3.2.1 Globalisation

Globalisation as a phenomenon was spurred on by advances in technology and its influences on communication, information and global economies. Nayyar (2008, p. 4) describes globalisation as "an expansion of economic activities across national boundaries" manifested in "international trade, international investment and international finance" and in the "flows of services, technology, information, and ideas across national boundaries".

Another characteristic of globalisation involves the organisation of production through transnational corporations, resulting in compression of time and space that "makes it possible to conduct business on a planetary scale in real-time" (Berdahl, 2008, p. 46). This new "world market … is beyond the reach of the nation-state" and, by implication, reduces national agency (Berdahl, 2008, p. 47).

As individual governments are unable to regulate the activities of multinational corporations, globalisation has come to shape "education both in terms of what is taught and what is researched, shifting student interests and university offerings away from broader academic studies and towards narrower vocational programmes" (Duderstadt et al., 2008, p. 275).

Davis (1997, cited in Badat, 1998) defines globalisation as the progressive integration of national commodity, capital, financial and currency markets into a single global market that operates according to a universal set of rules. Technological advances have increased the pace and rate of globalisation, changing the world economy from being international to transnational (*ibid*). According to Badat (1998), globalisation has a descriptive dimension and a prescriptive dimension.

The descriptive dimension encompasses:

- Strategic core activities such as global trade, corporate management and innovation function at a planetary level in real-time;
- The production and consumption of goods and services at a worldwide scale;
- The domination of global culture by Western values;
- The belief that free trade and information will result in growth and increased quality of life for all and
- The intent to liberalise national and global markets, resulting in arguments for the free flow of trade and information.

Over time, the descriptive becomes prescriptive, resulting in alternatives becoming increasingly unacceptable.

Globalisation is driven by powerful actors located in the developed nations, transnational corporations, and multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. These actors are invested in a global reach that will move goods and services across the world and can determine which countries receive goods and services at preferential rates and which countries have heavy penalties and interest rates imposed on exports and development initiatives. The effect of these structural impositions creates a divide that increases the wealth of the transnational and developed nations and further creates conditions for poverty and economic stagnation in underdeveloped countries. The direct impact on underdeveloped nations has dire consequences for education, health and food security.

3.2.1.1 The Decline of the Welfare State

Kwiek (2005) and Deem (2008) discuss the welfare state, or nation-state, and its demise due to globalisation. Termed the 'Keynesian national welfare state' (Jessop, 1999, p. 348), the role of the state was to find a fair balance between state and market.

Globalisation has led to nations focusing on global and economic concerns at the expense of internal, social, and domestic matters (Kwiek, 2005). The result is a move away from public spending and monetary policy that focuses on social projects centred on workers and citizens to a focus on financial markets.

As this has happened, international and supranational bodies such as the European Commission and World Bank have replaced national governments as key education and economic policymakers (Bassett, 2007; Dale, 2007, cited in Deem, 2008).

3.2.1.2 The Knowledge Economy

At the advent of globalisation, state-funded universities entered a compact which involved supporting the nation-state by producing knowledge and educating citizens in return for funding. In this context, knowledge was understood largely as a social good. Economic and political changes brought on by globalisation have led to uncertainty about the university's role and function. The university's role as a partner to the nation-state influenced its institutional culture and its position as a social, political and cultural project (Kwiek, 1996, 1999, both cited in Kwiek, 2000). The change in the global circulation of capital irrevocably altered the economic and political role of the nation-state, which in turn affected the university. Globalisation resulted in knowledge being viewed as a commodity to be traded for profit, resulting in a shift away from knowledge being viewed as a common good for humanity.

The impact of globalisation on research and the creation of knowledge has affected the core purposes of universities (Badat, 1998). Appaduri (2001, cited in Boden & Epstein 2006) argues that globalisation creates a narrow definition of knowledge as produced in a replicable, systemised, objective and rational way. This results in a focus on data collection and analysis rather than on the development of theory and new models of understanding. According to Boden and Epstein (2006, p. 230), this effectively mutes the voice of the public intellectuals and means that alternative frameworks for thinking are ignored.

Those involved in knowledge production for the knowledge economy are then seen as the knowledge workers who are the human capital understood as necessary to drive innovation (Badat, 1998).

This has profound implications for the educational functions of universities and the way students and prospective students perceive them. It has also meant that demand for higher education has grown across the world as individuals see qualifications as one of the only ways of entering the workforce (ibid).

The consequences of globalisation include demand for new skills and capabilities, shifts in the labour market, technological advancement and the impending impact of artificial intelligence, as well as threats to political legitimacy and authority (Ball, 2010). This exerts pressure on higher education systems to become economic machines producing workers (ibid).

According to Peters (2007), the United Kingdom's 1997 Dearing Report (Dearing Committee, 1997) illustrates the construction of the university as a global service embracing private sector/for-profit characteristics in order to contribute to the national and global economy through the production of knowledge. Higher education is increasingly a globalised activity and is commodified through academics who move between countries, taking up research and teaching posts, as well as by students who move across national borders to study. In turn, students themselves become commodities as they pursue the neoliberal promise of personal wealth through investment in education and are sought by universities to enrol them in a competitive market Boden and Epstein (2006). The impact of students from poorer nations travelling to first world countries to obtain their degrees at great expense, then returning to their own countries carrying Western knowledge practices, thereby replicating a hegemonic world order. In turn, the drive for internationalisation in neoliberal economies such as those of Australia and Great Britain has shaped policy decisions, teaching identities and pedagogies (ibid).

3.3 THE MATERIAL CONTEXT

The material context explores the emergent discourse of neoliberalism as an outflow and impact of globalisation within a global economic frame. This section thus explores the influence of neoliberal theories, economic marketisation and managerialism. Each of these facets has implications for higher education institutions and affects higher education leaders.

3.3.1 The Rise of Neoliberalism as Ideology

Neoliberalism is linked to globalisation at an economic level as a politically imposed, hegemonic discourse affecting global economies.

The roots of neoliberalism can be seen in the work of Frederich Hayek (1899–1992), who stated that resources accrue value only in relation to the subjective preferences of agents. This represented a radical shift from the views of Adam Smith, Karl Marx and David Ricardo, who perceived value as being related to the amount of labour involved in generating a product.

For Hayek (1994), the law of supply and demand determined the pricing mechanism and that markets should run independently of state planning of any sort, including the concept of the welfare state (cited in Olssen, 2001).

For Hayek (2009), the market was a mechanism for allocating resources in society. He argued that the involvement of the state was both inefficient and a threat to individual freedom. Hayek purported spontaneous, unregulated markets using fragmented knowledge to produce economic creativity and progress and that the state should not be privy to such knowledge ibid). Anything different to unregulated markets or interference from the state would fail. In social realist terms, what Hayek supported was downward conflation, where the "parts organise the people. …cultural systems (logical relations between theories and beliefs) are consumed by the socio-cultural level (causal relations of influence between groups) through the process of regulation and socialisation, thereby downwardly shaping social integration" (Archer, 2000, p. 5). According to Gray, the societal leader's power and control lay in how "knowledge is fragmented" and how "circumstances of a time and place" are constructed by someone for someone else's benefit (1984, pp. 31-32; cited in Olssen, 2001). The result is an economic system beyond the reach and control of the individual's ability to choose, and it is the individual's autonomy that is consumed by neoliberalism.

To the present day, Hayek's work influences worldviews and practices, organisational behaviours, and, by implication, the roles and functions of leaders.

Influential theories undergirding neoliberalism emerged as powerful discourses that have shaped the perceptions of leadership within organisational structures, such as universities, and the role and function of individuals within the economy.

Drawing from Reisman's (1990) research, three such theories have emerged as powerful discourses, namely agency theory (AT), transaction cost economics (TCE), and property rights theory.

The three theories carry implications for higher education leadership and are discussed in the next section.

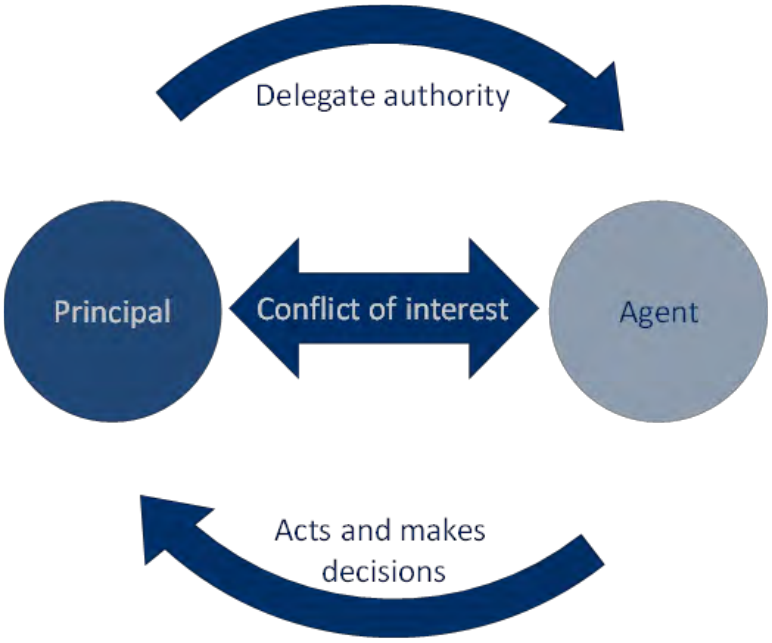
3.3.1.1 Agency Theory

Agency theory (AT) was favoured in member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), including Britain, America, Australia, and New Zealand. AT structured work relations hierarchically as contracts between principal and agent, with an emphasis on compliance and control in labour relations. Since its first use in business firms, AT has been adopted by public organisations as a tool of compliance and accountability.

AT structures work relations hierarchically in terms of chains of authority and command, creating levels of authority in a management hierarchy. This is a clear shift from broad work categorisations based on professional or collegial autonomy by contracting through clear managerial functions. The principal manages and delegates, and the agents comply in return for reward. Control is optimised through monitoring, information gathering, evaluations, performance appraisals, targets and rewards. According to Catherine Althaus, AT has led to a massive restructuring of the roles of funder and provider, policy and delivery, and the decoupling of public sector bureaucracy and state, resulting in policies of deregulation, corporatisation and privatisation (1997, p. 137-138, cited in Olssen, 2001). It becomes possible to trace the discourse of managerialism (discussed later in this chapter) to AT – particularly its effects on shaping institutional hierarchy and the implications for higher education leadership.

Figure 8

Agency Theory's Chain of Command



Note. Reproduced from Corporate Finance Institute (2022, p. 79).

Agency theory is said to not occupy a niche in social sciences by Shapiro (2005) but rather being reflected through agency relationships such as organisations, professions, roles, markets, government, family, social exchange and so forth.

3.3.1.2 Transaction Cost Economics

Linked closely to Agency Theory is the theory of transaction cost economics, which is concerned with efficiency in transacting business. Oliver Williamson (1975, 1983,1985, 1991, 1992, 1994, all cited in Reisman, 1990), the proponent of this theory, contended that efficiency, and nothing else, matters. Positioned ontologically as a discourse within neoliberalism, TCE holds to *uncertainty, bounded rationality, limitedness, asymmetricity, perfect information* and *opportunism* and the *self-interested subject*. The implications of these discourses can be expressed as follows: "The absence of information will effectively destabilise market equilibrium; this in turn introduces *uncertainty* which allows individuals to act *opportunistically*", according to Reisman (1990).

These discourses come into play in higher education settings in the form of contracts that advantage one group over another. An example might involve institutional contracts for the provision of services where the understanding is that it is better to retain the current contract that privileges the internal stakeholders than to face the *uncertainty that* a new contract may bring. The inverse of this could also be true in higher education settings in cases where *bounded rationality* leads to outsourcing rather than facing the *uncertainty* of staff wage strikes and labour disputes. An example might involve the outsourcing of cleaning to companies that deal with the fallout of labour disputes (ibid).

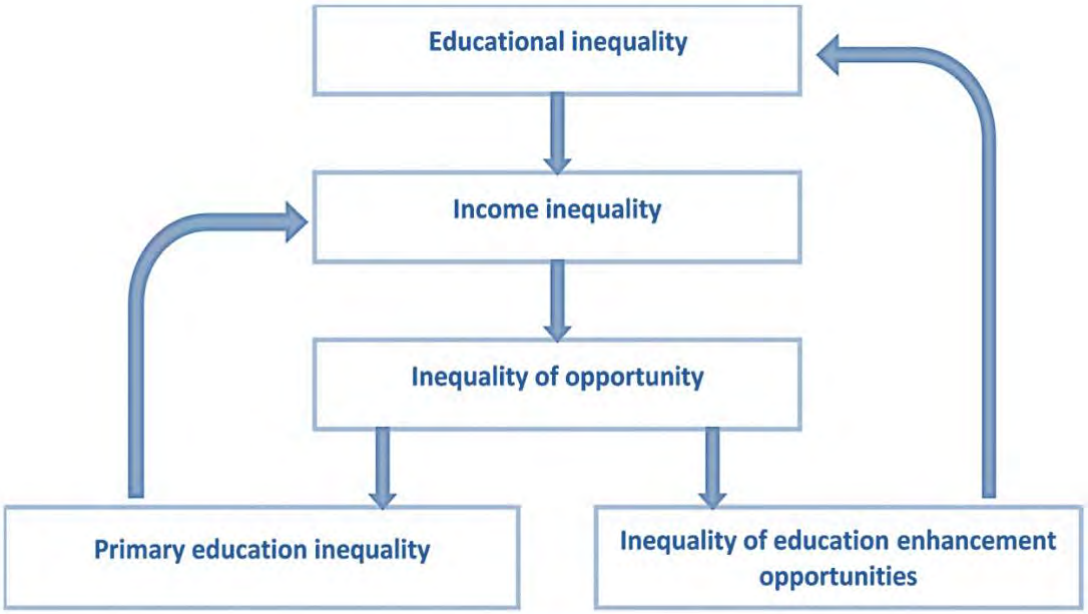
Transaction cost economics results in change in higher education contexts, a process structurally bound by the discourse of economics and efficiency.

The *Fees Must Fall* phenomenon that had an impact on South African higher education institutions in 2015, and 2016 is a powerful reminder of the embeddedness of transaction cost economics. The state had sight of the *perfect information* of what economic change in higher education would cost, yet the government chose not to act on this information. It was then forced to act as a result of student activism. However, challenges related to the missing middle[7] remained, with the result that TCE is unable to bring about wholescale change.

7 The term missing middle defines students who are too wealthy to benefit from National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) funding, but who struggle to afford higher education. The missing middle currently refers to students from households with annual incomes between R350 000 and R600 000 (Garrod & Wildschut, 2021, p 484).

Figure 9

Transaction Cost Economics within Higher Education



Note. Reproduced from Nureyev et al. (2020).

In their research, Nureyev et al. (2020) note the changes in higher education from a planned to market economy with a strong emphasis on entrepreneurship, which runs counter to the notion of a welfare state and sees the marketisation of higher education as a masked refusal by the state to fulfil its social obligations. Figure 9 depicts how inequality in higher education is perpetuated and replicated. A poignant reminder is the persistent issues regarding student fees that each year demonstrate how income inequality and inequality of opportunity ensure the continued marginalisation and socioeconomic exclusion of students from disadvantaged communities.

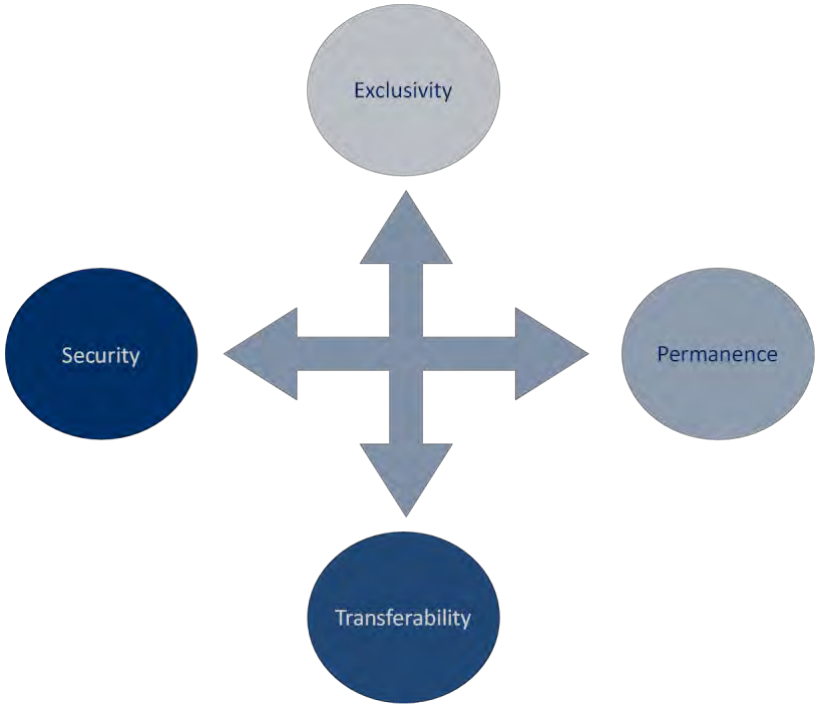
3.3.1.3 Property Rights Theory

A third power-laden discourse underpinning neoliberalism is that of property rights theory (PRT), which determines ownership of property and how these rights are transferred from entity to entity. PRT determines the individual's right to own and do certain things within an institution and to receive rewards or incentives for these actions (McKean, 1974, p. 175; cited in Olssen, 2001). PRT is embedded in the neoliberalist discourse as the concept of self-interest in human behaviour.

Property rights have four distinctive characteristics: security or quality of title, exclusivity, permanence, and transferability (ibid), as set out in Figure 10.

Figure 10

The Four Distinctions of Property Rights Theory



Note. Adapted from Arnason (2005).

PRT is embedded in the neoliberalist discourse as the concept of self-interest in human behaviour (1988; 1996; cited in Olssen, 2001).

Collectively, agency theory, transaction cost economics and property rights theory formed the *new institutional economic*s approach to governance and compliance in institutions of higher learning with discourses such as accountability, ownership, purchase agreements and contracts.

3.3.2 Economic Liberalism and Neoliberalism

Economic liberalism views individuals as economically self-interested subjects and the best judge of their interests and needs. Economic liberals argue that the best way to allocate resources is through an efficient market and a commitment to a laissez-faire free market that self-regulates and does not require any human or government intervention. The concept of free trade without tariffs and subsidies or any form of state imposition, together with the idea of floating exchange rates and open economies, dominates this school of thought. Classical liberalism views the individual as an autonomous being able to exert agency in the practical order.

Neoliberalism views the individual as a mechanism to be developed into an entrepreneurial resource to further economic growth (Burchell, 1996, pp. 23-24).

Freedom, choice and individual agency, therefore, become constructions of the state, which takes on the positive role of developing "techniques and forms of expertise" (Barry et al., 1996, p. 14; cited in Olssen, 2001); such as auditing, accounting and management.

Economic liberalism views the role of the state with suspicion and distrust and seeks to limit the state's intervention in protecting individual rights. According to Foucault, a liberal society can exert powers and properties to oppose regimes seeking total control. Liberalism creates a constructed political space that secures individual freedoms (1991; cited in Burchell, 1996).

Neoliberalism distinguishes itself from liberalism by viewing state involvement as positive since it provides conditions, laws and interventions that institutions need to adhere to further the state's agenda for economic growth. While classical liberalism is characterised by autonomy and freedom of agency, neoliberalism works through the state to create enterprising individuals as competitive entrepreneurs to build the economy. For neoliberal governments, freedom involves providing mechanisms for consumerism, competition compliance and obedience to further economic growth (Olssen, 2001). The role of the state then becomes to audit accounting and to promote good governance and management. The view of neoliberalism is that of political reasoning by the government. It is more than ideology; and it is a powerful discourse of ideas and theories emerging in response to a historical cycle. Foucault views this as political control excursed through hegemonic mechanisms located in systems of expertise and technology (ibid).

3.3.3 Neoliberalism as Economic Marketisation

The Thatcher (Britain) and Reagan (United States) eras saw the dismantling of the Keynesian welfare state approach of regulating market forces for the benefit of humanity, with Reagan famously stating that there is no such thing as society (Kirby, 2006). Margaret Thatcher ushered in an era of privatisation and deregulation and gave room for the rampant greed of multinationalism in what Ball (2010) termed Thatcherism. Thatcher subverted existing mechanisms between the state and universities to take direct control of university funding mechanisms (Shore & Wright, 2000, cited in Boden & Epstein, 2006, p. 232). This placed the government in the position to dictate research agendas and the notion of national economic competitiveness. What ensued was the introduction of managerialist tools for audits and performance measures by way of ensuring universities would contribute to the economy and civil society in a measurable way (Boden & Epstein, 2006, p. 233).

Shore and Wright (2000, cited in Boden & Epstein, 2006, p. 232) stated that this resulted in the reshaping of universities' financial models.

Universities now had to remodel themselves to enact managerialism discourses and procedures to become auditable entities (Power, 1997, cited in Boden & Epstein, 2006).

This gave rise to institutional economics, which Ball (2010) called Mitsubishi-ism, emphasises institutional redesign through individual and collective behaviour, such as incentivisation and replacing task specification with target setting. The discourse of performativity becomes an effective intervention and prescription-steering mechanism together with target setting (ibid). Education is then seen as a commodity and draws on commerce discourses such as total quality management and human resource management. Boden and Epstein (2010) spoke of the shift universities have made from being producers of knowledge to becoming an extension or economic driver with clear objectives and fixed targets. This, they argued, was clearly evidenced in certain universities through science and technology research agendas aligned with global economic goals.

The consequence is the reshaping of how science is taught and the training of future generations (ibid). Universities are coerced through funding and partnership commitments to produce the very epistemic devices that will replicate the production and consumption processes of neoliberal states. The impact is not only setting the research agendas in universities but also determining how the research is to be conducted (Kenway et al., 2004, cited in Boden & Epstein, 2010). Boden warns that the capture and control of research agendas will have an impact on the critical thinking capability of future generations of students (ibid). By recasting the teaching capacity of universities, a double hegemony emerges with students as consumers of knowledge at universities whilst, at the same time, students shape curriculum content and pedagogy.

The advent of neoliberal discourse gave rise to related economic discourses such as 'performativity' and commodification of teaching and research with set targets and local as well as global performance measurement criteria and outputs (Barnett, 2015). Prior to neoliberalism, markets formed an essential part of the welfare state by balancing the activities of private entrepreneurs acting as a regulatory mechanism for society. This concept was replaced under neoliberalism, where markets came to be about control and performance. Important shifts occurred as a result of the work of Friedman, Hayek, and Buchanan, as well as the formation of neoliberal theories discussed earlier in the chapter, which are theories that continue to define higher education practices.

3.3.3.1 Managerialism

Managerialism is the insertion of theories and techniques of business management and the cult of excellence into education with a focus on quality and customer satisfaction, with innovation as a driver (Newman & Clarke, 1994, p. 15, cited in Ball, 2010). Managerialism is also associated with the concept of corporate culture as managers delineate, instrumentalise and normalise the conduct of staff holding power, control and authority in universities (Bolden et al., 2008). Academics become much like a controlled labour force (ibid). Paradoxically, this gives lecturers managerial responsibility, with problem-solving being rewarded. However, this is in tension with forms of audit, surveillance and monitoring such as appraisals, target setting, output comparisons and performance management. Peters and Waterman (cited in Ball, 2010) term this phenomenon *loose and tight* and Du Gray terms it *controlled de-control*.

3.3.4 Higher Education in a Neoliberalist Context

Olssen (2001) speak of the ascendancy of neoliberalism and the associated discourses that influence higher education, which have a direct influence on how institutions of higher education define and conduct themselves. A traditional professional culture of open intellectual enquiry is replaced by institutional performance of measured outputs, strategic planning performance indicators, quality assurance and academic audits. Governments view universities as the nexus to building the economy, specifically the knowledge economy, with a key focus on entrepreneurial capability.

Badat (2010) writes that neoliberal thinking has reshaped economic and social policies, institutions and practices in several ways:

i. The concept of development has been reduced to economic growth and economic indicators in spite of other purposes for higher education identified in, for example, South Africa's White Paper on Higher Education (DoE, 1997). Following this, universities themselves have become subject to metrics and performance indicators with their role redefined in relation to economic development (Berdahl, 2008, p. 48, cited in Badat, 2010). Funding for universities is provided on the understanding that their function is to prepare students to become workers in the economy. This contrasts with the understanding of the university as an institution for the production of new knowledge for the good of humanity (Boughey, 2021).
ii. Universities are defined as selling packets or products of knowledge for public and private consumption, with the value of these products determined by demand (Boulton & Lucas, 2008, p. 17, cited in Badat, 2010).

No longer are higher education institutions seen as a public and social good. Rather, they are constructed as a means of economic development, and the private goods accrue to individuals who benefit from them (Boughey, 2021).

iii. Neoliberalism has produced a culture of materialism marked by individualism and greed (Nayyar, 2008, p. 5).

These pressures continue to reshape the identity of higher education institutions, as the purpose of their existence remains under scrutiny. An example of this is credentialism, which researchers link back to human capital theory, where individuals seek qualifications as credentials to access the job market because industry requires this (Walters, 2004). Credentialism acts as a mechanism that ensures the replication of social structures where the more affluent are able to purchase the necessary credentials through the education offerings at universities. Upon graduation, people have greater access to societal goods and life chances.

3.3.4.1 Educational Policy

Influences in educational policy manifest through social and political networks as the international circulation of ideas (Popkewitz, 1996) through policy borrowing (Halpin & Troyna, 1995), with the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia acting as laboratories for educational reform (Ball, 2010). The concept of idea pollination creates cultural and political reproduction, which undermines the capability and feasibility of local solutions (ibid). Educational policy is disseminated throughout the world through academic travel, journal publications, and books, with some making money by selling their ideas as a form of educational entrepreneurship (Levin, 1998).

The impact of policy is further exacerbated by multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Jones (1998, p. 152, cited in Ball, 2010) stated that the World Bank disseminates its ideology through educational activities that promote an integrated world market system. Global changes in trade and technology gave rise to the discourse on higher education as a global service. Universities, faced with these changes in trade, technology, and travel, adopted for-profit characteristics in order to contribute to the growth of the global economy and global corporations through the production of skilled graduate labour. Inclusive to this process is the operation of technological transfer in translating research outcomes into a form usable by industry and commerce (Deem, 2008).

3.3.4.2 State Capture of Higher Education Institutions

The state, using neoliberal discourses of modernisation such as renewal, responsibility, reform, accountability and transparency (Boden & Epstein, 2006, p. 232), has repositioned its relationship with universities. Historically, universities have always been dependent on state funding as well as income from the private sector. However, recently, the state's demand to universities has been to deliver value for money with an emphasis on the delivery of outputs in return for payment (ibid). Boden and Epstein speak of the hidden operation of power as to who determines what knowledge is valued and "to whom and how universities [should] be accountable and why?" (2006, p. 233).

The implications of the developments mentioned above for universities are numerous, with institutions caught in the rip-tide of state, market and civil society. Higher education institutions find themselves holding in tension competing demands from institutional stakeholders, society, government and businesses. Carter et al., (2015) call this the new orthodoxy, which is marked by the following:

I. Policy control that tightens the connection between education, employment, and the economy;
II. The discourse on graduate employability and student outcomes in relation to market needs for skills and competencies;
III. Control over which institutions teach curriculum content and assessments;
IV. Reduction in the government's fiscal contribution to education; and
V. Greater civil society control is achieved through direct involvement in the decision-making and market choice of the governing body (ibid).

3.4 THE SITUATED CONTEXT

The situated context explores the effects of the external context (globalisation) and the material context (neoliberalism) on the higher education sector in South Africa. Universities in South Africa are historically located and embedded in structures and cultures that continue to exert constraining powers and properties over the collective consciousness of their present leadership.

3.4.1 South African Educational Context

Historically, the South African educational landscape is a fragmented one, with racial and language segregation due to the Apartheid government's policies that oppressed people based on the colour of their skin.

The fragmentation of the educational landscape was entrenched by South African prime minister, Dr Hendrick Verwoerd, with the Bantu Education Act in 1959, followed by the Extension of University Education Act in 1959.

The Apartheid government used education as a mechanism to embed an unjust social system in a manner that continues to have devasting implications for future generations of South Africans.

Colonial education institutions took the following shape with English-medium universities (the University of Cape Town, Rhodes University, Witwatersrand University, and the University of Natal) and Afrikaans-medium institutions (Stellenbosch University, Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, the University of Pretoria, and the University of the Free State).

Rand Afrikaans University later established a counterweight to Witwatersrand in Johannesburg and the University of Port Elizabeth to Rhodes University in the Eastern Cape.

Following the introduction of Bantu Education in 1953, a process termed inferior tribalism in education (RSA, 2014, section 3) resulted. The apartheid government determined that black people would have their own universities in their own homelands. Examples of universities designated for black students were the University of Transkei (UNITRA), the University of Bophuthatswana (UNIBO) and the University of Venda. The University of Durban Westville was designated for Indians, and the University of Western Cape for those classified as 'Coloured'.

Verwoerd's infamous words, "What is the use of teaching a Bantu child Mathematics?" reverberates to this day as the nation struggles to educate students, with Mullis et al. (2020, p. 178) reporting that "Learners from homes lacking the basic amenities, such as running tap water and flush toilets, have the lowest educational outcomes. In order to increase achievements, the starting point for some learners is improved home conditions". Present-day black students continue to struggle to gain access to and success in maths-based disciplines such as accounting, engineering and the sciences. The apartheid segregationist decision regarding the non-teaching of mathematics continues to bear the bitter exclusionary fruits of apartheid in the present day.

3.4.2 An Educational Phoenix

The South African educational landscape continues to bear the scars of the nation's Apartheid legacy. The apartheid dispensation created fissures in society that, 25 years after the first democratic election, continue to affect the higher education sector. Historically black universities are defined by a curriculum preparing a segregated workforce catered for the black populace.

Limited resource allocation and highly regulated administrative functions, together with their location in remote areas, constrained the institutions' growth towards autonomy, both economically and intellectually (Bozalek & Boughey, 2012). The historically black universities were denied the opportunity to build financial reserves, develop administrative capacity, participate in meaningful research, and were stigmatised as inferior. In parallel, the historically white universities catered for the white minority with the intention that they would form part of a superior, privileged civil society in support of the apartheid ideology. These historically white universities received ample funding, administrative and infrastructural support and were allocated the autonomy to develop as institutions of higher learning. From this crucible of racial injustice and discrimination, South Africa's first democratically elected government emerged.

The decades-long political struggle gave rise to a new political elite tasked with creating an integrated, national educational system which could model social, political and economic transformation.

The newly elected government restructured higher education by forming a single department of education, eradicating the 19 distinct, ethnically, regionally, and racially segregated departments of education (Jansen & Taylor, 2003). The new state, inheriting one of the most unequal societies in the world (ibid), was pressed to respond to the nation's cries for social justice and equity and redress for the wrongs of Apartheid in all spheres of society. It needed to develop a skilled workforce to enable economic and social development, thereby fulfilling the ideals of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, upon which the Freedom Charter (1948) is based, stating that “higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit” (article 26). It also needed to contribute to the development of a critical citizenry that would be able to participate meaningfully in a new democratic dispensation. The four purposes of higher education identified in the 1997 White Paper (MoE, 1997) illustrate the contrasting needs.

3.4.3 Higher Education Restructuring

It is important to note that the restructuring of the South African higher education space was conditioned by the legacy of Apartheid, as well as by the policies implemented by the national government to redress the injustices of the past and globalisation. The new government considered it possible to change the country structurally and introduced a number of policies to change the educational context (Allais, 2014). The discussion below unpacks some of the unintended consequences of an approach that some considered lacked sufficient analysis *for* policy (the process of creating a policy) as well as analysis *of* policy (evaluating the policy environment and adopting a

systemic approach that determines policy content values, assumptions, ideologies, underpinnings as well as the policy process) (Lange, 2017).

3.4.3.1 Education Policies Influenced by Globalisation

The National Commission on Higher Education [NCHE] (1996, p. 3) developed *A Framework for Higher Education* that called for new research agendas and new learning programmes to release the country's cultural, social and economic potential. The NCHE report further acknowledged the need for South Africa to confront a globalised, technological world that was transforming production and consumption patterns. South African universities would, therefore, need to produce skilled, innovative graduates in order to participate in the global economic market successfully (ibid).

Higher education institutions had to address not only the social and structural inequalities of the apartheid legacy but also the government's economic and social restructuring agenda and develop a globally competitive workforce at the same time (Badat, 1998).

The report of the NCHE in 1996 was followed by the landmark White Paper on Higher Education (1997), which resulted in the promulgation of the Higher Education Act (Act 101) in 1997 and saw the national government assume a more directive role in higher education. The white paper clearly outlined the national goal of transformation with social justice as the cornerstone (Hall & Symes, 2005, p. 202). It clarified cooperative governance as hierarchical, incorporating checks and balances in order to preserve the degree of institutional autonomy needed for academic freedom in teaching and research (ibid). One of the checks against state power instituted in the white paper was based on the constitutional right of academic freedom as in "the absence of outside interference, censure or obstacles in the pursuit of academic work" (Department of Education [DoE], 1997, section 1, p. 23). The formation of the Council for Higher Education [CHE] furthered the government's intention to steer the higher education system by legislative means. The CHE later proposed a drastic restructuring of the higher education system in 2000 (CHE, 2000).

The White Paper (1997) views the transformation of higher education as part of a political, social and economic transition together with redistributive social equity policies. This transformation was shaped by a globalised world dominated by the concepts of free trade, commercialisation, and global competitiveness, but, at the same time, by the need to eradicate apartheid-generated unjust patterns of landownership, resource distribution, and social and economic practices. The white paper placed higher education at the heart of societal transformation and the creation of a better life for all.

This is evident in the four purposes for higher education (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2002, para. 1.3) as follows:

i. To meet the learning needs and aspirations of individuals through the development of their intellectual abilities and aptitudes throughout their lives. Higher education equips individuals to make the best use of their talents and the opportunities offered by society for self-fulfilment. It is thus a key allocator of life chances and an important vehicle for achieving equity in the distribution of opportunity and achievement among South African citizens.
ii. To address the development needs of society and provide the labour market in a knowledge-driven and knowledge-dependent society with the ever-changing high-level competencies and expertise necessary for the growth and prosperity of a modern economy. Higher education teaches and trains people to fulfil specialised social functions, enter the learned professions, and pursue vocations in administration, trade, industry, science and technology, and the arts.
iii. To contribute to the socialisation of enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens. Higher education encourages the development of a reflective capacity and a willingness to review and renew prevailing ideas, policies and practices based on a commitment to the common good.
iv. To contribute to the creation, sharing and evaluation of knowledge. Higher education engages in the pursuit of academic scholarship and intellectual inquiry in all fields of human understanding through research, learning and teaching.

In order to address the challenges faced by the need for South Africa to participate in a globalised economy and address social injustice in the country, the national government led by the African National Congress used its guiding manifesto called the National Democratic Revolution [NDR], underpinned by Marxist ideology, to institute a number of policies. The Reconstruction and Development Programme [RDP], the Growth Employment and Redistribution [GEAR] programme, the Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa [ASGISA] and the National Development Plan [NDP] were introduced as macroeconomic policies intended to effect redress (Maphaka & Rapanyane, 2021). In 2017, a call for Radical Economic Transformation [RET] was made in order to address pervasive issues of inequality, unemployment and poverty that remained more than twenty years after the advent of democracy (ibid). Arguably, the call for RET emerged because of the failure of previous policy initiatives to ameliorate the challenges in the lives of the majority of South Africans.

Patel (2021) cites the South African Reconciliation Barometer Survey of 2019 to claim that discrimination, poverty, and corruption at every level of government were indicative of policy failures.

He asserts that a lack of social cohesion, fragmentation of social structures, and increased government fiscal deficit will cause looting, protests, and civil unrest to grow as human development remains disconnected from economic development (ibid).

3.4.3.2 The New Role of Higher Education

Following the shift to democracy, the South African government needed to reshape the context of higher education. Where formerly it was a mechanism to entrench Apartheid, it now required to become a means of forging a new social compact for the nation.

The urgency to ensure global alignment in academic qualifications resulted in the South African Qualifications Act of 1995, from which came the National Qualifications Framework [NQF] and the South African Qualifications Authority [SAQA] as the governing body. The establishment of the NQF had enormous implications for curriculum reform (Boughey & McKenna, 2012, p. 59).

The state followed the lead of other countries that attempted to integrate formal education and vocational training and had qualification frameworks. The development of a framework (the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework) took many years to develop and was eventually finalised only in 2014 (CHE, 2014). The finalisation of the framework required all universities to reregister their qualifications with the CHE. The Skills Development Act of 1998 and the Skills Development Levy of 1999 placed legislative demands on higher education for workplace development plans and reports. The introduction of the new Higher Education Management and Information System [HEMIS] to allow for the tracking of enrolments and the award of subsidies by the Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET] followed in 1999. The Higher Education Quality Committee [HEQC] (2002) was established in 2002.

The National Plan for Higher Education [NPHE] (2001) was an attempt to reconfigure the higher education system after Apartheid and concluded that cooperative governance had failed to encourage collaboration owing to institutions competing with each other (RSA, 2001, paras. 1.3, 6.4, cited in Hall & Symes, 2005) for a larger slice of state subsidy. The NPHE entrenched state powers in the affairs of higher education institutions with the statement that the Ministry of Education would not hesitate to intervene in the affairs of universities should there be a failure to implement policy and transformational goals to ensure sustainability (RSA, 2001, para. 1.5, cited in Hall & Symes, 2005). Government-approved plans for restructuring the higher education context followed in 2002.

These plans resulted in the emergence of three institutional types: traditional universities, universities of technology, and comprehensive universities, as well as a series of widescale incorporations and mergers, which reduced the number of institutions in the system from 36 to 23 in order to achieve greater coherence.

From 2002 to 2004, three additional policy initiatives were implemented: obligatory enrolment planning, the approval system for the mix of programmes and qualifications to be offered by each university, and a new incentive-based institutional funding model. The restructuring of the South African higher education landscape followed the neoliberal restructuring models of Europe and Australasia, laying the foundation for neoliberal hegemonic mechanisms to become entrenched as culture and normalised as accepted practice.

In 2004, the national government introduced a new incentive-based funding framework for higher education called the New Funding Framework [NNF] (DoE, 2004).
The DoE determined that the tertiary education sector would be managed as a joint system with a focus on meeting national targets, planning, financial management and quality mechanisms (Styger & Heymans, 2015). The planning model included the following three steps:

i. The ministry set national policy targets and foci.
ii. Universities developed three-year rolling strategic plans setting out how they intended to address national targets and foci.
iii. Interactions occurred between the university and the ministry, which led to the approval of institutional plans, and funding was granted based on the amount of funding still available (Styger & Heymans, 2015, p. 269).

Furthermore, funding comprised block grants or teaching input grants linked to student registrations per qualification type and graduate throughput rates, together with research output grants. Institutional allocations were determined by an intricate formula called classification of educational subject matter [CESM] categories.

A second funding category called earmarked grants assisted institutions with designated foci such as teaching and community development, restructuring of institutions, and, more recently, the research development grant (ibid).

3.4.4 Higher Education Restructuring Tensions

Universities struggled to keep up with the rapid shifts in the higher education system, with some institutions strained beyond capacity. Historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs), in particular, experienced financial strain as a result of being placed under the same funding conditions as their historically advantaged sister institutions. In the late 1980s, the HDIs had initially welcomed being subject to the same funding conditions that applied to historically white institutions rather than having to negotiate annual budgets with responsible departments (Bunting, 2006). The funding formula was based on enrolments and, although HDIs originally benefitted from the rise in student numbers overall in the early 1990s, they suffered financial hardship once black students began to vote with their feet and chose to enrol at better-resourced institutions over time (Cooper & Subotsky, 2001). This was exacerbated both by a lack of skilled leadership to manage the university resources and the absence of any form of endowment that historically white institutions (HWIs) had been able to accrue over decades (Bunting, 2006). Historically, white universities had the freedom to determine budget spending and developed fiscal control systems to do so.

This was different for the HDIs that received funding from the departments responsible for them, which had to return any unspent funding at the end of each financial year rather than being allowed to build reserves.

Shrinking government funding due to the dominant neoliberal thinking that saw higher education as a private rather than public good resulted in per capita spending being reduced. In addition, the HDIs, which had always expected redress funding to allow them to address historical inequities in resources and infrastructure, were disappointed when this failed to materialise. Issues of governance and lack of good leadership began to emerge with several institutions being placed under administration, a process that allowed management and governance structures to be replaced by a ministerially appointed individual. Arguably, the tension between state regulation and institutional autonomy is only beginning to be fully realised as higher education institutions face issues of sustainability in a volatile national and global economic climate – a process that is exacerbated by shrinking government subsidies and ever-increasing legislative and regulatory demands.

The unprecedented restructuring of the entire educational system that took place from the early 1900s onwards saw the emergence of a more formal relationship between state and universities, with the demand for governance and management structures driven by legislation and regulation (Hall & Symes, 2005, p. 200).

Not considered in this period of rapid policy formulation and implementation was whether the leadership or agency within institutions had the capacity to address conflicting goals related to social justice and the need to comply with increased demands for great efficiency and cost saving. Jansen and Taylor (2003, p. 8) speak of a policy practice gap where institutions were not able to fulfil policy requirements owing to resource limitations predominantly related to the availability of skilled, knowledgeable staff. The changes following the democratic election resulted in the development of structural arrangements for higher education, or structural elaboration in Archer's (1995, 2010) terms, as well as the introduction of new discourses constructing higher education and the role of managers and leaders. The extent to which these changes were compatible with the need for transformation, in the sense of enhanced social justice, is questionable – an observation strengthened by the student protests that rocked the system in 2015 and 2016.

The efforts of the Department of Higher Education to address the injustices of the past saw a distinction made between institutional and individual redress (Bozalek & Boughey, 2012). The extensive efforts made to right the injustices of the past bring to the fore a question about the location of the problems that plague the system to this day. Is social justice located within individual institutions or within the way higher education itself is conceptualised at a global and national level? Given the uneven educational terrain of higher education, as democracy dawned, one can argue that the rapid shift to adopt globalised views of the role of higher education and the way it should be organised was not necessarily in South Africa's best interests (Boughey & McKenna, 2021).

3.4.5 Organic Crisis

Although state funding has been inadequate and continues to be so, to address the need to develop a vibrant, equitable higher education system, not all challenges in higher education can be related to funding. The quality of academic leadership and the ability of academic staff to embrace change are also problems (Badat, 2016). Lack of funding results in fewer academics and larger classes, and thus, less time is spent on underprepared students. This has an impact on throughput rates, with 50% of students who start a degree dropping out (Moodley & Singh, 2015).

What is often overlooked and underestimated is the critical need for a South African higher education leadership social analysis. This process would have influenced the restructuring of higher education policy and its approach to policy reformulation. Lange (2017) states that the language of policy as discourse is not neutral but is an instrument and an object of power.

Policy as texts exists within discursive practice, which in turn is located within the social practice (ibid). How policy is, therefore, interpreted and taken up will be contingent on the social actors within universities.

Derrida (2004, p. 154) notes that a university reflects society and, in essence, reproduces what exists in society. Waghid (2017) states that universities, particularly in South Africa, need to identify the norms and values that they uphold and that a failure to do so constitutes an act of irresponsibility. Waghid, drawing on Giroux (2007, p. 181), spoke of a "democratic pedagogy", stating that it is the responsibility of academics, and by implication the university, to draw on discourses of critique, to embody values of reason, freedom and equality as the very foundation upon which life is lived.

Castells (2001, p. 22) comments that universities do not stand outside of society but reflect, and even amplify, the ideological struggles present in all societies. This statement resonates with the South African higher education sector as it struggles with the government's policy decisions in a nation wracked by poverty and violence and deepening social inequalities. As a historically reproduced system, the challenge, as stated by Castell, is to create a just social system from within that is able to hold the tensions and contradictions exerted from without (ibid) in order to rediscover its purpose. This, as stated by Ron Barnett (2015), is a "task without end".

3.5 THE LEADERSHIP CONTEXT

Chapter 2 briefly connects Archer to leadership theory in relation to social realism. This section on the context of leadership looks at the theoretical construct of leadership and its implications for higher education. The approach in this section is to explore in-depth the theoretical underpinnings of leadership rather than the typology, applications or practices of leadership, thereby forming an exploratory tool to support Archer's (1998) analytical dualism. In doing so, the aim is to shed light on the complexity of leadership and the importance of critical and social realism in understanding the formation of the higher education leader.

Leadership researchers, according to Uher (2013), tend to focus on the stable aspects of leadership discourses in the cultural domain with the inclination to accept this as common sense. Not only does this oversimplify the construction of leadership, but it also denies its complexity and places limitations on leadership theory (ibid). Favoured leader-centric approaches place the locus of control in the leader for organisational and project success or failure.

Archer (2000) would see this as upward conflation, with the leader deemed to be the locus of change while the powers and properties inherent in structure and culture are ignored.

Studies of leadership tend to focus on events located within a specific time frame and often rely on surveys and reflections of leaders (Gardner et al., 2010; Hunter et al., 2007; Lowe & Gardner, 2000). The approach sees leadership theories and contextual influences on leadership as stable over time, producing the same results and the same perspectives (ibid). This single snapshot approach to leadership studies ignores the tendential nature of interactions between structural, cultural and agential powers and properties that give rise to specific outcomes or phenomena observed in a single survey process (Archer's (2007, 2000) work on tendencies and leadership is explained in Chapter 2).

Leadership theorists have begun to recognise the need for a theoretical approach as leaders achieve their goals through people over time (Lord & Dinh, 2012), so the historic snapshot approach to leadership research needs to be revised (Kaiser et al., 2008).

Research into leadership theory needs to consider the effects that processes occurring concurrently at multiple levels (Valcea et al., 2011) as well as system dynamics (Crawford & LePine, 2013) have on the emergence of leadership phenomena.

More recent leadership theories acknowledge leadership as a complex social phenomenon that occurs over time in social and relational networks (Kahn et al., 2013; Valcea et al., 2013) located in a specific context (McKay & Chia, 2013). Archer (2000) supports the notion of leadership as a social phenomenon influenced by structures and mechanisms operating independently of each other with varying results.

Leadership theory is now considered a complex phenomenon across varied strata (Cho & Dansereau, 2010; Wang & Howell, 2010) with multiple mediating powers and properties at play (DeRue et al., 2011), emerging over significant periods of time (Day & Sin, 2011; Lord & Brown, 2003). The next section explores leadership theory in context.

3.5.1 A Leadership Review

In order to make sense of the vast and varied field of leadership research in relation to this study, the extensive leadership theoretical reviews of Dinh et al. (2014) and Gardner et al. (2010) are used to map the research findings and locate the discourses at play in the higher education setting.

The discussion below draws on an extensive qualitative review of over 10 top academic publishing journals exploring the emergence and analysis of the constructs of leadership theory conducted by Dinh et al. (2014).

Dinh et al.'s (2014) review draws on Gardner's (2010) work on peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2000 and 2012. The reviews cover 752 peer-reviewed articles with a primary focus on leadership theory. The findings reveal theories receiving the most scholarly attention, such as charismatic and transformational leadership theory (294 articles), followed by leadership and information processing, such as leader-follower cognitions and decision-making (197 articles). Theories regarding the relational or social exchange of leaders appeared in 156 articles, followed by leadership dispositional/trait theories (149 articles), with 117 articles focusing solely on theories relating to leadership traits.

Leadership theories relating to social equality and diversity (81 articles) and leader-follower theories (69 articles) reflect an interest in shared leadership, as reflected in studies done by Pearce et al. (2008). Theories involving leadership and structure received scant attention (17 articles), as did contingency theory, which was combined with one or more theories in 55 articles.

Emerging trends in leadership theory are dominated by strategic leadership (182 articles) (House & Aditya, 1997), followed by team-leadership theories, more often combined with established theories such as transformational leadership (112 articles). House & Aditya (1997) writes that this denotes a shift towards understanding the social context of leadership. Of interest is the systems theme of contextual social networks and integrative theoretical approaches (110 articles). Osborn et al. (2002, p. 797) deemed this to be a neglected side of leadership, with Porter and McLaughlin (2006, p. 560, cited in Dinh et al., 2014) stating that a "void still exists in *leadership* research literature".

Linking closely to the preceding theories is the systems-based approach that explores leadership adjustment to contextual change over time (72 articles) and leadership training with a focus on emergence (102 articles) and leadership development (67 articles). Questions such as, Why are developmental opportunities sought? (Dragoni et al., 2009), and Why do the same training events and activities lead to very different experiences and results? (DeRue et al., 2011) are issues drawing researchers' attention. Dinh et al.'s (2014) review show an increased concern for ethical leadership theories that focus on leaders' internal state as expressed through moral behaviours (covered in 80 publications) closely linked to authentic leadership theories (31 articles) (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner et al., 2011).

Leadership theories exploring the altruistic leader (Brown et al., 2005; Yukl, 2012) are overlooked. House and Aditya (1997) state that research assumes the role of a hedonistic leader without really exploring the motivation or intentions of leaders. In response to the shadow side of leadership, Avolio and Gardner (2010) and Gardner et al. (2011) promote authentic leadership theory as an exemplar of leading through relational transparency and moral integrity.

Servant leadership theory, popularised by Greenleaf (1970), is receiving renewed research interest. Fry (2003) states that spiritual leadership theory is also receiving increased attention from researchers.

Research theories involving leadership emergence (35 articles), with a focus on who becomes a leader and under what conditions a leader is recognised, are the most promising in terms of alignment with this research.

Foti and Hauenstein's (2007) research, as well as Wolff et al.'s (2002), focus on leadership experiences and what predisposes a person to emerge as a leader, was closest to the theoretical underpinning of this research, which looks at leadership as a construct within an open system that is enabled or constrained by traits, behaviours, and experiences over time.

The exponential growth of leadership studies over the last decade shows an ever-increasing focus on leadership hierarchy (Kaiser et al., 2008), the internal state of the leader, including the interaction of emotions, perceptions and cognitions (Dinh & Lord, 2012; Trichas & Schyns, 2012) and the socio–relational–contextual aspects of leadership (Chang & Johnson, 2010; DeRue & Ashford, 2010). More recently, interest has fallen on the leader's role in complex systems and managing change in dynamic social systems (Balkundi et al., 2011).

3.5.2 Explorations of Leadership in Context

A review of established and developing theories (Dinh et al., 2014) revealed an increased awareness of the impact of socio-cultural environments on understanding of leadership and the distinction between top-down and bottom-up approaches (Yammarino & Dansereau, 2011; Yammarino et al., 2005, cited in Dinh et al., 2014). Top-down leadership approaches involve efforts by leaders to change the climate and culture of an organisation through the introduction of policies and guidelines.

Schaubroeck et al. (2012, cited in Dinh et al., 2014) note that the introduction of policies and guidelines is usually followed by directives seeking to enforce codes of conduct (Tyler & Blader, 2005) or appeals from leaders for values alignment (Brown & Treviño, 2005, 2006), and attempts to model the desired behaviours for followers.

Archer (2000) would see this as leaders exerting their personal powers and properties (PEPs) as social actors to further the projects they have identified to address concerns. However, the perceptions of the followers of leaders exerting their powers and properties will either enable or constrain the efforts of the leaders in what is termed intra-personal dynamics (Dinh & Lord, 2012; Howell & Shamir, 2005).

3.5.2.1 Leadership and Identity

Identity theory is increasingly receiving attention from leadership theorists. Hogg (2001) described the emergence of the leader as a prototype of what the group perceives the leader needs to be, and this is usually determined by followers. Leaders are selected because they reflect what the group wishes their leader to be like (ibid). Brewer and Gardner (1996) identify two concepts of the self in leadership theories: i) the individualised or personal self, which differentiates an individual's selfhood from that of others, and ii) the relational or social self that assimilates with a social group. Within this latter concept, two further categories can be identified: i) conceptions of self, which are derived through relationships with others, and ii) those which result from membership of social groups.

The way an individual leader is able to draw on both their personal and social identities in different ways has an impact on the extent to which they are able to function as effective leaders in varying situations (Hannah et al., 2009; Lord et al., 2011).

Archer (2000) stated that the ability of an individual to adapt to cultural and structural complexity is dependent on their concerns, projects and practices. It is through reflexivity that leaders can align their personal identity with the position of leadership and the role identity. Leaders' reflexivity, in turn, is always constrained or enabled by mechanisms such as position, resources and policies, as well as discourses that shape the environment (ibid).

3.5.2.2 Leadership and Structure

Leadership research further seeks to explain the role of leaders in complex systems as they lead change and manage complex issues and networks (Balkundi & Kilduff, 2005; Balkundi et al., 2011; Hannah et al., 2011; Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2001; Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009; cited in Dinh et al., 2014). A leader's social obligations and contractual norms are seen to work together to influence the use of collective resources (Gulati et al., 2012).

In many respects, these ideas are akin to Archer's (1995, 1996, 1998) view of leaders as social actors who exercise their PEPs in order to pursue projects they have identified. In exercising these PEPs, however, leaders are always conditioned by their histories and past experiences.

3.5.2.3 Leadership and Projects

An events-driven approach to leadership has received attention in leadership theories (Dansereau et al., 1984; Klein et al., 1994). Dinh and Lord (2012) and Hoffman and Lord (2013) emphasise the importance of events as an additional level of analysis. Events are understood as specific, time-bound activities occurring in a particular place or at a specific time (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010). This area of research focus has allowed for the exploration of leaders' responses and personal reactions as triggered by different events.

Another consideration involves leaders' responses to complex organisational shifts, with researchers exploring the way in which specific events can enable or constrain leaders' actions (Morgeson, 2005) or the rate of complex change processes (Plowman et al., 2007).

Dinh et al. (2014) sought to address the current limitations of leadership theory, stating that leadership is a complex phenomenon that should consider multiple and mediating influences (DeRue et al., 2011) requiring various levels of analysis (Cho & Dansereau, 2010; Wang & Howell, 2010) and the idea that leadership emerges over an extended time (Day & Sin, 2011; Lord & Brown, 2003).

3.5.2.4 Leadership and Historicity

Leadership theories often focus on a singular dimension of leadership over a short period, ignoring the personal and contextual conditions that set the stage for the leadership to emerge. Research methodologies often rely on retrospective surveys (Gardner et al., 2010; Hunter et al., 2007; Lowe & Gardner, 2000) and ignore emotions and the way leaders have exercised their agency in detail. Leadership theorists have also ignored the interplay of powers and properties inherent in organisational culture and structure and the way the leader is conditioned by and continues to interact with these (Yammarino & Dansereau, 2011; Yammarino et al., 2005; Mayer et al., 2009; Schaubroeck et al., 2012; cited in Dinh et al., 2014).

3.5.2.5 The Emergence of Leadership

Leadership theorists have, moreover, attempted to understand leaders' dispositions and their formation over time (Foti & Hauenstein, 2007; Wolff et al., 2002). Some theorists consider disposition to emerge from context or the relational elements of shared leadership or teams (Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009; Carson et al., 2007; cited in Dinh et al., 2014).

In their review, Dinh et al. (2014) explore the notion of leadership development, noting that:

- Leadership development is not a new concept (Day, 2000); questions about which individuals seek out leadership development opportunities and why they do so reveal causal complexities (Dragoni et al., 2009);
- Individuals who experience the same developmental opportunity may emerge with different learning outcomes (DeRue et al., 2011);
- An interaction between traits and experience and leadership development exists (Dinh and Lord, 2012) and
- A disproportionate amount of interest in charismatic and transformational leadership with respect to leadership development has been identified (Day 2000), along with the need for a holistic approach to understanding both kinds of leadership.

3.5.2.6 Leadership and Emotions

Numerous leadership theories explore the perceptions, emotions and cognitions of leaders and their effect on leadership (Bono & Ilies, 2006; Dinh & Lord, 2012; Lee et al., 2000; Trichas & Schyns, 2011, cited in Dinh et al., 2014).

Researchers are increasingly interested in the interplay between experiences and emotions, as well as the relationship between leaders and followers and their emotions.

Another phenomenon is the study of toxic leadership, exploring leaders who emotionally abuse followers and cause harm to people and organisations. An interesting consideration is that leaders' emotional and mental states are often ignored, deemed as transitional and considered unsuitable for leading others (Day & Sin, 2011; Lord et al., 2011).

A newer trend seeking to explain leaders' emotional states draws on neuroscience and studies biological responses and genetic data to describe brain activity and memory as influencing leadership behaviours. Some researchers considered this a reductionist trap (Lee & Butler, 2012). The complexity of human behaviour in dynamic systems cannot be relegated to the "primitive brain" (ibid). Archer (2000) speaks of upward conflation in describing the approach of the individual as being solely responsible for effecting change in a context. She opposes this approach as it denies the interplay of the external, material and situated contexts with the leader and, in this instance, their brain and thinking patterns.

3.5.2.7 Leadership and Reflexivity

There has been an increase in research focused on the ethical and moral dilemmas of leadership. Leadership theory cannot fully explain the altruistic leader and associated leadership behaviours (Bass, 1990; Brown, 2010; Ciulla, 1995; Yukl, 2012). Closest to Archer's theory of reflexivity (2000) is the description of the authentic leader as self-aware, able to reflect on feedback, express relational closeness with others and have a deep sense of moral self (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner et al., 2011). Leadership theorists are unable to explain the moral perspectives of leaders and why some are more able to draw on these than others. Mayer et al. (2012) connect social learning theory to ethical leadership theory, stating that the leader can reinforce values within a context.

3.5.2.8 Leaders and Organisational Learning

Hannah and Lester (2009, p. 34) claimed that learning within organisations is an interdependent process that allows leaders to enact interventions at multiple levels (individual micro level, network meso level and systems macro level). Leaders enable organisational learning by establishing structures and conditions for learning to emerge. However, social-relational networks can constrain or enable the learning. Learning can be further enabled or constrained by structures that distribute resources, the position of key individuals, and cultural constraints in the form of discourses that condition social networks (Smith-Jentsch et al., 2009).

3.6 LEADERSHIP THEORY CRITIQUE

Yukl (1999) identified the conceptual weakness of charismatic leadership as construct ambiguity and lacking in explanatory power (see also Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013; Cooper et al., 2005; Gardner et al., 2011, cited in Dinh, 2014). Van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013) questioned the ambiguity and construct validity of charismatic leadership and noted that the concept lacks sufficient explanation of causality. Researchers are also cautious about authentic leadership (Cooper et al., 2005; Gardner et al., 2011, cited in Dinh et al., 2014).

Most leadership theories focus on the individual as a level of analysis drawing on trait theories, leadership skills and capabilities and the analysis of leadership styles (such as transformational, transactional and ethical leadership). A concern is that this is generalised to predict leader perceptions and influence across multiple contexts and periods. Other theorists discuss leadership across multicultural settings using personal traits, such as intelligence, in order to explain causality for change in a relational setting (Dinh et al., 2014; Gardner et al., 2011;).

It, therefore, becomes virtually impossible to determine the mechanisms or the interplay and inter-relationality of mechanisms that lead to enablement and constraints to leadership in that context.

Dinh et al. (2014) explored the emergence of leadership and determined that one analysis invariably influences another (Lord & Dinh, 2012), thus highlighting the complexity of leadership existing at multiple levels in dynamic systems (ibid). Types of leadership reviewed were adaptive leadership (Hannah et al., 2009), complexity theory (Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2001), e-leadership, including leadership in virtual teams (Avolio et al., 2000; Purvano & Bono, 2009), and leadership for organisational learning and knowledge (Berson et al., 2006), all cited in Dinh et al. Analysis of this work makes clear the interplay between macro and micro mechanisms that affect leadership, which, in turn, is affected by socio–structural–cultural constraints. Concerns are the lack of acknowledgement of the interrelationality of leadership theories, that is, how these theories affect or influence one another, and the disregard for temporality.

As already noted, the current use of survey tools and retrospective questionnaires forms the basis of leadership research, which is empirical and based on the assumption that observed behaviours are stable across time. According to Kuppens et al. (2010), these notions are simply not true.

Seemingly stable constructs change depending on social cues, intrapersonal dynamics and differing events, often leading to diversity of choice and decision-making patterns (Dionysiou & Tsoukas, 2013); group processes (Morgeson, 2005) and organisational systems (MacKay & Chia, 2013) that require leaders (and followers) to adjust to ambiguity continually. This results in researchers codifying theories that overemphasise the stability of processes, which, in turn, leads to inconsistencies in research findings.

As stated, all leadership occurs in a social context and results from the interplay between individuals, groups, structures, and cultural dynamics. Attention needs to be given to the individual and organisation (as well as the cultural domain—not mentioned in the literature) in order to understand how events or phenomena interact to influence leadership.

Furthermore, there is a disconnect between quantitative and theoretical approaches to leadership. The quantitative approach explores the universal picture across situations, using a single level of analysis and negating the effect of time. The theoretical approach looks at emergence and how different leadership phenomena emerge across multiple levels of analysis. This includes temporality as affecting the emergence of leadership (Langley et al., 2013).

3.7 FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

It is vital to study the foundational assumptions of leadership theory and research, as there is a need to consider more dynamic processes at play in the leadership context over time. Leadership theories constructed on retrospective concepts and data tend to overestimate the direct effects of leaders, leadership and context. In addition, this raises concerns related to the efficacy of retrospective measures that use past judgments or events to predict future outcomes when the underlying goal is to understand how leaders influence (or are influenced by) environments that are complex and variable (Langley et al., 2013; MacKay & Chia, 2013).

The matter of timescale in leadership is crucial as contextual structures and mechanisms interplay with leadership over time (Kaiser et al., 2008). The chronological effect of leadership and the leader's journey is of utmost importance (Morgeson, 2005). Individual group and organisational events, activities and processes can unfold in different ways over time – be these seconds, minutes, days, months or years (Langley et al., 2013). Leaders can influence others instantaneously (within seconds) through processes of emotional contagion (Sy et al., 2005) or after months or years, as leadership actions cascade downwards in hierarchically structured organisations (Jacques, 1990), such as universities.

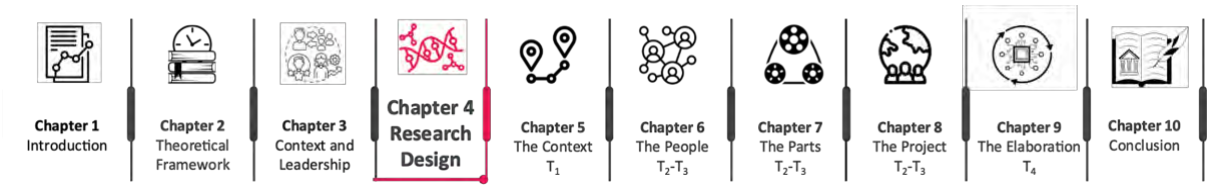
3.8 CONCLUSION

Universities have structural and ideological cultural powers and properties and, as such, are constantly changing while becoming, shaping, and being shaped by society. As social structures, universities precede agency yet are shaped by agency in an interplay of structural emergent powers and personal emergent powers (Archer, 2000, 2007).

The structure provided by Clarke and O'Donoghue (2017) creates the framework to explore the construct of leadership through the lenses of four contexts (*external, material, situated and leadership*). The external context, or meta-frame, unpacks globalisation and the ensuing transformation of the welfare state towards a state driven by economic policy and hegemonic discourses of power over knowledge. The effects of globalisation provide the conditions for the emergence of neoliberalism as an ideology – the emergence of economic marketisation. Agency theory, transaction cost economics and property rights theory create the conditions of the material context. This triad of neoliberal theories acts as a mechanism that constrains the freedoms and choices of individuals. The direct implication for higher education is the enforcement of institutional economics, which, in turn, commodifies higher education.

The extensive work of Dinh et al. (2014) and Gardner (2010) provides the research backdrop of this study. Leadership theories give rise to discourses which shape higher education leadership. Leadership as a construct is contextually shaped by external, material, and situated contexts, as well as by the leaders themselves. The notion of the interpersonal complexity of leadership (Hannah et al., 2009; Lord et al., 2011) recognises the reflexivity of leaders who are always constrained or enabled by the circumstances in the structures in which they operate, such as their position, resources and policies, as well as the culture and discourses that shape the environment (Archer, 2000). This study critiques the notion of leadership and the theories underpinning leadership as inadequately addressing issues of causality (Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013).

4 CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN



Society, as an object of inquiry, is necessarily "theoretical" in the sense that, like a magnetic field, it is necessarily unperceivable. As such, it cannot be empirically identified independent of its effects, so it can only be known, not shown, to exist - Bhaskar (1979, p. 57)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The study intends to explore the interplay between agency, structure, and culture in relation to leadership in a higher education context. Archer's (1998, 2000, 2007, 2013, 2016) social realism is used to frame the study. Using a critical realist approach as the underlying philosophy (Luke, 2009), the study was conducted as a case study, and data were analysed using qualitative methods. The data collection methods involved conducting a literature review that allowed me to explore the social and cultural conditioning in place at what Archer (1998) terms T_1 of the morphogenetic cycle. The data collection methods also included interviews with research participants, document analyses, and member checking. The data analysis tools included discourse analysis, analytical dualism, abduction and retroduction. To ensure the trustworthiness of the research, appropriate data collection and analysis procedures for qualitative research were followed, which included utilising secure data storage, data analysis software called Quirkos, member checking, and data triangulation.

4.1.1 Research Approach and Rationale

A personal interest in higher education leadership led me to an exploratory journey entering the 'cycle of enquiry' that integrates research questions, theory, personal experience and practice (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). I approached the design of the study underpinning this thesis with the ontological positioning of critical realism (Pawson & Tilley 1997).

4.2 CRITICAL REALISM AS UNDERLABOURER

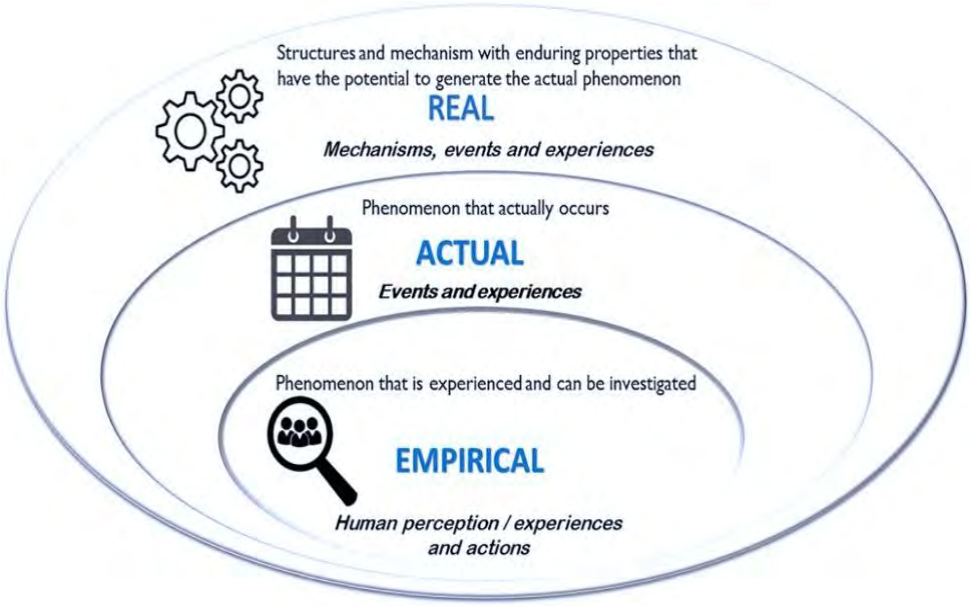
Critical realism addresses the limitations of both realism and relativism (Houston, 2001; McEvoy & Richards, 2003, cited in McEvoy & Richards, 2006).

It does this by distinguishing between three layers of reality (Bhaskar, 1978), as described in Chapter 2: To recap briefly; these are the *Empirical*, or what is experienced or observed directly or indirectly in relation to human experiences and perceptions; the *actual* which encompasses events that occur whether experienced/observed or not; and the *Real* in which structures and causal mechanisms with enduring properties that have the potential to generate actual phenomena are located. These causal mechanisms are not accessible through observation or lived experience. Rather, they need to be identified through reasoning (Archer, 2003).

Figure 11 illustrates the relationship between the domains of the Real, Actual and Empirical.

Figure 11

Critical Realism's Layered Ontology



Note. Reproduced from Mukubang (2021).

As humans, our knowledge of reality is always fallible owing to the limitations of our empirically derived experiences and the previous social and cultural influences that condition them (Sayer, 2004). At best, we can mediate the world through empirical data, as it is not possible for us to observe the intransitive dimension directly (Sayer, 2000).

As already indicated, the actual domain contains events that may or may not have been experienced (Rutten, 2021, p. 12). Researchers' methods used to measure these events contain instruments that are theory and value-laden, resulting in differing perspectives and outcomes. This is termed epistemic relativism. Critical realists acknowledge that our knowledge of the world is always socially, historically, and culturally situated.

This relativism makes our accounts of the world fallible as truths are perceived and rationalised through an individual's experience within a specific period and context. Bhaskar (1978) uses the term epistemic fallacy when causality is determined via empirical methods – a process which he argues involves conflating what is with what can be known. Thus, critical realists reject the use of empirical or regularities to determine causality (Rutten, 2021, p. 12).

Archer (2000), drawing on the work of Bhaskar (1979), states that judgemental rationalism makes the determination of an objective understanding of the world possible by means of critical models of inquiry. These critical models of inquiry allow for the exploration of values and objectivity, as facts are subjectively perceived and, in turn, shape values (Brant & Panjwani, 2015; Scott, 2005). In research, judgemental rationalism involves inferring causal powers located in the Real domain on the basis of experiences and observations located in the empirical domain. For critical realists, explaining an unobservable phenomenon is not about facts or opinions but rather about using reasoned judgement to infer which mechanisms at the level of the Real lead to its emergence (Rutten, 2021, p. 12).

4.2.1 Open Systems

Critical realists view the world as an open system that is multidimensional and marked by interactions between social structures and mechanisms and human agency (Lawson, 1997, cited in McEvoy & Richards, 2006). Bhaskar (1978) views the world as a stratified, open system of emergent entities. Entities are "things that make a difference in their own right" rather than the sum of their parts (Fleetwood, 2005, p. 199). Entities can be material or immaterial and be located in different domains of the Real (Vincent & Mahoney, 2018). An example of a material entity could be the university, and an immaterial entity could be the ideology and values that people draw upon while working in the institution. The relationship between entities at different levels is known as emergence (Elder-Vass, 2010). As an entity, the university comprises different parts, each nested in the larger institution through relationality. The different parts may be dependent on one another, although they are irreducible to one another as each contains its own essence or properties (Bhaskar, 2008, p. 279).

4.2.2 Causal Powers as Causal Mechanisms

Mechanisms are defined as entities with causal powers capable of generating events, observable or not (Danermark et al., 2002; Sayer, 1992). Mechanisms are stratified and capable of causality, creating the conditions for mechanisms at a lower domain to combine and create conditions in another domain (Mukubang, 2021). When mechanisms combine to effect causality, emergence occurs (Danemark et al., 2002). This emergence is not reducible to preceding levels.

Mechanisms are located at different levels of reality to emerge from various strata of reality and may be biological, physical, psychosocial, cultural, socioeconomic or psychological. They may be normative (Danermark et al., 2002; Sayer, 1992). Causal mechanisms have the potential to enable or constrain change depending on conditions within the domain at the time (Lawson, 2003). Within an open system, mechanisms do not always produce the same outcome in different contexts, a process that is known as 'contingent causality' (Smith, 2021, cited in Mukubang, 2021). Hence, mechanisms are tendential. The term 'tendential' is thus used to describe the unpredictable nature of mechanisms, a condition which would frustrate positivists who favour consistency and generalisability in research findings.

4.3 RETRODUCTION

Retroduction is the process of moving from the levels of the empirical and the actual, this being from what is experienced and observed, using inference to identify mechanisms leading to the emergence of events and experiences (Mingers, 2003, cited in McEvoy & Richards, 2006). Retroduction involves asking "what may have, must have or could have" caused the observed or experienced phenomenon (Olsen & Morgan, 2004, p. 25, cited in McEvoy & Richards, 2006). For Sayer (1992, p. 107), retroduction is "the mode of inference in which events are explained by postulating mechanisms which are capable of producing them". Bunge (2004, p. 201, cited in Bygstadt et al., 2016) states that "mechanisms are unobservable; therefore, their description is bound to contain concepts that do not occur in empirical data". Social realism provides the tools to access these structures and mechanisms. In the case of the study underpinning this thesis, it is through exploring the *nature (*Sayer, 1992, 2000; Danermark, 2002) of the leader, and not their attributes or leadership styles, that it becomes possible to explain the observed and experienced.

As the research is historical in nature, examining events and experiences that happened in the past or present, I used retroduction as a methodological tool to reconstruct what properties and powers existed to allow for the leadership that emerged (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 206). By means of inference, I could identify mechanisms capable of producing the event (Sayer, 1992, p. 107) that, for example, resulted in the kinds of leadership that emerged during the #Fees Must Fall protests – posing the question of what the conditions at the level of the Real must have been like for these forms of leadership to have emerged. As an iterative process, retroduction began during data collection and analysis and included the process of member checking and document analysis (Wynn & Williams, 2012; cited in Bygstadt et al., 2016).

Theory was used as a tool to explain variances between mechanisms, and in the initial stages of analysis, multiple theoretical lenses were considered to build an understanding of the observations in the empirical (Vincent & Mahoney, 2018). Sayer (2002) states that, as an explanatory tool, retroduction should always be open to further possible explanations and adjustments. This is why I have identified it as an iterative process.

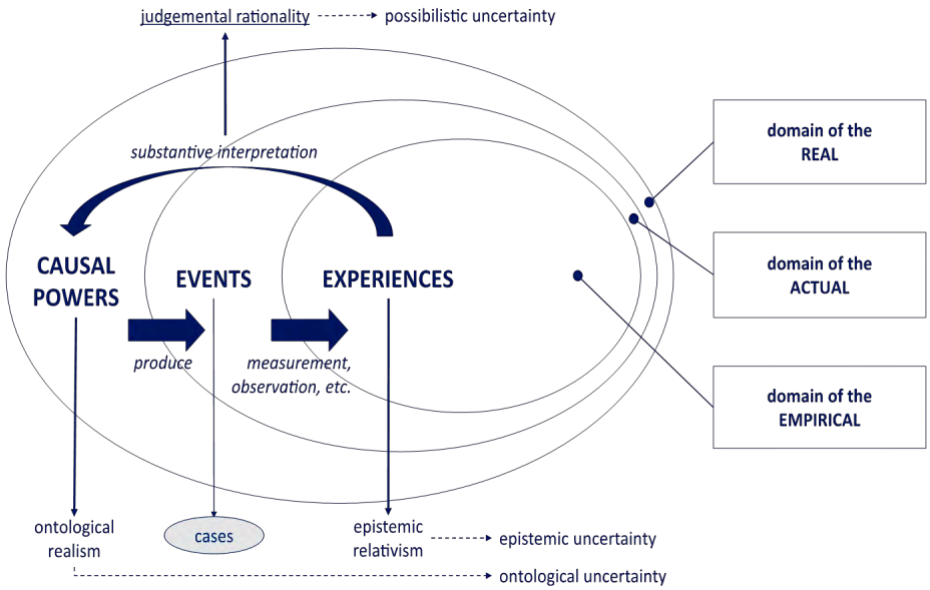
4.4 ABDUCTION

Vincent and Mahoney (2018) state that abduction involves using theory to redescribe what is observed to explain causation, giving rise to the observed events and experiences in the actual and Real domain. This study involved combining theory explored in a literature review with observations in the empirical domain, which were reported in interviews and other data to posit the interplay of mechanisms from which events and experiences emerged. When abduction is employed, it is possible to arrive at multiple explanations for observed phenomena. Judgmental rationality is then needed to decide which theory provides the greatest explanatory power.

Figure 12 below explains the process of abduction and the application of judgemental rationality, also termed inference or substantive interpretation (Rutten, 2021), by applying critical realism as a data analysis method.

Figure 12

Critical Realism as Underlabourer to Social Realism Research



Note. Reproduced from Rutten (2021).

4.5 QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY APPROACH

In this study, undergirding a qualitative case study approach with a critical realist ontology and social realist epistemology made it possible to provide an explanatory account of the way leadership was exercised over a particular period of time. Using a framework comprising critical and social realism, I explored the structural and cultural conditioning of leaders. The framework further allowed me to explore the way leaders were enabled and constrained as they enacted their roles over a particular timeframe.

Walsham (2006) writes that single case studies allow for an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon, providing rich description and understanding. Desmet et al. (2012, cited in Longhofer, 2017) state that a single case has significant explanatory power. The case study design of this study followed a holistic single case study approach with embedded sub-case studies or units (Yin, 2003, cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008). This simply meant that the overarching case was located within a single university, and the research participants at the institution each formed a sub-case study linked to the overarching case. Each research participant was analysed as a separate sub-case, forming a within-case analysis. After that, the sub-cases were subjected to an overarching across-case analysis. The cross-case analysis increased the explanatory power of the research findings (Bergene, 2007, cited in Longhofer, 2017). Care was taken during the case study analysis process to ensure that the holistic single case of the institution remained the primary focus.

Conger (1998) and Toegel (2002) argue that a qualitative approach is the technique of choice for leadership studies. It enables nuanced and contextualised understandings of within-organisation structures, relationships and practices. Toegel (2002, p. 175) argues that leadership studies reflect a ‘story of missed opportunities’ because of the dominance of quantitative techniques in the field of leadership. Conger (1998) explains that quantitative techniques assume a perspective wherein leadership is capable of being measured as a phenomenon that is static, well-delineated and with universal dimensions. Conger's (1998) critiques of quantitative techniques are associated with identifying limitations on the examination of leadership. One imposed limitation is a variation on the organisational level (Yukl, 1998). Another is the dynamic and changeable character of leadership within organisations (Nadler & Tushman, 1990). A third is the effect of the symbolic nature of leadership's social construction (Barker, 2001). The complex nature of the phenomenon of leadership varies from one context to another. Day (2000) asserts that there is a shortage of specific, contextually based research.

Similarly, there has been a call for a grounded, qualitative approach to the relational (Parry, 1998) and processual (Bryman, 2004; Conger, 1998; Day, 2000; Lowe & Gardner, 2000) aspects of leadership in discrete contexts (Bryman et al., 1996). Using a qualitative research approach supports the methodological framework of critical realism because critical realism sees the world as a stratified, open system from which phenomena emerge. The qualitative case study approach not only allows for value-laden, descriptive research of leadership in a university context but also allows for new insights and knowledge to emerge (Steinmetz, 2004, cited in Longhofer et al., 2017).

Tying this back to a social realist theory framework, Archer (2003) states that agents (in this case, university leaders) will always choose projects that suit their interests, and it is precisely through the case study that we can best understand the things that matter most to people (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Longhofer & Floersch, 2012, 2014, cited in Longhofter, 2017, p. 7). This helps to avoid what Bourdieu terms the scholastic fallacy when methods and scholarship fail to recognise that which is most important to people (Longhofer, 2017).

4.6 RESEARCH METHODS

Hughes and Sharrock (2007, p. 35, cited in Roberts, 2014) state that the terms method and methodology refer to two separate but related elements of research practice. Methodology refers to the theoretical underpinnings that determine the selection and specific application of research methods. The term method describes techniques adopted to accumulate and collect data about the research elements.

4.6.1 Sources of Data

Any piece of research underpinned by critical realism needs to begin with empirical data in the form of observations of the world around us or reports of experiences of that world. The first stage of this study involved conducting a literature review on leadership and higher education. The literature is explored in Chapter 3: Contexts and Leadership. In critical realism, discourses are considered as causal mechanisms in the domain of the Real (Fairclough, 2013). This first stage in the research design involved understanding and identifying key discourses creating the fabric of the cultural domain. I used discourse analysis as a methodological tool to identify these discourses in the literature. By analysing discourses in the literature, it became possible to deconstruct languaged beliefs; attitudes and reasoning in seeking to identify the underlying structures which give rise to the actual (events) and empirical (experiences).

After identifying key discourses based on the literature review, I began to search for demi-regularities at the empirical level. Demi-regularity[8] is a critical realist term used to describe tendencies that show up as rough trends or broken patterns in empirical data (Fletcher, 2017). As a result of identifying demi-regularities at the empirical level, I was able to use the tools of abduction and retroduction to posit the mechanisms of conditioning, enabling and constraining leaders' actions in the institution. Identifying social and cultural conditioning at T_1 of Archer's (1998) morphogenetic framework is integral to the use of the framework. As indicated in Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework, Archer argues that agents are conditioned, not determined by mechanisms in the societies into which they were born. Thereafter, this conditioning will impact the concerns they choose to pursue, the projects they identify to pursue these concerns, and the actions they take in pursuing these projects. Demi-regularities also informed my identification of enablements and constraints encountered by the university leaders as they pursued their projects.

4.6.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

Discourses are sets of statements that bring social objects into being (Parker, 1992, cited in Fairclough, 2005). Discourses exert powers and properties at the level of the Real. Discourses become visible through ordinary, everyday language, such as the statement that academics have autonomy in research (which may or may not be true). Alternatively, discourses can carry implicit messages as a result of what is left unsaid, such as when a person introduces themself as a member of a first-nation people or a first-generation student. Discourses serve to guide institutional practices by setting limits on what is acceptable in terms of values, practices, common understanding, and knowledge (Fairclough et al., 2004).

8 Critical Realism acknowledges that social meanings, ideas, and decisions can have causal impacts in the world, these social objects do not follow a conception of causal law and the deterministic regularity of Humean constant conjunction. Prediction – along the lines of 'whenever event x, then event y' – is simply not possible because the social world consists of open systems, in which any number of occurrences and events can overlap and interact and in which people can learn and change" (Brown et al., 2002, p. 5). As such, Critical Realism looks for tendencies, not laws (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 70). It is possible to observe these tendencies, in rough trends or broken patterns in empirical data. Critical realists call these emerging patterns demi-regularities. Demi-regularities can be effectively identified through qualitative data coding (ibid, cited in Fletcher, 2017, p. 1).

Discourses are connected to context in that they both reflect and constitute context (Trowler, 2001, p. 4). Potter and Wetherell (1987, cited in Trowler, 2001) state that discourses have powers and properties in that things happen as a result of discourses.

The powers and properties of discourses interact with the socio-structural domain individually in terms of identity, socially in terms of positioning and social construction, and politically in terms of power (Trowler, 2001).

Fairclough (1992), in his work *Discourse and Social Change,* attempts to provide a methodological framework for critical discourse analysis in practice and, in doing so, constructs a social theory involving discourse. Fairclough argues that the power to change is within the emergence of new levels of discourse by changing how the discourse is spoken and written and thus comes to represent the world (Fairclough et al., 2004). It is the ideological processes in society that hold the key to unlocking change where discourse is seen in terms of ideology (such as democratisation) and changes in hegemony (ibid).

Fairclough (1993) argues that all forms of organisational research need to include an analysis of discourse and states that this is an essential and unavoidable part of any form of study involving organisations. Social phenomena – as socially constructed through people's interactions and interpretations and as the way they see the world and interact with it – contribute to social elaboration (Archer, 2007; Fairclough et al., 2004).

Mumby and Clair (1997, p. 181, cited in Fairclough, 2005) state that organisations are created as coherent social realities through discourses, giving purpose to agency. However, as Reed (2004) points out, this view risks collapsing epistemology into ontology by not recognising the reality of organisational structures with powers and properties of their own. Archer (2005) agrees with this view, stating that structure always predates agency.

The methodological approach of this study views discourses as speech acts with the power of mediating the relationship between events and structures (Fairclough, 2005; Trowler, 2001; Archer, 2005). In critical realist terms, discourses are located at the levels of the empirical, actual and the Real (Archer, 2000; Fairclough et al., 2004). Discourse analyses are open to analytical dualism that allows for the separation of epistemology from ontology.

4.6.3 Sampling

A purposive approach was used in the selection of participants for this study (Cohen et al., 2011). Purposive sampling focuses on the development or emergence of concepts and theories (Devers & Frankel, 2000) which support the research intention. I purposefully selected information-rich sub-case units or research participants who were able to provide understanding to inform the research question (Devers & Frankel, 2000). In following Ragin's advice (1994, cited in Devers & Frankel, 2000) of utilising no more than six to 10 research participants for complex case studies, I selected six individuals from the most senior positions in the university, as the research focused on senior leadership in higher education. The research participant pool consisted of three deans, a registrar and two vice-chancellors who held senior positions at the university since 2007 or before. I later consulted a deputy vice-chancellor whose experiences were also included in this study. Due to the small sample size and the fact that the research is located in a traditional university, of which there are very few in South Africa, I have limited the descriptions of the interview participants to ensure their anonymity and confidentiality. Sharing details such as gender and race, as well as the leadership positions, increases the possibility of identifying the interview participants.

4.6.4 Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews form an essential part of a case study approach to research design (Yin et al., 1994) as they are an efficient way of gathering rich, detailed information (ibid).

Elder-Vass (2005, cited in Banta, 2012) describes positioned individuals (or senior university leaders in the context of this research) who speak in a certain way as constituting a discourse circle. These discourses, he states, are often enforced and adopted across an institution. Because the leaders and leadership roles are structurally embedded, these discourses lead to the emergence of events. In this study, the interviews allowed for the analysis of discourses, where leaders exercised and drew on their PEPs. Following Archer (2000, 2007), the discourses were understood to have CEPs. In other words, the interviews generated an opportunity to explore the cultural mechanisms that institutional leaders drew on when exercising their leadership as social actors. I explored the leaders' PEPs in order to identify what enabled or constrained their concerns and projects in the practical, social and natural domains. By pursuing their concerns through projects, leaders encountered structural emergent powers and properties (SEPs) and cultural emergent powers and properties (CEPs) as they exercised their personal emergent powers and properties (PEPs). The interviews allowed me to explore T_2–T_3 of Archer's morphogenetic cycle, where the interplay between CEPs, SEPs and PEPs is analysed to understand the emergence of leadership at the level of the actual and empirical.

The participant interviews were crucial to exploring Archer's theory of reflexivity as an emergent stratum of reality.

Having worked at the university prior to conducting this research, I was able to establish rapport, support and understanding with the research participants from the start of the research process. Each research participant received a cover letter of invitation to participate in the study. The invitation letter described the nature and purpose of the research, as well as timeframes, intentions, nature of involvement, and contribution the study aimed at making to the institution. Participants needed to sign the consent section of the letter before being interviewed. The consent and interview process was discussed with each research participant at the start of the interview.

By the time I began to interview the participants, I was no longer working at the university, having moved to my home, which is in another province 1,000 kilometres from the institution that was the focus of the case study. I chose to conduct the interviews live online via Zoom and telephonically. Conducting the interviews in this manner, instead of in person, was both cost-effective and time-saving. The Zoom calls allowed for live online interviewing, whereas the telephone calls provided fewer social cues in terms of non-verbal communication and physical context. Holt, a researcher who made use of non-contact interviews and critical discourse analysis, found this absence of ethnographic information an advantage, as she was able to conduct a deeper analysis at a textual level (2010, cited in Edwards & Holland 2013, p. 48).

A similar approach of conducting semi-structured interviews telephonically in a qualitative study was adopted by Sturges and Hanrahan (2004, cited in Edwards & Holland 2013, p. 48), who reported that the quality, quantity, nature and depth of responses did not differ from those obtained during in-person interviews conducted during the same study (thus attesting to the validity of telephonic interviewing in qualitative research). Sturges and Hanrahan consider telephonic research interviews valuable in minimising cost, addressing ecological dilemmas, providing ease of access, and overcoming spatiality (ibid).

The interview script was guided by the overarching research question and related sub-questions, as well as by being informed by the literature review. I asked questions about the leaders' formative years, their choice of career path, what they needed to do to be appointed to their current position at the university, and what mattered to them (i.e. their concerns). This allowed me to explore the research participants' sociocultural conditioning, as well as their reflexivity from a social-realist perspective.

Questions regarding the research participants' formative years and career choices related to T_1 of the morphogenetic cycle. Questions about their period of employment at the university associated with T_2–T_3 and questions relating to what matters most and why this was the case related to T_4. My interviews were, therefore, structured by the three phases of the morphogenetic cycle, with participants being able to follow the journey of their leadership in a higher education setting reflexively. Many of the research participants found the interview process valuable in promoting reflexivity and were appreciative of the opportunity it afforded.

The research participants engaged in a single ninety-minute interview, which I audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

4.6.5 Documentary Evidence

Documentation, including speeches, presentations, and any writing produced by the participants, was included in the analyses to provide cross-reference insights that emerged from the interviews.

Additional documentation, such as governance meeting minutes, institutional memos containing key decisions and institutional reports, was also analysed. The analysis process is outlined in Section 4.8 of this chapter. As I have already indicated, my analysis involved using abduction and retroduction to posit the interplay of mechanisms at the level of the Real.

4.6.6 Data Integrity and Management Assurance

All interview transcripts and other forms of documentation were indexed and stored in a cloud-based, online qualitative research database called Quirkos, as well as on three external hard drives as a backup. My intention in doing this was to maintain a data trail through the cross-referencing of documents (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

4.7 IDENTIFYING CAUSAL MECHANISMS

As already explained, causal mechanisms are located at the level of the Real and, therefore, are not directly observable. In a social realist study, the most critical part of the data analysis process is identifying the causal mechanisms (Bunge, 2002, cited in Bygstadt et al., 2016) through inference, empirical investigation and theorising (McEvoy & Richards, 2006). Critical realist theory describes mechanisms as having contingent causality, meaning they may or may not produce an effect in one context (Archer, 1998; Bhaskar, 1998; Smith, 2010, cited in Bygstadt et al., 2016).

Therefore, research findings in critical realist research cannot be generalised (Lawson 1997, cited in McEvoy & Richards 2006).

The concept of emergence becomes central to the methodological process as this accounts for the interrelationality between structure, culture, and agency (Elder-Vass, 2005). Relationality as a leadership mechanism at the level of the Real is explained in the chapters to follow. Emergence helps explain the unintended consequences of agency or the leaders' activities and actions, which cannot be reduced to the effects of structure and culture on agency (Archer, 2000; Elder-Vass, 2005).

Deciding which mechanisms give rise to observed phenomena involves considering which account of the interplay among the mechanisms has greater explanatory power (Sayer 2000, 1992; McEvoy & Richards 2006). To help me do this, I used "empirical corroboration" (Wynn & Williams, 2012, cited in Bygstadt et al., 2016), a process that involves corroborating the most frequently occurring demi-regularities in the observed phenomena in the literature, constantly checking within and across each of the interviews.

Analytical dualism allows for the theoretical separation of structure, culture, and agency to explore the sociocultural and social interactions enabling or constraining the emergence of leadership. The sub-case or research participant interviews formed the primary source of case-study data (Yin et al., 1994) for the T_2–T_3 period of Archer's morphogenetic cycle.

4.8 DATA ANALYSIS

I approached the data analysis process using the explanatory tools of analytical dualism. This was an important step in avoiding central conflation, where the leader is viewed as inseparable from structure and culture; upward conflation, where the leader is understood to be able to control context; and downward conflation, where the inverse holds true (Archer, 1998; 2000).

The first stage of the analysis involved fine-tuning and displaying the data by uploading it into Quirkos. Coding is an interpretive process (Saldaňa, 2012) and involved my use of judgmental rationalism, as I drew on theory from the literature review, common sense constructs, and personal and professional experience (Maxwell, 1996). I applied "theoretical sensitivity", a term used by Straus and Corbin (1990, pp. 41-47) to describe awareness of methodological, epistemological, and ontological sensitivity in a coding process. By utilising this first stage of data analysis, I was able to infer from the empirical interview data 936 codes, also known as mechanisms.

These codes further classified mechanisms as structural, cultural, or agential in the first round of analysis. Table 1 shows this stage of the data analysis process.

Table 1

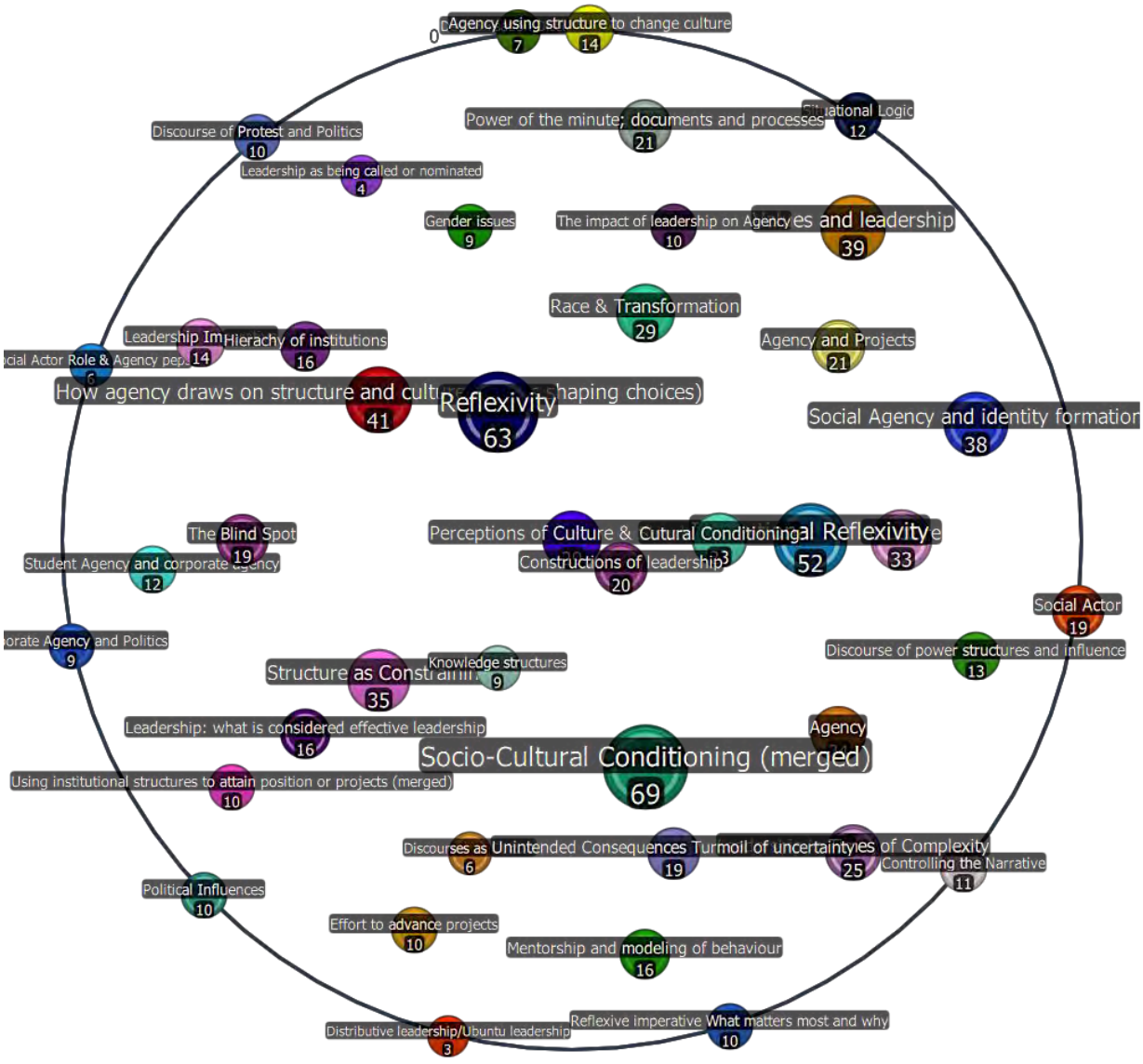
Data Analysis – First Stage of Data Coding

Interview participant code	Number of words	Number of codes at the first iteration of analysis
Interview A	55979	144
Interview B	87737	250
Interview C	40868	123
Interview D	51507	197
Interview E	47049	112
Interview F	67589	110

I continued working from the empirical data, and using theory; I made inferences by postulating mechanisms capable of producing the events at the level of the Actual (Sayer, 1992, p. 107). This process involved identifying demi-regularities from the data at a structural level and cross-checking this with the literature (Fletcher, 2016). The following image from the Quirkos software illustrates the codes (also called data software quirks) at this stage of abduction, where I began refining the codes to form demi-regularities located in the domain of the Real.

Figure 13

Quirkos Image Showing Data Abstraction: Structure Culture and Agency



The Quirkos image illustrates the abstraction of codes to form demi-regularities

All social structures possess inherent causal powers with the capacity to enable or constrain the projects and concerns of agents (Fletcher, 2016). In addition, conditioning of the social world can enable or constrain the actualisation of tendential mechanisms. I recognise that the effects of the interplay between SEPs and PEPs may or may not be observable in the empirical. To determine the causal mechanisms in the domain of the Real by means of abduction, I redescribed observations from interviews and documents in terms of theory by drawing on the literature review, using judgemental

rationalism to provide the most plausible explanation for the mechanisms that I posited as leading to the emergence of events and experiences reported by leaders.

Figure 14 below shows a snapshot of this process from the Quirkos software. This redescription process helped refine the number of demi-regularities further as I began to determine the demi-regularities of structure at the level of the Real.

Figure 14

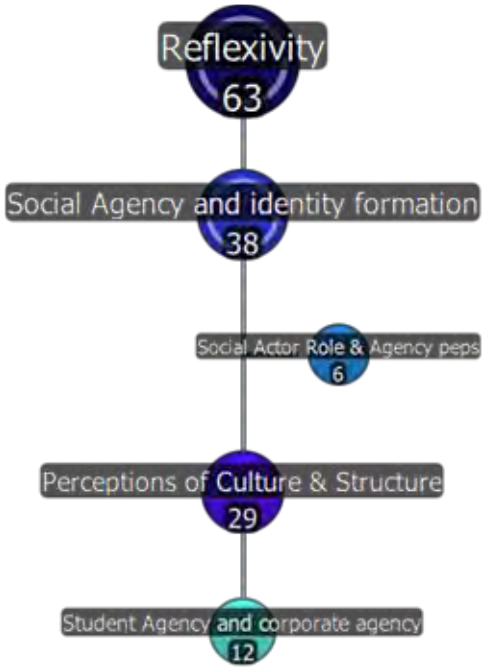
Quirkos Image of Abduction as an Analytical Method: Refining Demi-Regularities in the Real Domain

I used the analytical tool of abduction to reconceptualise or reinterpret the leader's experiences (Danermark, 2002, p. 205) in a higher education setting. I gained an understanding of the causal mechanisms not directly observable, i.e., at the intransitive level (the Real domain) that give rise to observable phenomena at the transitive level (domains of the actual and empirical) in the form of events, experiences, and behaviours.

Figure 15 below depicts a Quirkos image which illustrates the process of abducting agential mechanisms to the domain of the Real.

Figure 15

Quirkos Image of Retroduction as Analytical Method in Determining Agential Mechanisms



By using critical discourse analysis in order to identify dominant discourses in the higher education context (a process achieved as a result of the review of the literature) together with abduction, I was able to bring analytical dualism and discourse analysis together during the next stage of the data analysis process. I identified discourses as generative mechanisms in the sociocultural domain. Using abduction and working from empirical data to theory, consistently cross-checking and refining the data coding in an iterative process resulted in reducing the demi-regularities to 42 distinct causal mechanisms.

I thereafter further analysed the refined findings and asked the question: "What must the university context be like for the causal mechanisms to be as they are?" At this stage, using the tool of retroduction became invaluable in reconceptualising the interplay between SEPs, CEPs, and PEPs. As a result, I was able to identify generative mechanisms not identified through the iterative stages of abduction. By using multiple theoretical lenses, it became possible to determine any undetected underlying generative mechanisms.

Interview transcripts, together with my identification of their concerns and projects, were sent to all research participants for member-checking and verification (Candela, 2019). All participants were satisfied that the transcripts and analysis were a true reflection of their projects and concerns.

This formed another layer of abduction and built rigour and integrity into the process of determining causal mechanisms located at the level of the Real. This additional layer of member checking builds construct validity and tests the consistency of the application of judgmental rationalism. The morphogenesis of leadership reflects a combination of the research methodology and research methods used in the study.

Guide to Table 2: The Morphogenesis of Higher Education Leadership

Table 2: The Morphogenesis of Higher Education Leadership, as set out on pages 91-94, reflects the process of data analysis to the application of analytical dualism, where I artificially separate structure, culture, and agency. A description of Table 2 is set out as follows:

The first column, titled Empirical Data, illustrates the first stage of the data analysis process. At point 1) *Literature review and interview data,* I utilised the leadership literature review and evidentiary documents as the first level of analysis. I began the coding process by identifying the discourses that powerfully shape how leadership is constructed in the higher education environment. I steered clear of the pitfalls of leadership typologies that may limit how I explore leadership at the level of the Real. For example, transactional leadership or collaborative leadership, as well as academic leadership, is contingent on the behavior of the leader in a specific context at a particular point in time (a snapshot approach as described in Chapter 3). Working with typologies would limit the research to the exploration of the epistemology of leadership, thereby locating the study in the empirical and actual domain. To remain true to the research intention of exploring the ontology of leadership located in the Real domain, I continuously checked that the data analysis process did not devolve into identifying the practice of leadership.

The Table 2 columns, shaded in grey and blue, illustrate how I moved through the morphogenetic cycle. Starting with the morphogenetic cycle at T_1 that describes the university socio-structural conditioning, the findings thereof are carefully set out in Chapter 5 of the thesis, at T_2-T_3. Using judgmental rationalism and abduction, I determine the contents of Column 3. *Causal Mechanisms identified through abduction and retroduction at the level of the Real and Actual* as well as Column *4. Descriptors of Causal Mechanisms,* which are shaded in blue in Table 2. This process involves identifying mechanisms in the domains of culture, structure, and agency by drawing on the theoretical tools of analytical dualism, abduction and retroduction. As a result, I was able to make inferences carefully, cross-check my reasoning, and use the research literature and source documents to explain the way unobserved causal mechanisms contributed to leadership's emergence.

Table 2

The Morphogenesis of Higher Education Leadership

EMPIRICAL DATA **1. Literature review and interview data** **(First level of analysis)**		**APPLICATION OF ANALYTICAL DUALISM: SEPARATING DEMI-REGULARITIES INTO STRUCTURE, CULTURE AND AGENCY**			
		Morphogenetic Cycle: T_1	**Morphogenetic Cycle: T_2–T_3**		
		2. Evidence in the empirical data **Findings in Chapter 5**	**3. Causal Mechanisms identified through abduction and retroduction at the level of the Real and Actual** **Findings covered in Chapters 6 to 9**		**4. Descriptor of causal mechanisms** **Findings covered in Chapters 6 to 9**
Social exchange and relational leadership theories	This theoretical focus includes personal and vertical dyad linkage and relational leadership theories.	**Socio-structural Conditioning** Higher education: macro, meso and micro sociocultural and structural conditioning. The discourses of leadership Globalisation and Neoliberalism Leadership triad: politics, power and business Politics and higher education The politics of knowledge	**Structural domain** Networks established through relational reflexivity Data: Documents, interviews and literature review	**Structural domain** The construct of leadership Formation of relational networks of power and privilege Gender Race	Reflexive PEPs of the social actor agency drawing on agency: How individuals are supported and mentored in the institution and how they assimilate the values and practices of their mentors, thereby replicating a way of being
Diversity - leadership theories	Diversity leadership theories explore issues of race and gender with a specific lens on women and minorities in leadership positions. It also compares leadership practices of one culture to that of another to ascertain universal and cultural/national leadership traits.		**Structural domain** Data documents, interviews, and literature review	**Structural domain** Gender and race as enabling and constraining higher education leadership	Leadership exercising its PEPs within the structural domain, enabling, or constraining the construct of gender and its SEPs. Racial constraints and enablements
Power and influence theories	This demi-regularity focuses on power and influence, power types and sources, influence tactics, consequences of position and		**Structural domain** Opportunities through knowing the right people or being connected to	**Structural domain** Hegemony and formation of networks of power and leadership	When agency draws discourses within the structural domain (SEPs) combine to form hegemony and how this works – as inclusionary or exclusionary, enabling, or

	personal power, impression management, and political skills	Power and race in higher education Higher education transformation imperative The networked structure Leadership positioning in higher education	influential people and affiliations within the university	Collegiality as power Power relationships Power freedom and visibility in academia Power politics and knowledge	constraining transformation in the sociocultural domain
Contextual leadership theories	These thematic leadership theories address leadership in specific contexts such as higher education or military. Leadership practices are often constrained by contextual structures and mechanisms		**Structural domain** The socio-structural conditions in higher education (global, national, and local) that sets the conditions for the higher education leader. Documents, interviews, and literature review	**Structural domain** Power of the minute, documents, documented recorded words and processes Institutional structure Protest and contestation with corporate agency Constructions of leadership	What and why leaders draw on: documentation, such as meeting minutes, speeches, memos, policy, strategic documents, governance, people management, this includes resource constraints such as DHET as well as societal SEPs. Exploring leadership response to student protest and contestation Leadership as discursively constructed; the hierarchy of positions within the university
Complexity and systems leadership theories	Leadership theories in this category focus on complexity theory and are useful to describe leaders' activities in times of uncertainty. Social, network and integrative theories are also included.		**Structural domain** Politics, power, and privilege as mechanisms in the structural and cultural domain in the university Documents, interviews, and literature review	**Structural domain** Politics, power, and privilege Protests and social movements Construct of knowledge Perceptions of the institution and institutional reflexivity Student collective agency	Exploring leaders' response to student protest and contestation The way knowledge constructs enable or constrain access to positions and resources How knowledge is constructed The complexity facing leadership: macro, meso and micro powers properties at play
Creativity and change theories	This group of leadership theories explore the leaders' propensity for change initiatives and innovative creativity as well as influencing organisational culture though action or inaction.		**Agency domain** Documents, interviews, literature reviews	**Agency as social actor** Agency and efforts to advance projects	Exploring why and what the leaders do to advance their projects in the social order, and what structures and mechanisms they draw on

Identity-based leadership theories	This emerging group of theories focuses on self-concept and social identity approaches to leadership.		**Agency domain** Documents, interviews, literature reviews	**Agency as social actor** Identity and leadership Social agency and identity formation and values Reflexivity of agency in higher education Leadership in times of complexity	Development of leadership identity in the university using reflexive PEPs an SEPs of the environment How leaders' reflexivity and their PEPs are exercised in determining positioning in the institution Social actor and personal agency: the I and me collide in the social actor's role
Emotions and leadership theories	This group of leadership theories explores the effect of the leaders' emotions on the leader as well as the follower, whether positive or negative		**Agency domain** Documents, interviews, literature reviews	**Agency as social actor** Emotions and leadership The blind spot What is considered effective leadership? The impact of leadership on agency, Individualism, and collectivism	How is success measured and recognised in higher education? What is deemed successful, effective, and impactful? What social actors do not see of their own reflexivity and how this will affect their role and value Social actor and personal agency: the I and me collide in the social actor's role
Strategic leadership theories	This group of leadership theories explores leadership at the highest level of organisations. Areas of research include enabling and constraining mechanisms as well as the conditions needed to effect change at the top structures of leadership. This category also includes research on public leadership in large bureaucracies and why leaders fail or succeed.		**Agency domain** Documents, interviews, literature reviews	**Agency as social actor** Agency and efforts to advance projects	Exploring why and what leaders do to advance their projects in the social order, and what structures and mechanisms they draw on

Leadership emergence theories	The leadership theories in this category explore pathways and processes by which leaders develop leadership capability. It explores the follower-recognition of leadership; and includes leadership development and identification of leaders.		**Agency domain** Documents, interviews, literature reviews	**Agency as social actor** Self-awareness, reflection and reflexivity	Not clear in data, therefore used retroduction as a method
Ethical and moral leadership theories	This theoretical category explores altruism and leadership as well as ethics and morality of leaders. Specifics such as how ethics and morality can be cultivated and its importance to/consequences for leadership are the research concerns. This category also covers authentic, servant and spiritual leadership theories.		**Cultural domain** Documents, interviews literature reviews	**Cultural domain** What is valued in higher education and by whom? The shifting goal of autonomy and success in higher education and the conflicts for leadership Difficult decisions and ethical dilemmas	The interplay between the leaders' values, structure, and culture. Why and what leaders draw on through their reflexivity in practicing values? What values are preserved in higher education and why How is success measured and recognised in higher education? What is deemed successful/effective/impactful? Exploring the interplay between leaders' values as reflexive PEPs and structure Leaders' values shape the choices that they make and what they choose to draw from to enact these choices When leaders must choose between two competing values of equal importance

The data analysis involved using judgmental rationality to identify and refine my understanding of tendential causal mechanisms located in the domain of the Real. Archer's (2000) analytical dualism allowed me to distinguish agency from structure and culture (or 'the people' from 'the parts). This entire process was mapped to Archer's (1998a) morphogenetic framework, as Chapters 5 to 9 of the thesis will discuss.

I consistently applied the same data analysis process for all data sets to ensure data trustworthiness, rigour, and consistency in the application of the tools and analysis. This process builds stability and accuracy of analysis (Yin et al., 1994, p. 23).

4.9 RESEARCH TRUSTWORTHINESS, RIGOUR AND QUALITY

Seale (1999) speaks of the trustworthiness of research findings as an alternative to research validity and reliability. The terms validity and reliability are often used in quantitative research that draws on an understanding of the world as a closed system requiring the disproving or approving of a hypothesis. It is further argued that the focus of qualitative research findings should be on quality with the intention of explaining the observed phenomena (Golafshani, 2003). This is of utmost importance for research within a critical and social realist understanding that recognises the emergence of phenomena as tendential, that interaction between structures and mechanisms depends on conditioning, and that change may or may not result over time.

4.9.1 Methodological Triangulation

Critical realists acknowledge that multiple perceptions of a single reality occur at the level of the empirical. This inevitably poses challenges that can, however, be addressed by data triangulation (Healy & Perry, 2000). Triangulation involves utilising more than one source of data in social sciences research (Bryman & Bell, 2003, p. 291, cited in McEvoy & Richards, 2006).

The most frequent concern of the small case study approach is that data units are often small in number (Deem, 2001, cited in Diefenbach, 2008), which may influence the credibility of the findings. I was able to address this potential hurdle by also applying data triangulation (Meijer et al., 2002, cited in Diefenbach, 2008). Triangulation also addresses the concern of the snapshot nature of interviews as representing one point in time (Deem 2001, p. 14; Jensen & Rodgers 2001, pp. 237-239, cited in Diefenbach, 2008). I argue that the three-fold purpose of triangulation of "confirmation of completeness", "abductive inspiration", and "retroduction" (Risjord et al., 2001, 2002, cited in McEvoy & Richards, 2006, p. 71) increased the trustworthiness of this study.

Confirmation involves validating insights derived from research. Completeness involves obtaining complementary perspectives that may reveal differing or unexpected findings.

Following the work of Risjord et al. (2001, 2002, cited in McEvoy & Richards, 2006), triangulation served three purposes in my study:

i. Confirmation: Data triangulation was used to confirm and enhance trustworthiness by avoiding single research method bias (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). To achieve this, I explored supporting documents, reports, and materials generated by the research participants to confirm the experiences and activities reported in the interviews.
ii. Completeness: Rogers and Nicholaas (1998) argue that a combined methods approach allows for a more inclusive researcher view and greater depth of understanding of the causality of emergent structures and mechanisms. I worked across the research interview data, together with document analysis, to achieve this effect and compared the insights I gained to the leadership literature review. By working iteratively across methods, I was able to refine the data and identify nuances in my understanding of causal mechanisms.
iii. Abductive and retroductive inspiration: This builds on retroduction, making inferences regarding the causal mechanisms and giving rise to phenomena in the actual and empirical domains. It involves moving from exploratory methodology and explanatory theory towards an understanding of causation.

Applying Archer's morphogenetic cycle as well as analytical dualism addressed data analysis trustworthiness. I also examined the sociocultural conditioning of participants by exploring the contexts that existed prior to their taking up leadership positions. This was achieved using document analysis, engagement with artefacts providing spatial-cultural representations of the institutional context, and engagement with the literature and interviews. The use of multiple methods of data collection and analysis was thus integral to my research design.

Winter (2000) problematise the selection of data as a challenge to building trustworthiness, stating that no two researchers will use the same sets of data in the same way because analysis is always subject to researcher subjectivity since data cannot speak for themselves (Denzin, 1998, p. 313, cited in Diefenbach, 2008). Therefore, even the most detailed coding will require me to make subjective decisions. While Drisko (1997) demands authenticity and accuracy in data interpretation, MacPherson et al. (2000, p. 53, cited in Diefenbach, 2008) call this process "the uncertainty of interpretation". This point is discussed below under the heading Research Ethics, as I follow Pyett's (2003, p. 1171) guidance that the selection of ontological units from the data is a "demonstration of the researcher's honesty, reflexivity, discipline and rigour".

Concepts from the interviews and source documents – supported, wherever possible, by the literature review – enabled construct trustworthiness. This also acted as a measure to increase the quality of the research data. Meijer et al. (2002, p. 146, cited in Diefenbach, 2008) advise researchers to refer to additional sources of data, such as documents and artefacts, thereby applying data triangulation.

By following the same data analysis process for each set of data, errors and biases were minimised. The analysis of the literature also allowed for the development of external trustworthiness and rigour in terms of documenting leadership constructs in higher education across different contexts. In realising that some leadership discourses in the literature review did not reflect in the interview data and vice versa, the external and internal data emerging from this comparative analysis further enhanced the study, thus offering the potential for future studies to be conducted in this field.

4.10 RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY

Merriam and Johnson-Bailey (2001) describe positionality as relating to where the researcher stands in relation to the other, in this instance, the research participants. In terms of positionality, it is possible to be an insider as well as an outsider to a community at different times. Insider and outsider positionality are not necessarily binary opposites. Rose (1997, cited in Merriam et al., 2001) states that positionality sets the tone for the research and that it is influenced by the researcher's race, gender, social identity and institutional privilege. Working and studying at the site of research placed me in a position termed 'insider', and, by implication, I was privy to information and cultural dynamics that an outsider may not have had.

I acknowledge my reflexivity and its potential for bias in the research process, mindful of Archer's words that "reflexivity has causal powers" (2003, p. 41). She also notes that we can modify ourselves by reflecting on what we care about or what matters most to us, even when under constraints. Self-reflexivity can be achieved by the exercising thereof (Archer, 2003, p. 104). This approach helped me mitigate my bias by choosing how I would exercise my reflexivity. Being and becoming conscious that I needed to go beyond cognitive reflection to a deeper level of the inner voice of self in relation to the research and my being in the world, I kept a reflexive journal, recording my thoughts and feelings as these arose in relationship to being a researcher with the potential to exercise my causal powers on the researched. Ultimately, the way I exercised my subjectivity and its potential to influence the research findings was achieved by deliberately and reflexively choosing to be as truthful as possible and holding on to integrity in the research process. My approach was strongly influenced by Costley and Gibbs (2006), Small (2001) and Pring (2001), all of whom are cited in Williams (2009), who emphasise the role of the individual researcher in making ethical choices.

Fletcher (2016) calls this the researcher's "reflexive responsibility of making the most loving choice". This involved understanding the role of my subjective powers and their interplay with "objective structural or cultural powers" (Archer, 2007, p. 5, cited in Williams, 2009) in influencing the research process, an important element in exercising judgemental rationalism.

4.11 METHODOLOGICAL DILEMMAS

Methodological dilemmas involved issues of potential bias, a sense of trepidation about how truthful the data would be and whether the evidence and resultant insights would be of high quality, trustworthy and rigorous.

Walford (2013) cautions researchers to consider the ethical and methodological issues that may arise when interviewing people more powerful than themselves. Power is to be negotiated in the research process and cannot be assumed by the researcher (Merriam et al., 2001). Sanghera and Thapar-Bjorkert (2008) speak of gatekeepers – individuals within an institution with the power to sanction research and restrict access to the researched. Gatekeepers have the potential to constrain, enable or transform the research process and may attempt to control who does research, the topics, and who gets researched. Chacko (2004) adds another layer to the complexity of power relations in institutions by saying that this can affect knowledge production and the exchange of information. Adding complexity to the interview process, Alvesson (2003, p. 170, cited in Diefenbach, 2008, p. 7) states that interviewees are often politically conscious actors. Social actors are mindful of the need to be politically correct, and the interviewer is usually provided with management "jargon" (Diefenbach, 2008).

4.11.1 Power, Emotion and Interviews

Hierarchies and inequalities exist in everyday life owing to cultural, class and material differences among people, giving some people better life chances than others (Payne, 2006, cited in Edwards & Holland, 2013). In social realist terms, the PEPs of both the interviewer and research participant are present in the interview process, resulting in an interplay between agency and sociocultural emergent SEPs and CEPS. I was conscious of interviewing more powerful people than myself and felt the need to be fully prepared and to carefully explain the process before starting the interviews. Mikes (2012) and Phillips (1998), both cited in Edwards & Holland (2013), compare this need for preparation before interviewing elites to "having done the homework" in an attempt to minimise the power imbalance between interviewee and research participant.

Fitz and Halpin (1994, p. 40, cited in Edwards & Holland, 2013, p. 93) state that the research participant may seek to set the agenda and create a discourse that reproduces rather than transforms, while the interviewer aims to control the outcome through asking questions. There were moments during the interviews when I experienced this power interplay, one being when the research participant wanted to know why I did not send through an interview questionnaire in advance of the interview itself. Other instances involved the interview being cut short halfway through with a request for rescheduling (this happened on two occasions with different participants).

Power and emotion come together during the interview process consciously and unconsciously, forming part of the dynamics of the interview process (Hollway & Jefferson, 2012, cited in Edwards & Holland, 2013). It is through emotion that people make sense of the world, and Holland (2007 and 2009, cited in Edwards & Holland, 2013) states that emotions during an interview can become an opportunity for insight and knowledge. In social realist terms, emotions are considered emergent mechanisms with their own powers and properties (Archer, 2000).

During the interview process, I experienced evasive responses and rote answers and often needed to rephrase or go back to a certain question. As the interviews progressed, participants usually relaxed, and trust emerged because I was known in the environment in which participants worked, but I was always conscious of the fact that I was "interviewing up". Another important element was the research participants' reflexivity, which came to the fore as they were asked to recall instances of prior leadership. I was able to mitigate this leadership bias by cross-referencing the interviews with public documents, such as papers and project reports involving the research participants and other interviews and speech acts, in order to validate claims.

4.11.2 Researcher Bias

Researcher bias is the term used by Darke et al. (1998) to describe the effects of the researcher on events and the inverse. This includes the researcher's beliefs, values and assumptions, which can influence the analysis of data, as well as failure to investigate contra-findings. The qualitative research process carries bias owing to inferences, interests, worldviews and prejudices (Collins, 1992; cited in Diefenbach, 2008), as well as researcher reflexivity (Archer, 2003).

The importance of ensuring multiple sources of evidence is one mechanism to alleviate researcher bias. However, this does not mitigate the way data is interpreted, for example, from interviews.

As a researcher, I was aware of my internal conversation and the potential for bias. As a mechanism to evaluate my reflexivity, I acknowledged and documented dissonance and uncertainty that arose during the interview process.

I acknowledged that, as a fallible human in a complex environment, it was impossible to silence the reflexive response. Instead, when opposing viewpoints arose, I documented those in order to deepen and enrich the research experience and the emergence of personal identity. I had debriefing researcher interviews with a fellow researcher who understood the context of the research. The concept of a researcher debriefing interview is described by Onwuegbuzie (2010) as a reflective tool that gives the researcher an opportunity to reflect on the interview, the research analysis process and researcher bias through several lenses. This ranges from personal experience of the interview to participant concerns and ethical and political issues that may have arisen during the interview process.

4.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Gray (2004) describes ethics as involving character and custom, whereas Cohen et al. (2000, cited in Williams, 2009) speak of the complexity of character. Cohen et al. (2000, p. 56) state that research ethics is morally implicit in a social researcher's work. Pring (2001, p. 418, cited in Williams, 2009) takes a direct approach by stating that the ethics of research is in the *character* of the researcher as *trustworthy* and "possessing the virtues of courage, honesty, having modesty about the intrinsic worth of the research". Costley and Gibbs (2006, p. 96) emphasise the ontology of character over methods of custom. Ethics in research, therefore, resides in the ontology or being of the researcher rather than in the methods or "process of competence" (Costley & Gibbs, 2006, p. 96). Given the reflexivity of the researcher and the inherent causality and potential to influence research processes, the focus should be on the process of making ethical decisions in the research process rather than the actual conducting of the research going beyond custom and methodology (Small, 2001, p. 403). Small (ibid) argues that a research community will mitigate the "unpredictability of the individual researcher". The development of the capacity to make ethical decisions in a research project forms the nexus of ethics in research, and this can only be done within a research community which jointly holds the responsibility "to ensure educational research is ethical research" (Small, 2001, p. 405). An ethical disposition is required in educational research and takes precedence over the choice of codes by calling for the "moral deliberation of the researcher" (Cohen et al., 2000; Pring, 2001, cited in Williams, 2009), with trustworthiness as requisite. In following the injunctions noted above, I was part of a research community at a university, and the observation of fellow researchers' practices, together with attending writing and research methodology workshops, developed my practice as a researcher.

My character as a researcher emerged slowly over time as I continued to receive feedback from a community of fellow researchers to read and immerse myself in scholarly research. Presenting my work to educational scholars also provided an opportunity for research ethics to emerge.

A crucial aspect of researcher ethics is the oversight by the supervisor of this research, to whom I am accountable, as well as accountability to the larger educational research community.

4.12.1 Privacy, Confidentiality and Anonymity

Issues of privacy and confidentiality were addressed by offering research participants access to all transcribed interviews and research findings so that they could be assured of identity protection. I felt a sense of responsibility and almost a sense of protectiveness towards the research participants in terms of protecting their identity and any form of harm that may emerge because they had offered their time and being to engage in this study (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). I shifted away from the initial concept of individual leadership cases and chose to look at the leaders' narratives as a collective, thus shifting away from having to provide details concerning their identity. The provision of any further information concerning projects and concerns of the respondents would have made it easier to determine identities given the small pool of leaders at the institution. I chose to refer to research participants using alphabetical symbols and worked hard to obscure places, dates, times, positions and periods mentioned in the study. The activities, events, experiences and contexts that resulted from these remained unchanged. For example, the political, economic and social forces surrounding the research participant remained unchanged. These cultural and structural forces are critical to the study in exploring the enabling and constraining forces at play at the level of the Real. An independent reader was used to assess whether identities could be traced back to the interviewees.

The process of member checking was used, where interpretations were shared with research participants as the study progressed. With the participants' permission, I obscured identifying details and attempted to change small details that might have revealed their identities. Participants were granted the opportunity to read drafts of all research outputs to allow them to determine whether their identity was sufficiently obscured or to correct any errors of omission and interpretation.

Trowler (2011) states that one cannot guarantee institutional anonymity. To protect the identity of the university, an effort was made to omit all references to the institutional name. I was fortunate to present the initial findings at a conference attended by senior academics of the university. The feedback was that it was not possible to identify the research participants or the institution. Changing the final document title was an additional step taken when the thesis was submitted in order to ensure that it could not be related to the institution and the interviewees.

As a researcher, my commitment was always to provide clear and frequent communication with all interviewees and research participants and to be honest and transparent regarding all aspects of the research process. I also aimed to give timely, respectful feedback and respond to all queries.

All research participants received information outlining the purpose of the research and were requested to provide a signature confirming their consent to be interviewed. Ethical clearance was requested and received from the research ethics committee to conduct the study.

4.13 RESEARCH DELIMITATION

The perfect research design simply does not exist (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 42), with Paton (1990, 162, cited in Marshall & Rossman, 1999) stating that there are always trade-offs.

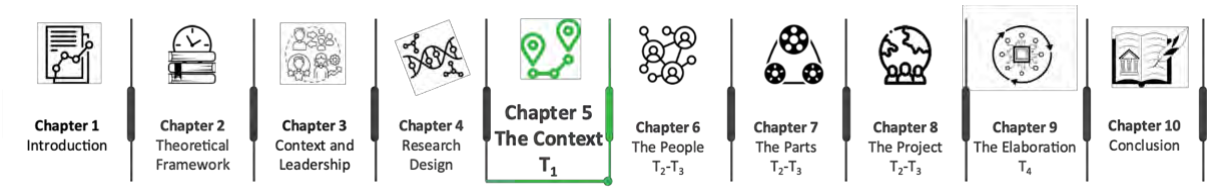
The study did not focus on a typology of leadership or leadership theories by, for example, exploring leadership styles or seeking to identify particular forms of leadership in the institution studied. Nor was the focus on leadership development, as this might have replicated the plethora of leadership development research. I was also intent on not seeing the leader as the sole locus for creating social change. The conceptual understanding of leadership as a social construct was addressed through the inclusion of a section in the study on the emergence of leadership theory. This section forms a watermark in the study's theoretical framework of critical and social realism.

4.14 CONCLUSION

As already indicated, this study focused on exploring the enablements and constraints on the emergence of leadership in a higher education setting. It did not seek to identify leadership typology within the institution or name any of the individuals participating in the research as 'effective leaders'. Instead, it explored the nature (Sayer, 1992; Danemark, 2002) of the leader, not their attributes or leadership styles.

My intention as a researcher is to commit to the best possible research practice. I can only trust that the account of my practices in this chapter supports this goal.

5 CHAPTER 5: THE CONTEXT



What needs to be the case to make a morphogenetic society – as a wholly new global social formation possible? – Archer (2015, p. 21)

5.1 INTRODUCTION: HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP CONTEXT AT T_1

Critical realism as a theoretical framework allows for the understanding of generative mechanisms which lead to the emergence of actions taken by leaders (in the form of events at the level of the actual), as well as experiences and observations of leaders and others about leadership. By exploring leadership using the critical realist stratified, layered ontology, Archer's (1998, 2000) morphogenetic framework and, more specifically, her concept of analytical dualism allows for the separation of structure culture and agency to identify the tendential causal mechanisms that constrain or enable the projects and concerns of university leaders. Archer (2000) states that the social structures and emergent mechanisms pre-date university leaders' positions and the personal emergent properties inherent in those positions. University leaders are often unaware of the structural emergent properties (SEPs) and cultural emergent properties (CEPs) conditioning their activities and actions. It is precisely the higher education leaders' interaction with the causal mechanisms in the socio-structural and cultural domain that either leads to morphogenesis or morphostasis at the level of the Real.

Chapter 5 emerges from the empirical data as set out in Table 2: Morphogenesis of Higher Education Leadership on pages 91 to 94. Each of the sections in this chapter discusses the structural conditioning of higher education at T_1 of the morphogenetic cycle. Utilising data documents, literature reviews, and interviews, as well as following the methodological processes of analytical dualism, abduction, and retroduction, the findings at T_1 shape this chapter. Whilst some aspects of the higher education landscape and structural conditioning are discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the explanatory tools of analytical dualism and retroduction are now applied to the leadership literature, participant interviews and document analysis, allowing for deeper exploration of causal mechanisms located in the domain of the Real.

5.2 THE DNA OF HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

Most leadership researchers focus on the epistemology or practice of leadership, in critical realist terms, locating research and results in the empirical and actual domain (Kempster & Parry, 2011). Driven by positivist and constructivist theoretical frameworks, the research results address findings pertaining to desirable leadership behaviours and practices. An example of this type of research that sells millions of self-help books and training materials often states the 'how', with discourses such as How to become an effective leader. Indeed, the researcher received over 578 million internet results on googling this subject in January 2023. These courses are offered by leading global universities such as Stanford University, among other world-renowned institutions of learning. This approach to leadership focuses predominantly on what Archer (2000) terms upward conflation. The notion that it is possible to create a leader through development courses in critical realist terms commits the epistemic fallacy (Bhaskar, 1978) of confusing what is with what can be known. By collapsing the epistemology (doing) of leadership with the ontology (being) of leadership, the tendential nature of structural and cultural emergent mechanisms that constrain or enable the activities of leaders is ignored. This brings into question the notions of leadership development and training as plausible mechanisms to develop higher education leaders without taking into consideration the interplay of powers and properties located in structural and cultural domains, as well as the powers and properties of the university leader. The thesis research findings of Behari Leak (2017) reveal that professional development courses offered to academics (as at many universities) more often fail than succeed in accomplishing their intended objectives because course participants are constrained in implementing what they have learned as they engage with mechanisms in the contexts in which they work once the course has ended. It is plausible to extrapolate these findings to leadership training that is offered outside the university context.

5.2.1 The Morphogenetic Cycle of Leadership in Higher Education

Archer's (1996) social realism allows for consideration of the way the historical and contextual conditions are observed and experienced (Kim et al., 2006; Sinha, 2003; Danermark et al., 2002; Liu, 2011; and Alatas, 2000, cited in De Souza, 2014). Her morphogenetic framework explores the social and cultural conditioning at T_1 that shapes the way leaders act in a higher education setting. This does not imply that leaders are determined to behave in certain ways but rather that they are predisposed to do so owing to social and cultural conditioning.

In subsequent chapters, I explore the structures and mechanisms that enable and constrain higher education leaders in their efforts to effect change by pursuing projects and concerns.

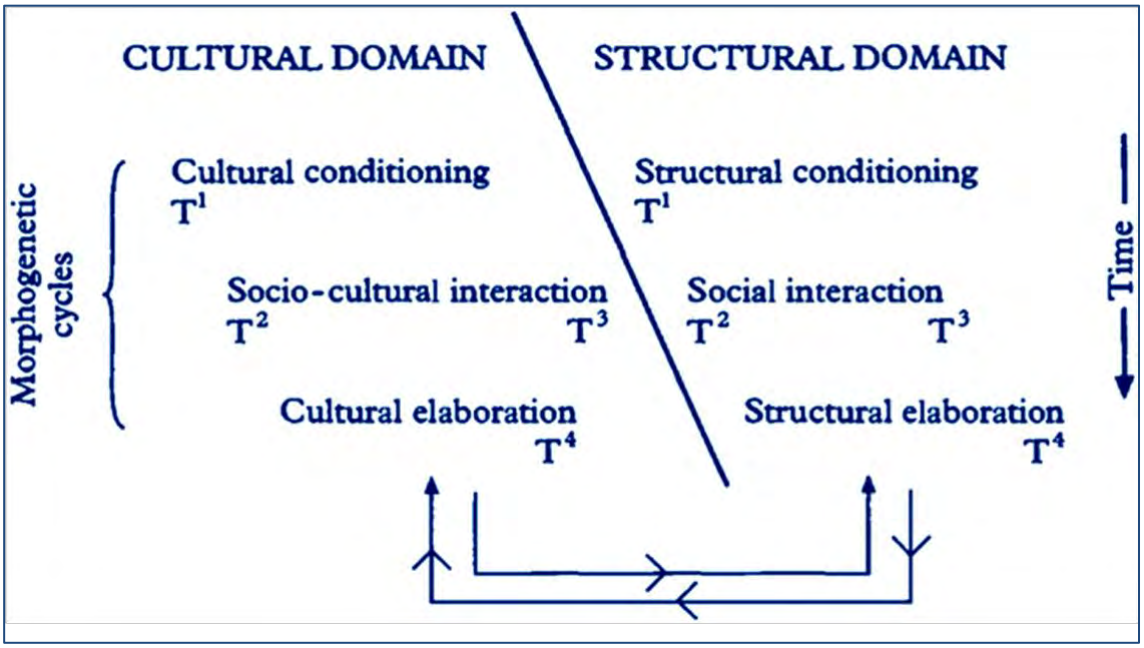
This section explores structural and cultural mechanisms that condition senior leaders and which have the potential to affect the projects they choose to pursue and the way they exercise their agency in relation to them.

Pawson (2013, p. 44) states that careful consideration should be given to underlying sociocultural conditions, including values and the prior set of social rules, norms and interrelationships. In social realist terms, these conditions relate to the CEPs and SEPs of mechanisms in the contexts in which leaders live and work. As a theoretical underlabourer of the study on which this thesis reports, Archer's (2000) social realism assigns equal importance to structure, culture and agency while acknowledging that agency alone deliberates on projects and activities. By utilising the morphogenetic cycle (Archer, 1995, p. 65), the problem of the agency versus structure debate is overcome by examining the structure–agency interplay over time rather than in singular episodes.

Figure 16 below illustrates the morphogenetic cycle occurring in never-ending cycles.

Figure 16

Archer's Morphogenetic Cycle Depicting the Cultural and Structural Conditioning at T_1



Note. Reproduced from Archer (2000; 1998)

As indicated, this section of Chapter 5 foregrounds the higher education context to explore how contemporary higher education leaders have been conditioned. To do this, leadership theory, conceptualised as a set of discourses in the domain of culture and therefore possessing CEPs, is drawn upon.

5.3 HIGHER EDUCATION SOCIOCULTURAL AND STRUCTURAL CONDITIONING (T_1)

The 21st century, marked by rapid advances in technology, has significantly changed and challenged the higher education terrain. Senior leaders in universities face increasing tensions and pressures as they seek to make sense of the complexity and contestation (Swartz, 2014). Among other things, leaders have to balance the structural realities of state funding and global market pressures with increasingly dissatisfied and demanding student populations that become paying consumers. The leadership context is further complicated by discourses constructing the university as an operational entity with the core business of producing knowledge (Deem, 2008; Ndebele & Maphosa, 2016).

The Fallist movement (Dawson, 2017; Garraway & Bozalek, 2019) brought into sharp focus other forms of contestation, highlighting the range of discourses shaping the role of the university. Discourses constructing metrics as a mechanism for historical redress as well as an instrument for economic growth and others constructing education as a means of navigating societal boundaries and classism further serve to condition the higher education context prior to any university leader's activity. More recent pressures on higher education relate to the local and global focus on student wellness, food and physical safety (Wickham, 2020). Issues of student physical safety and psychological well-being allow for the emergence of a discourse of the welfare university, shaping questions such as whether the university is a place for the creation of knowledge or whether it should play the role of carer, comforter, and protector (Samuel, 2017). The university embracing the role of carer, comforter, and protector will give the state the opportunity to step into its role in contributing to welfare.

Swartz (2017) draws on Jessop (2005, p. 48) and Robertson (2010, p. 192) to identify "strategic structural selectivities privileging certain actors and identities over others". In other words, the argument is that social and cultural conditioning will enable certain leaders to succeed while constraining the efforts of others.

5.3.1 The Micro-Meso-Macro of Socio-Structural Conditioning

As indicated earlier, social structures require human activity to activate their powers and properties. Although humans activate social structures through the enactment of beliefs and values (Benton &

Craib, 2001, p. 133), the structures themselves are enduring. For example, the structure of Apartheid continues to exert SEPs to the present day, and these continue to constrain university leaders.

5.3.1.1 Socio-Structural Conditioning

In South Africa, the public national education system is funded by two departments. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) provides funding for primary and secondary school education (Grades R to 12), and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) provides funding for universities. The Apartheid legacy of the past has had an impact on the entire educational system, with people with low incomes most affected, particularly in rural and township schools as well as historically disadvantaged universities. Tertiary education is viewed by disadvantaged youth in South Africa as a path to social mobility and a way out of poverty (Chetty, 2014). Most of the black youth in the 18–24-year-old age group continue to be excluded from higher education as a consequence of economic and historical circumstances that directly influence their ability to move upwards in society. Despite all the educational reforms introduced since the shift in political dispensation in 1994, education continues to be structured along racial and class divides (ibid).

StatsSA (2019) reports that 1 074 912 students had accessed the tertiary educational system that structurally was intended to accommodate only 600 000. Steadily increasing numbers in response to targets places tremendous pressure on institutional capacity and on leaders who need to meet demands for placements. An added pressure is the poor throughput rate, with students taking up to six years to complete a three-year qualification, clogging the system and hindering the opportunity for new students to come into the system. Annual analyses of data submitted to the Higher Education Management and Information System (HEMIS) kept by the DHET (CHE, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020) show the same persistent patterns in student performance data: slow throughput and low graduation rates, accompanied by high attrition. The data show a persistent pattern of black students performing less well than their white peers, a phenomenon that puts pressure on institutional leaders striving for transformation in the form of more access and success in higher education for social groups long denied quality higher education. Poor performance can be seen to stem from the Apartheid legacy. Boughey and Mckenna (2015) state that the biggest indicator of the ability to access and succeed in higher education is the educational levels of caregivers in the students' home of origin. Educational success breeds educational success, and quality higher education was, and arguably continues to be, denied to black people because of Apartheid (ibid).

Wolpe (1991, pp. 3-4) observes that the "core structural conditions of Apartheid" would "over a long period continue to place severe constraints on the pace and possibilities of any programme pursued by a new regime to reduce inequalities and realise social justice".

Wolpe (1991) goes on to argue that great care and creativity would need to be exercised in the framing and forging of policies "if they are to contribute to the construction of a new South Africa" (p. 1).

He warns that, if this does not happen, higher education policies could "reproduce powerfully entrenched structures generated by Apartheid instead of "serving as instruments of social transformation" (1991, p 16).

Socio-structural mechanisms, an inheritance from the Apartheid past, continue to cast a shadow over universities in South Africa. Research Participant A states the following:

> Ja, and so our environment is also a peculiar one, like if you had to contrast us with some universities where they would not have that much or the need to pay that much attention to their context. For example, if I am [at] a particularly elite university, I cream the top of all the students, and I don't really care about anyone else, and I continue. Within our country, we've got a different context; we're dealing with a very fluid situation where we've got a legacy that we've got to be conscious of. So I can't just go ahead and admit only those people who get six As in matric, all 90%, and they all can do a whole lot of things, and we just do amazing things, etc. We've got a context in which we operate, and we need to be conscious of that. [This] is not for a difficult strategy but for a challenging one. (Research Participant A, 2017)

Participant A speaks of a legacy that constrains the present higher educational context and the need for a strategy to address the issues facing institutional leaders. Certain universities and their leaders are privileged by virtue of socio-structural conditioning prior to their activities. Elite universities continue to benefit by being able to offer opportunities that other universities may not be in a position to provide, such as bursaries and scholarships to top matriculants with better infrastructure and resources (Southall & Cobbing, 2001). The term elite' denotes historically advantaged white universities and institutions which transmit or enculturate particular ways of being in society (ibid). Discourses constructing historically advantaged universities as elite form part of the socio-structural conditioning of leaders. The implications of being a historically white university benefitting from historical structures and mechanisms are still evidenced despite new government policies and initiatives. Structural conditioning and structural inequality resulting from resource allocation, positioning and roles (Case, 2015) become an enabling environment for some and a constraining environment for others, thus perpetuating historical conditions.

5.3.1.2 Sociocultural Conditioning

The cultural system is a product of sociocultural interaction, emerging with its own CEPs, and thus works to condition social actors. Culture, as an emergent entity, finds expression through leaders' values, world views and beliefs.

Structural emergence becomes a causal mechanism located at the level of the Real, with the potential to enable and constrain the activities of agency (Archer et al., 2012; Danermark et al., 2002).

As an extension, subject-object relations in terms of the interrelationality between SEPs and agency need to be identified and explored in order to examine the mechanisms that enable and constrain higher education leadership.

Discourses, as described by Kress (1990, p. 7), are "systematically organised statements which give expressions to meanings and values of an institution. They define what is possible to say and not to say (and by extension, what is possible to do or not to do)". Simply put, "discourses colonise the world imperialistically" (ibid).

In critical and social realism, discourses are mechanisms with CEPs that are activated when agents exercise their PEPs to draw on the discourse. When acted on by agents, discourses exercise causality and can constrain or enable the projects of social actors in higher education settings.

5.3.1.3 The Discourse of Leadership at T_1

The notion of leadership in higher education settings is influenced by leadership theory that focuses on the activities and behaviours of leaders (Bryman, 2007), with very little research being done on what constitutes leadership for higher education. Leadership models and theories first find expression in neoliberal concepts of performativity and managerialism, as discussed in Chapter 2. McFarlane (2010) speaks of the "unbundled university" where the boundaries are blurred as functions are outsourced, often with a greater emphasis on teaching and the provision of services as opposed to research. The implication of this shift not only challenges the identity formation of university leaders, but the additional functions of managing, monitoring and auditing also reflect trends in the corporate world (ibid), where the university vice-chancellor becomes the chief executive officer (CEO).

Leadership theory shapes discourses constructing leadership in the university and thus frames perceptions and understandings of leadership and its role and function. This, in turn, shapes the behavior of leaders as expressed in the following interview excerpt:

> A theory of leadership which meant a lot to me was situational leadership. So, when you get someone new in a position, you spend lots of time with them and lots of support, and then you go through the cycle, and then you get to the point where you can withdraw. So, for example XXXXX, you know our setup here. XXXXX runs that section without any intervention from me. We have a weekly meeting.
>
> All the heads of sections and she's got to keep me in touch with what's going on so I know what's happening. But I don't get involved anymore in managing. (Research Participant C, September 2017)

Research Participant C has a particular perception of leadership and how this should be enacted in a higher education setting, which arguably can be traced to theory as discourse. However, this extract also suggests an understanding of leadership as managing people and running a department or section in a university, which can also be understood to be discursively constituted thanks to dominant neoliberal discourses discussed in Chapter 2.

Dinh et al. (2014) identify and categorise leadership theory into three broad domains mirroring the work *Glonacal Agency Heuristic* of Marginson and Rhoades (2002), which views higher education across three dimensions (global, national and local). Understanding theory as discourse and that discourses exercise CEPs when activated has direct implications for the university leader as the positioning of leadership alters. The work of Marginson (2009) and Vaira (2004) in the discussion below helps to map leadership theory as conditioning the views of leadership in universities and the direct implications for university leadership. Both authors identify three different groups of theories.

Micro-level theories: This approach looks at the leader as an individual and covers all aspects of the self, from emotions to cognitions and behaviors. Archer (1998) would see this kind of understanding of leadership as privileging 'upwards conflation', where all activity stems from the individual, and morphogenesis or morphostasis is dependent on the leader (p. 2000). In terms of social realist theory, core to the individual is the personal identity and social identity, which is forged in the self from birth onwards. Archer states that it is the leader's reflexivity that comes to the fore and that the personal identity will always shape the social identity (ibid). By reflecting on the mechanisms enabling and constraining the projects and activities, higher education leaders may respond through mediating, manipulating, interpreting or resisting the CEPs and SEPs being experienced as they go about executing their roles (Vaira, 2004, p. 484). At the micro-level, university leaders are conditioned to believe what behaviours are accepted and expected in an academic environment. Their personal identity as an academic leader becomes constrained by the leadership constructs of neoliberal

discourses that frame leadership in a certain way. This is reflected in the comments of Research Participant E:

> So, it was not difficult for me to step up to the vice-chancellor position. I had no desire to take up the position, but I was persuaded by people to take up the role. I must say I never put myself forward for any leadership position.
>
> Throughout my life I have been asked, I have been approached with the request that I make myself available. So, I submitted an application as people might have believed that I would be able to make a good vice-chancellor. But, look, nothing really prepares you for the role of a vice-chancellor. (Research Participant E, August 2017)

Although holding the most senior position in the university, Participant E does not identify with the role of vice-chancellor and only puts forward an application for the vacant position as a result of the urging of others. Of critical importance is the relationality between the position and the person, which, in this instance, is reticent and reflective. Also of note is that the position of vice-chancellor is perceived in a particular way, and there is an awareness on the part of Research Participant E that the role requires a certain disposition or attitude which cannot be developed as a result of conscious preparation for the role. In other words, no leadership training could adequately prepare someone for the highest office in the university. Another important point to note is that other agents approach the social actor to take up the most senior position in the university. A question as to where power is located within the institutional structures comes to the fore as to how this power is exercised. Who determines the positioning of leaders, and how do social actors navigate these power structures? The following extract from an interview with a senior university leader contributes to an understanding of the emergence of leadership in this case study:

> At [institution], we worked with an understanding of traditional academic governance. The deans were elected by faculties and looked to their faculties. The VC and DVCs were appointed but, if you looked closely, they did not have academic power. That power lay within the faculties. So, as DVC, for example, I could not simply overturn an exclusion. I had to listen to a student who came my way claiming some sort of unfairness or special circumstances and, if I thought something had been missed, I could only go to the dean and ask if s/he would look at the case again. I could not tell the deans what to do. I had to win the deans over – win their hearts and minds with an argument for a particular course of action. The VC and the DVCs needed the support of the Senate – that was all-important – and before the Senate, we used to plan to ensure that support, discuss how an issue should be handled, what arguments

> should be presented, what the objections would be, and so on. At the time I was there, a new breed of manager arrived who did not get this. They dismissed the Senate and used to go running straight to the Council, bypassing the VC, sometimes whom they could perceive as weak because he did not, and would not, wield executive power. [Institution] still has elected deans but only just. There are strong arguments from some new managers for appointed executive deans reporting to a CEO-like VC.
>
> I think [current VC] might be the last of the traditional VCs at [Institution] and that it won't be long before we have appointed deans who will control rather than act as a representative of their faculties. (Senior University Leader, January 2023)

This substantive contribution by a senior university leader raises a number of red flags for higher education leadership, as the construct of neoliberalism exerts structural emergent properties that constrain it. In addition, the role of social actors who exercise their PEPs reveals the structural mechanisms of power in their various expressions, as discussed in Chapter 7.

Meso-level theories: This set of theories explores the socio-relational aspect of leaders and how they engage with organisational processes, teams, and followers in exercising their leadership. Leadership theorists focus on the interrelationality of leadership and the role of the follower. Archer (2000) would see this approach as "downwards conflation", where society is considered to shape the leader. Marginson and Rhoades (2002, cited in Vaira, 2004) state that higher educational institutions act as conduits for these external forces, in turn adapting to global pressures through implementing reforming policies and restructuring practices.

Macro-level theories: These explore leadership as a complex system involving social, structural, and individual aspects of leadership. The danger here is that leadership research conflates socio-structural and cultural mechanisms, thus collapsing the ontological and epistemological domains. As stated earlier, Bhaskar (1986) termed this the 'epistemic fallacy', saying it is precisely what critical realism seeks to avoid. Vaira (2004, p. 486) states that the mechanisms affecting higher education from a global perspective are underresearched both theoretically and analytically, with the result that there is little understanding of the way global forces promote new forms of leadership. The recent global COVID-19 pandemic is an example of global forces affecting higher education leaders' activities.

Dinh et al. (2014) view leadership as an emergent theory that requires the integration of micro-, meso and macro-level considerations (Gardner & Cogliser, 2006). At a macro level, mechanisms in the domains of structure and culture can constrain and enable. Meso-level considerations focus on the leader in an institutional setting, exercising PEPs in engaging in an institutional context (Archer, 2000)

at the micro level. Micro-level considerations look at the leader as an individual. All three levels need to be taken into account in understanding leadership (Gardner & Cogliser, 2006).

Ideas and beliefs held by leaders that contradict or oppose those held by constituents mean that different ideological positions result (Archer, 2000, p. 174), creating very different situational logic. The result is differences in sociocultural relations. Constrictions in the cultural system result in constraints in the sociocultural domain.

Constraining contradictions occur when two parts are dependent (in that A needs B to function). Situational logic requires the two to let go of beliefs and ideas in order for syncretism, which can take many forms, to the notion of emerge.

To illustrate the notion of situational logic, Participant D shared an experience of wanting to avoid demonstrating disagreement openly with staff members who were opposing new values and propositions. The result, in such a case, is a stifling of voices, which Archer (2000) calls constrictions that act as a mechanism to constrain change. Rather than letting go of the current form of practice, the institution assimilates new propositions and values without breaking from the previous practices until such time it can revert to its former state.

> You try to really instil a culture where people are respected because they are deans and DVCs, and you also want to institute a culture where people think freely, and there is no groupthink, as far as possible. Those things can be undone very fast. You just need ... I've seen it at another institution where I spent many years. All that changed within 18 months after I left because the people there did not have the courage to stand up to authority. All positive cultural aspects I thought had been introduced; I saw how once you have a new vice chancellor or director or CEO in place, you see how people have to be really courageous to say, "But, you know, we never did things like this before, and we don't say it because we're opposed to change but we actually like the way things were done because it was more democratic and more collective, and so on. Your way is actually taking away autonomy, and it's becoming too top-down". (Research Participant D, October 2017)

In the preceding interview extract, Participant D speaks about how change is essentially none-change as it is contingent on the leader's perception of the environment and how easily past practices can be revived.

What appears to be morphogenesis is morphostasis concealed in cultural rhetoric, often veiled in higher educational leadership practices (Eddy & Vanderlinden, 2006). Biko (1978) termed the act of

retaining beliefs, values and practices of the past as assimilation rather than transformation. In social realist terms, cultural rhetoric takes the form of discourses (mechanisms) in the Real domain that enable and constrain the social actor's efforts to effect change (Archer, 1998; 2000). The impact of sociocultural assimilation is morphostasis, as it is the dominant culture that will continue to hold power, and the system replicates itself. The break from the past cannot happen as the terminology of transformational discourses is appropriated by institutional leaders until the system can revert to its original state.

This is particularly destructive in a country such as South Africa, where education is seen as a mechanism for societal transformation. Numerous institutional and cultural rhetoric veiled as transformational discourses are examples of this. These policies and projects aimed at transformation keep institutions occupied with equity audits and annual reports for a subsidy, with little change to the conditions in the institution, allowing inequalities to persist.

5.4 GLOBALISATION AND NEOLIBERALISM AT T_1

Socio-structural and cultural conditioning in higher education in South Africa is shaped by mechanisms that exist at a global level. For example, South Africa's transition to a democratic state was shaped by powerful discourses privileging globalisation and neoliberalism, which were evidenced in policies that also drew on these discourses. The remainder of this chapter will explore the structural implications of neoliberalism and its generative mechanisms (understood to be located at the level of the Real) for higher education.

5.4.1 Globalisation as Sociocultural Conditioning

Vaira (2004, p. 483), reflecting on the research of Bradley et al. (2000) and Meyer et al. (1987), states that "almost if not all, social life facets are affected by the globalisation process: culture, politics, economy and social relations are all deemed to be transformed by this process".

Globalisation brings together other related discourses as off-shoots (Bradley et al., 2000). As a mechanism in the Real domain, globalisation has become embedded in higher education institutions as a method of sensemaking and structures how social actors deal with their concerns and projects. Vaira (2004) likens this to rationalising the world. Bradley et al. (2000) use the term 'meta-myth' instead of 'discourse' to describe a process which involves multinational entities, such as the Group of Eight (G-8), the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the European Union (EU), and international political and economic agreements, such as the General Agreement on

Trade in Services (GATS), European Free Trade Association (EFTA), North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), academic and political discourse and mass media (ibid). According to Kress's (1990) definition of this phenomenon, meta-myths are discourses.

This globalisation discourse has an impact at multiple levels in higher education, including governance structures, organisational culture and the role of academics (Clark, 1998; Delanty, 2001; Dill & Sporn, 1995; Gibbons, 1994; Gumport, 2000; Slaughter & Lesley 1997, cited in Vaira, 2004).

According to Duderstadt et al. (2008, p. 275), globalisation "exercises an influence on the nature of institutions that impact higher education" and on the "ways and means of providing higher education … shaping education both in terms of what is taught, what is researched, shifting both student interests and university offerings away from broader academic studies and towards narrower vocational programmes".

Globalisation exerts powers and properties on higher education institutions seeped in historical and value-laden structurally and culturally embedded practices that have been reproduced over time. Globalisation is reinforced by national and political systems, albeit also experiencing the pressures exerted by globalisation (Gumport, 2000; Kerr, 1987, cited in Vaira, 2004). An example of the way globalisation has conditioned South African higher education includes the drive for inclusion on the part of individual institutions in global university ranking systems. Inclusion in a global ranking system carries a competitive element. However, the metrics used in global systems need to take into account the historical conditioning of institutions or the purpose of universities in terms of academic teaching and learning. As Badat (2010) points out, ranking systems favour research-intensive universities, and only some South African universities carry this status.

5.4.2 Neoliberalism as Socio-structural Conditioning

Venugopal states the following regarding neoliberalism:

> Neoliberalism is everywhere but, at the same time, nowhere. It is held to be the dominant and pervasive economic policy agenda of our times, a powerful and expansive political rationality of class domination and exploitation, the manifestation of 'capital resurgent', an overarching dystopian zeitgeist of late-capitalist excess (2015, p. 1).

Perry Anderson describes neoliberalism as the most successful ideology of all time (2000, p. 17; cited in Venugopal, 2015). Vaira writes that neoliberalism is more than rhetoric or ideology and is "a wide range project to change the institutional structure of societies at a global level" (2004, p. 487).

A central tenet of neoliberalism is that social good can only be achieved by maximising the reach and frequency of market transactions. It thus "seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market" (Harvey, 2005, p. 3). Human development becomes constructed in economic terms. This notion of the market economy then redefines the university as a means to economic growth (Berdahl, 2008, p. 84).

This definition of neoliberalism best describes the effects of neoliberalism as a meta-myth or discourse located at the level of the Real carrying powers and properties that enable or constrain the efforts and projects of leaders in higher education institutions. The commodification of higher education is an example of the influence of neoliberalism, where education is sold as a product, and packets of knowledge are produced for consumption. Students are seen as clients needing to be serviced rather than partners in co-creating new knowledge required to address humanity's global challenges. The neoliberal discourse carries powers and properties that constrain the university and higher education leadership in varied ways. For example, academics are placed on fixed-term contracts, deans and HoDs become managers of lecturers, overseeing work-performance agreements and key performance areas and conducting performance assessments on staff.

5.5 THE LEADERSHIP TRIAD: POLITICS, POWER AND BUSINESS

Badat (2016, pp. 82-90) states that higher education can enhance social justice and lead to social development and the formation of a democratic citizenry. He states that opposing forces make higher education a mechanism of social injustice and exclusion through the replication of the patterns of the past (ibid). Badat sums up by saying that the reason that education has not achieved its transformation goals is that it is "not an autonomous social force. It is a necessary condition of positive social transformation, but not a sufficient condition" (ibid). Education as a mechanism at the level of the Real can exert SEPs that enable or constrain transformation in the structural and cultural domains. Education alone does not have the power to bring about transformation; rather, it requires higher education leaders to activate SEPs, which will then contribute to the emergence of more positive events and experiences (Archer, 2000).

5.5.1 Politics and Higher Education

Bobbio (1987, p. 57) brings politics strongly into focus as a form of sociocultural conditioning by stating that there are "two great blocks of descending and hierarchical power in every complex society, big business and public administration", also referred to as politics.

"As long as these two blocks hold out against the pressures from below, the democratic transformation of society cannot be said to be complete" (ibid). Structural changes, such as reflected in the higher education White Paper of 1997 that outlined a social justice framework of redress and social equity without consideration for the nexus of power and historically entrenched privilege, simply avoid the mechanisms that will constrain transformation (Motala, 2006, p. 7). Badat (2016, p. 82) states that the actions and activities of higher education leaders remain under the influence of the apartheid legacy.

Should these constraining conditions remain, "education, even with great effort at resolving internal issues, will not be able to effect change in the form of social justice, particularly with socio-relational alliances of economic wealth, social status and political power" (ibid).

The effects of political conditioning in higher education are experienced as constraining and complex, perhaps to the point of stifling the activities of social actors in South African universities. This is expressed by one research participant as follows:

> But now it's getting to the stage where the Minister is going to be able to enforce all sorts of things, the quality audits, for example, that we have to comply with, and it's moving out of the realm, which I thought was okay, of persuasion by peers. That's what the old quality audits were from CHE. Now it's if you don't comply, "We're gonna hit you", coming from the Minister, and the constant threat of sending in administrators and all of that sort of stuff. And the situation is getting really just very complex, and it's not just a matter of steering anymore; it's now becoming ... it's not happening yet, but it's heading towards taking on something of a management role in universities. (Research Participant F, November 2017)

This interview extract outlines the complexity faced by senior leadership. Not only has the leader's role and identity shifted, but the power exerted by the state through policy requirements has also taken on a new dimension.

The interview extract above illustrates the neoliberal-shaped discourse of academic governance as a structural mechanism constraining the activities of higher education leaders.

5.5.1.1 The Politics of Knowledge in Higher Education

Ordorika (1999, cited in Ndofirepi & Cross, 2014) states that universities are considered "to be among the most political institutions in society". The university's modus vivendi is knowledge production and dissemination, making knowledge, by association, highly political.

What we learn to do in nature (embodied knowledge), skills required in practice (practical knowledge), or the propositional elaborations made in the cultural system (discursive knowledge) or any form of knowledge results from the interplay of our PEPs and the powers possessed by mechanisms at the level of the Real in the natural, practical and social domains. Critical realists assume knowledge, as a social construct, to be transitive and temporary (Sayer, 1992, cited in Kempster & Parry, 2011). When knowledge is applied, it is reconstructed and transformed. As a result, learning will always be a crucial part of agents' activity in the world (Lave, 1993, p. 8, cited in Trowler, 2001).

Knowledge is both a mechanism at the level of the Real and, in the context of globalisation and neoliberalism, is increasingly constructed as a commodity.

The curriculum understood as encompassing not only what is taught (in the form of knowledge) but also how teaching takes place, who teaches and so on, is, therefore, a political and power-laden contested space. What is taught, by whom and to whom is more often not critiqued. Teaching and learning need to take into consideration the student's identity formation and context. Failures to do this lead to the construction of students as 'decontextualised' individuals (Boughey & Mckenna, 2016, p. 6), which ignores the fact that some individuals have been provided with access to the ways of being and knowing that sustain the university from birth (ibid). Academic leaders draw on dominant discourses constructing students, teaching and learning as they pursue their projects. By not addressing the constraints placed on student learning through persisting with models of teaching and learning constructed by hegemonic academic discourses, university leaders entrench socio-structural inequalities, constraining access for redress and reproducing the sociocultural domain (ibid).

Participant A's statement below identifies one way in which socioeconomic positions constrain access:

> There's an external constraint, which is how well matriculants pass mathematics. If we didn't have that, we would have a lot more students. So we have to work on that mathematics. I've got some ideas on how we can augment our mathematics classes. We have some students that might have done really, really well in maths literacy, and we could, and they are actually very, very clever and are capable of doing mathematics. They were just born in an area where there is no mathematics teacher, so they kind of have to do a BA or do something else instead of being an astrophysicist or an astronaut. So, there are internal things that we can do to augment and improve the pass rate once the student is in the system. (Research Participant A, August 2017)

5.5.2 Power, Race and Higher Education

In some circumstances, discourse is powerful because of the assumed nature of the ideas it encompasses. Discourse is power-laden and, as such, either enables or constrains agency. Badat (2020) notes the government's inability to transform the interests that produce and reproduce white privilege in terms of land redistribution, the media, universities, languages and culture in general. A comment from Participant B describes the way dominant assumptions can affect leaders:

> You cannot imagine how some of the people in this institution can be patronising. And I've shared some of these things with my colleagues and deputy vice-chancellors, and I've shown them some of the letters written to me by staff members, and they just cringe because they probably don't believe that such things do happen. For example, last year during the rape crisis project, some staff members were instructing me what I had to communicate and how I was supposed to communicate it, to whom I had to communicate that and went so far as to draft a statement that had to be issued in my name. So, all I had to do was to read that statement and issue it. These are some of the people I have had to work with. One has had to put up with a lot of crap here. Had it not been for the fact that I see this as an opportunity to contribute towards the transformation of this institution and to seek to realise this, I would never have made it; I would be long gone, done. (Research Participant B, September 2017)

The assumption is that a Black leader cannot lead as effectively as a white leader. These assumed discourses are produced and reproduced within the university, thereby constraining institutional transformation (Badat, 2020).

Mechanisms related to apartheid continue to have an impact on higher education institutions when acted upon by agents (Ndimande & Neville, 2015), as illustrated in the extract above. Issues of race and racial identity continue to influence the projects and activities of higher education leaders (Seekings, 2008). For Motlhabi (1985, cited in Ndimande & Neville, 2015), racial segregation is not only about segregation. It is about an ideologically bound belief of racial superiority that privileges people classified as white. Racial discrimination and politics persist in the structures and culture of the university, determining who has the right to make decisions and to speak with authority. The discursive power to make decisions and to be heard continues to belong to those who hold "socio-economic power; the settler-legacy power, historical colonialist and public discourse power" (Tufversson, 2012, p. 6). The research participant quoted above draws on the PEPs he can exercise as a social actor to resist the SEPs and CEPs he encountered in the incident described in the extract.

Nonetheless, the SEPs and CEPs that ultimately accrue from apartheid can be seen to be activated even by those who construct themselves as 'progressives'.

5.5.3 The Higher Education Transformation Imperative

Daszko and Sheinberg (2005) state that transformation happens when there is a complete break from the past, and systems are created that never existed before. More importantly, these systems involve new behaviours, practices, and beliefs. Contextually, no vestiges of the past should remain, as these are deemed to be unacceptable (Tufvesson, 2012).

In 1996, the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) set about redressing the racial and economic inequalities of the apartheid system (Ramrathan, 2016). The NCHE's approach was to advocate for a policy that would transform the higher education system. However, policy-driven approaches are flawed as political agendas inform them and do not necessarily take into account the culture-laden contexts in which agents operate.

Research participant E shares the constraints and challenges by stating that universities no longer determine what can be taught and who should be enrolled, as this is directly linked to state funding.

> Well, look, the state had a number of steering mechanisms, as they called it. The PQM was one – we'll decide what you can teach; the funding formula was the other one – we will only sponsor what we agree to sponsor and control you in that way, and the third one was the enrolment target – we will decide how big you should be. (Research Participant E, November 2017)

A university's PQM, or programme and qualification mix, is the list of educational programmes approved for subsidy purposes by the DHET. The intention was that the PQM would act as a lever promoting differentiation in the higher education system. This differentiation would be achieved by a university defining its particular purpose in a mission and vision statement. The purpose would then drive all activities within the institution. By means of the PQM, any new university programmes aligned with the institutional vision and mission will receive funding. Research Participant E's perception that the PQM was intended to work as a lever is indicative of the way policies and regulations can be constructed by leaders. In this case, what was only ever intended to be a lever in a system where institutions could identify their purpose and roles is seen as a form of control. Nonetheless, the aim of getting universities to self-differentiate by identifying the purposes they want to fulfil has not been achieved (Boughey, 2021).

The implications of transforming higher education through structural mechanisms relate to the conditioning of apartheid in South Africa. A discourse constructing the schooling system as inadequate and which is directly linked to issues of social justice and racial and class bias is identified by Research Participant F:

> It's no longer middle-class students, per se. And we've had students coming in, I think, it's been the increasing diversification, and that has brought existing challenges because many students, of course, come from schools where we can't make the assumptions we used to make. They haven't had good teaching; they haven't got the foundation that one would expect, and that doesn't make them deficient in a way. I think there's a great danger of, you know, saying, "The standards are dropping; the schools' results are dropping". I think we've got to work harder to respond to the changing needs of our students. (Research Participant F, October 2017)

These statements allude to the challenges universities face as a result of students coming to higher education institutions needing to be equipped to deal with academic study. So, while the interviewee concedes that students from poor backgrounds have no "deficit in any way", the inconsistency in the point of view is that it is not the increasing diversification that has brought the challenges to universities but the generations of systemic racism and prejudice that now no longer can be ignored. The response to "work harder" does not acknowledge the systemic issues of an open system steeped in socioeconomic and cultural contradictions that may counter Participant F's "hard work" at every step. So, the focus may be on the provision of extra tutorials or first-generation student programmes without acknowledging and addressing the SEPs and CEPs that continue to condition agents and that will thus function to constrain transformation. While the policy may advocate for a more open access approach to diverse groups of students, social and cultural conditions in universities may result in the provision of what Morrow (2007) terms 'formal access' and the denial of 'epistemological access' or access to the forms of knowledge and ways of knowing that sustain the university.

Ahmed (2015, p. 11) views policies as 'performatives' as policies on their own cannot enact what is stated or bring about change. Higher education policies require the exercise of agency if they are to be implemented. As agents exercise their PEPs, they will, however, always be confronted by mechanisms which constrain implementation. As a result, policies aimed at bringing about transformation are yet to show results (Nyamnjoh, 2015). Moreover, policies may reduce transformation to numbers and demographics and, in so doing, may not promote meaningful transformation at all (Ahmed, 2012, p. 14).

5.5.4 Politics and Business in Higher Education

Education has become a big business, with knowledge seen as a commodity and universities as a place of trade and business in education (Nayyar, 2008, p. 9, cited in Badat, 2016). The notion of preparing graduates for industry, more so in the technological era, creates tension with the understanding of the university as a public good. The implicit understanding of government funding public universities is that higher education is a mechanism for economic growth and social mobility (Badat, 2015). The national government's efforts to build a knowledge-based economy, drawing on discourses promoting the global knowledge economy (Cloete, 2014), have affected the structure and purpose of higher education (ibid). This has also reduced the responsibility of the state to fund higher education. The business narrative states that if knowledge is a commodity and universities produce it, they should sell it to fund themselves. Thus, there is a huge focus on third-stream income and the use of research to earn money.

The notion of higher education as a business acts as a constraining mechanism for higher education leaders while simultaneously enabling other university leaders (Boughey & McKenna, 2021).

5.5.4.1 The Economic Dimension

Discourses constructing higher education as a vehicle for economic and social transformation, together with associated structural mechanisms, continue to constrain the projects of higher education leaders. According to Badat (2016), the following mechanisms constrain transformation:

I. High levels of student debt combined with low throughput rates, resulting in 50% of students failing to graduate, act as constraining mechanisms in universities.
II. There is inadequate funding for higher education as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP). Funding has seen a fractional increase from 0.68% in 2004/05 to 0.72% in 2015/16.
III. A reduction of block-grant funding to universities, together with an increase in student enrolments. Decreases in subsidies have resulted in concomitant increases in tuition fees.
IV. The National Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) needs to be revised to support the ever-increasing student population from economically disadvantaged backgrounds despite the increase in funding from R578,2 million in 2004/05 to R34,5 billion in 2020.
V. More resources need to be devoted to student academic development programmes to bridge the gap students face due to inequality in the secondary schooling system.
VI. Infrastructural challenges faced by historically black universities as a result of the apartheid policies.

While the state views higher education as a mechanism to achieve social justice and economic growth, the inadequate resources dedicated to this have resulted in structural and cultural constraints owing to university leaders' lack of will to engage in issues of transformation (Badat, 2010).

Research Participant F expresses this disconnect between national transformational imperatives and the academic project and views these as two distinct shortcomings:

> But, ja, it is a baptism of fire. And what happened is that we had a whole bunch of protests. When I arrived, my first day as dean was April 1st, April Fool's Day, 2015. That was in the middle of the #RhodesMustFall movement. Then there was transformation; then there was protest; then there was more; then there was more rape stuff; then there were more protests. Then, finally, 2017 arrived, and I could start doing deanly things. (Research Participant F, October 2017)

Contrary to Badat's (2016) claims about the lack of funding, large amounts of money have been poured into universities in the form of development grants. Moyo's (2018) study identifies a lack of capacity and capability to use money intended to effect changes in teaching and learning as one of the reasons for the grants not achieving their intended purpose. In many cases, agents responsible for implementing grants drew on outmoded understandings of teaching and learning (understood as discursively constituted) as they exercised their agency to design programmes and projects. Another example is that of monies granted for new initiatives aimed at transformation but were often used to sustain existing practices.

5.6 THE NETWORKED STRUCTURE

Networks of influence can contribute to the positioning of agents within the higher education system. Leaders are often able to access opportunities through these established networks by knowing or being connected to influential people. There is a sense of being entitled to a role as a result of these affiliations. This highlights the interplay of the leaders' PEPs with CEPs and SEPs in the system:

> Look, the other thing I can tell you is, in that kind of environment, when you're coming into a situation where you're having this fallout in the first three months, six months, where there are accusations that the university was run by a cabal and so on, you then have to really be very careful about you not having a cabal yourself. That's something I will say with pride. Many people would have loved to be part of my cabal, but I didn't want to have a cabal, so they could not be part of it. There were no secret meetings over breakfast, over weekends and lunch. My home was deliberately made into a personal residence where all kinds of business

> would not be concocted and happen there and [be] taken into the university. (Research Participant E, October 2017)

Research Participant E speaks of the networks of influence that existed in a university before taking up a key leadership position. These networks, or cabals, function to influence the exercise of agency at institutional levels. As illustrated in Participant E's quotation, People form groups that draw on particular sets of discourses, and the discourses are affirmed as a result. At the group or organisation level, social influence is seen as intertwined with members' relationship networks and, most importantly, the structures and patterns they create (Carter et al., 2015; Friedkin, 1993; Friedkin & Johnsen, 2011; Saint-Charles & Mongeau, 2009, all cited in Saint-Charlesa & Mongeau, 2018). Archer (2007; 2000; 1998) states that relationality carries PEPs. When leaders in relational networks, by virtue of shared discourses, form structures, these can then enable or constrain changes in the domains of structure and culture in universities.

5.7 THE POSITIONING OF SOCIAL ACTORS

Social positioning serves as a conduit for social reproduction and how subjects are socially reproduced (Holland & Leander, 2004). Power relations emerging from this process shape the personal identity or group identity through discourses that are normalised and considered common sense, resulting in the way an individual is constructed by gender, race, or social class, among other things. This leads to the formation of social categories such as politicised students, management, academics, and support staff. When labels are attached to individuals or groups, they are subjected to a social position which carries enabling and constraining properties (ibid). For example, academics are able to exercise specific powers and properties (PEPs) that enable their work. They hold the position as an academic very differently from staff members given the title of support staff. Staff members in the support function are constrained in the production of research, for example, because discourses construct research as the province of academics. Individuals exercise agency by accepting a position or changing it. Alternatively, they can refuse to embrace the position (Bourdieu, 1977; Davies & Harre, 1990; Foucault, 1975, 1988; Harre & Van Langenhove, 1991, all cited in Holland & Leander, 2004). Positions occupied by leaders carry privileges, tasks, rights, duties, etc., and leaders practise their leadership by filling the position and conducting activities associated with the role (Bhaskar, 1998a, pp. 40-41; Archer, 1998, p. 200).

> And lastly, I think then I had to single out particular people who were very formative in my political intellectual development and who really played a profound role in helping me to

> assume the kind of positions that I later adopted as director of … (Research Participant C, September 2017)

This interview not only illustrates the powers and properties accruing from a position but also shows the point of contact between the leader and the position, together with the role of agents who may prepare the leader to assume this role. This relational aspect of the leadership position connects to the concept of a networked structure and the way in which opportunities are accessed by knowing particular people who may be formative in shaping and selecting leaders.

Holland and Leander (2004) write that the moment of accepting or declining a role is a moment of interpenetration when social and psycho-social powers and properties merge. Archer (1998) would call this socio-agential elaboration. It is precisely such moments or experiences that mediate powers and properties as mechanisms affecting change in the structural and cultural domain.

At the nub is the theoretical unpacking of how leadership is enacted, constructed, and reproduced as institutional models or typologies of leadership. Society privileges some at the cost of others. McDermott (1993) sees this as seeking a model of leadership that best reflects itself within a specific cycle of time or morphogenetic cycle.

Holland and Leander (2004) write that positioning is part of the reproductive processes in any society in that people, situations and structures are discursively constructed. Such positioning always precedes the social actor's activities (Bhaskar, 1998b; Archer, 1998). Archer would locate this at T_1 on the morphogenetic cycle.

> For a couple of years, I lived in the marvellous metropolis of Tswane and, whilst working, I was approached twice by the University, the Department of Humanities, to indicate that there were lecturing positions and if I had any interest I should you know, proceed. (Research Participant A, August 2017)

Positioning is likened to socially reproducing groups of people or individuals as a cultural entity. An example of this is the apartheid regime that positioned entire people groups on the basis of colour and further entrenched this positioning through structural divides such as different schools, communities, jobs and limitations on access to resources. This, in turn, shifted the identity of social groups, stigmatising some and constructing them as inferior to other privileged social groups. Holland and Leander (2008, p. 3) state that subjective positioning resulted in the historical (re)production of people and practices.

5.8 CONCLUSION: SOCIOCULTURAL AND STRUCTURAL CONDITIONING AT T_1

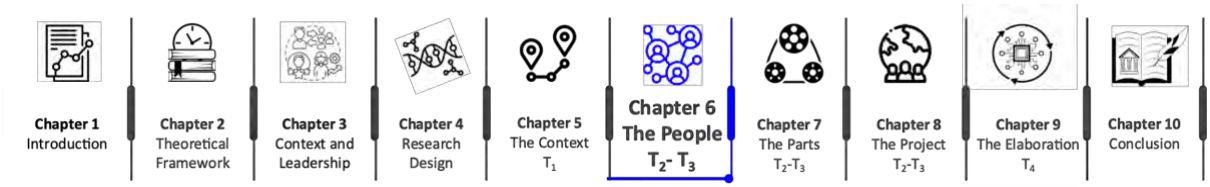
Archer's (1998) theoretical work provides the tools necessary to explore the prior conditioning of leaders in higher education. Structures and mechanisms are enduring, and they condition leaders before they actually take up leadership positions, which they continue to do once they have occupied their new roles. As a result, leaders come to perceive leadership in certain ways discursively constituted by leadership theories, which then shape their behaviour and approach to projects and activities within the university.

Leadership in higher education is multilayered and multifaceted and involves the exercise of PEPs in interplay with CEPs and SEPs at micro, meso and macro levels (Vaira, 2004). At the macro level, globalisation and neoliberalism are enormously influential at T_1.

The leadership triad of politics, power and business infused the ANC's Neo-Marxist macroeconomic policies and came to construct knowledge as both a mechanism for social empowerment and a commodity (Lave, 1993, p. 8, cited in Trowler, 2001). The discourses of knowledge as a vehicle for social transformation and a mechanism for economic growth then served to constrain and enable leaders as they exercised their agency.

This thesis now moves to explore the interplay of agency with social and cultural conditions between T_2 and T_3.

6 CHAPTER 6: THE PEOPLE (T_2–T_3)



What a leader thinks and believes will influence their choices and behaviours – Murphy et al. (2008, p. 252)

6.1 INTRODUCING AGENCY AT T_2–T_3

Chapter 6 explores the way higher education leaders in this study exercised their agency. Before beginning this exploration, it may be helpful to summarise the main tenets of Archer's (1998) social realism.

Social realism opposes the notion that the world is discursively constructed or languaged into being. Neither the parts nor the people can be shrunk/reduced into one, nor can the sociostructural domain be subsumed by the cultural domain and vice versa (Archer, 1998, 2000). Social realism holds that the parts and the people each have their powers and properties, which are irreducible to the other. The interplay of agents' powers and properties engaging with the powers and properties of mechanisms in the domain of people will result in morphostasis or morphogenesis of both the people and the parts. This point is of utmost importance in the present study as it understands leadership as emergent and not a creation of self or society, or a combination of these (Archer, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2007).

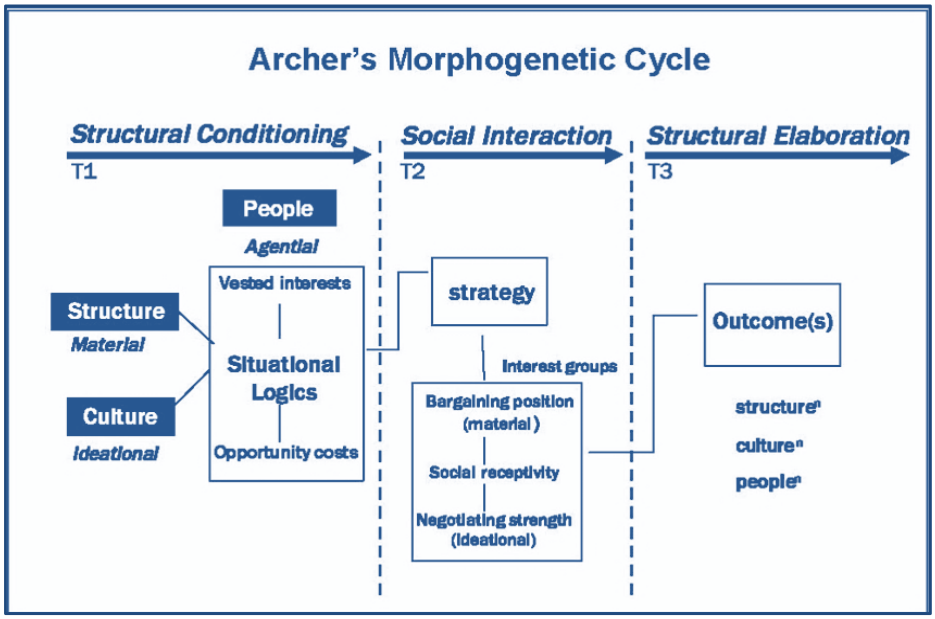
Archer (2020) writes that the ontological constitution of morphogenesis is dependent on the activity of agency and that any process that leads to social change requires the following:

- Structured human relations (context dependence)
- Human actions (activity-dependent)

Figure 17 illustrates morphogenesis as a methodological tool. Three temporal phases make up a single morphogenetic cycle that ends at T_4 in change or stasis. T_4 also represents the start of a new morphogenetic cycle.

Figure 17

The Three Temporal Phases of the Morphogenesis of Structure



Note. Reproduced from Wong (2005).

T_1–T_4 refers to the three temporal phases representing the flow of time. Each phase explains an aspect of the analytical process.

Chapter 6 emerges from the empirical data as set out in Table 2: Morphogenesis of Higher Education Leadership on pages 91 to 94. Each of the sections in this chapter discusses the interplay of agency with structures and culture within the university at T_2-T_3 of the morphogenetic cycle. Utilising data documents, literature reviews, and interviews, as well as following the methodological processes of analytical dualism, abduction, and retroduction, the research findings at T_2-T_3 shape this chapter. Whilst some aspects of the higher education landscape and conditioning are discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the explanatory tools of analytical dualism and retroduction are now applied to the leadership literature, participant interviews and document analysis, allowing for deeper exploration of causal mechanisms located in the domain of the Real. Chapter 6 explores the role of agency as a social actor within higher education in the reification of structure and culture.

6.2 ARCHER'S VIEWS ON IDENTITY AND LEADERSHIP

The concept of the social actor is key to the analyses of structural emerging properties (SEPs) and personal emerging properties (PEPs) that constrain or enable higher education leaders. This study explores the notion that identity is connected to social roles and dialectically linked to the emergence of causal mechanisms and the interplay between structural emerging properties (SEPs), cultural

emerging properties (CEPs) and the personal emerging properties (PEPs) of other agents in the domain of the Real.

Archer (2000, 2007) views self-identity as ontological and personal identity as emergent from the content of the experiences of the self (including convictions and emotional attitudes leading to commitments, actions and behaviours). Personal identity, as emergent from self-identity, is forged in the social structures and conventions of the context into which the individual is born. These could relate to race, gender, nationhood and ethnicity (Archer, 2000). The convictions of the self shape the personal identity that, in turn, is worked out in the natural, social and practical orders.

Archer (2000, 2012) views personal and social identities as shaped by reflexivity, as the individual considers the *sense of self*, *I, we* and *what we stand for* in the world. Archer speaks of the *me* that considers the role of self in society and argues that, as agents, we emerge owing to our concerns and projects in society (Archer 2000, p. 11). Our being shapes our becoming as "our sense of self is ontologically impermeable, unlike our personal and social identities which are epistemologically vulnerable" (Archer, 2000, p. 2).

It becomes possible to link Archer's (2000) identity theories to leadership theorists in building an understanding that leadership emerges over time, is ontological (therefore located at the level of the Real), and is linked to the sense of self – all of which have very important implications for exploring higher education leaders.

6.2.1 Other Theorists' Views on Identity and Leadership

Identity theorists support Archer's theoretical position on identity formation, as evidenced in the following discussion.

Cinoğlu and Arikan (2012) conducted an intensive literature review that revealed an agreement among scholars that identity and identity formation comprise three components, with the self as the primary actor in the identity formation process. Furthermore, Stryker and Burke (2000), together with Stets and Burke (2000, cited in Cinoğlu & Arikan, 2012), posit that identity formation begins with the individual's realisation and internalisation of social roles.

Drummond (2020, p. 236) considers self-identity transcendental, rooted in temporal structures of intentional experience, and that personal identity is forged in the content of this experience.

Personal identity is, therefore, reflexively emergent from the individual's convictions, as either passively or actively adopted by the self's experiences of social conventions, cultures, traditions and heritages (ibid).

Identity theorists Stets and Burke (2000) link the 'being' (ontology) of social identity theory and the 'doing' (epistemology) of identity theory as core to one's identity. Drummond (2020) cautions that a shift in social identity does not mean a change in personal identity. The theorists' (Drummond, 2020; Stets & Burke, 2000) point of view supports Archer's (2000, p. 2) approach to self as ontologically impermeable and the personal and social identity as epistemologically vulnerable.

Researchers are shifting from the position of being and doing to understanding the importance of 'becoming' in leadership (Lord et al., 2016). Scholars researching leadership identity write that it is not a matter of being but a matter of becoming (Ashforth, 1998, cited in Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003, p. 1164; Chernilo, 2017; Cinoğlu & Arikan, 2012; Stets & Burke, 2000). However, researchers concede that not enough studies have been done to understand the processes involved in identity formation (Alvesson, 1996; Knights & Willmott, 1992; Ashforth, 1998, cited in Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003, p. 1164). An important point in this study is the agreement among leadership scholars that self-identity is instrumental in regulating the leader's behavioural, affective, and cognitive processes (Baumeister & Vohs, 2003; Carver & Scheier, 1998; Lord et al., 2010, cited in Lord et al., 2016).

Van Knippenberg et al. (2005, p. 496) assert that the way a person perceives themselves (their self-concept or identity) will have a direct bearing on how that person feels, what they believe, the attitudes they hold, the goals they set, and the behaviour that they exhibit. Emery et al. (2011, p. 201) speak of self-identity as the "totality of the person's thoughts and feelings" as a separate entity. The work of Steyn (1995, p. 188) speaks of a self-schema as describing the knowledge structure of self. This self-schema represents the cognitive or residual memory of past interactions with the social environment. In other words, the self-schema represents the active working structures forming perceptions, memories, and emotional and behavioural responses. In essence, this is the leader's self-concept or self-identity. Murphy et al. (2008, pp. 252-253) state that the way a leader leads is directly linked to their self-perception or self-identity. To understand leadership in higher education, the exploration of the self-schema or self-identity of the leader becomes important (ibid).

Carless et al. (1998, p. 493) state that a leader will ignore feedback or be unwilling to change should this conflict with their self-schemas or self-identity. Stein (1995, p. 188) references research that confirms findings that leaders will only accept data that validate their self-schema or self-identity.

The work of Otto Scharmer (2008, p. 52) highlights the need to understand the "inner place" from which leaders lead and that self-identity forms a vital part of leadership (Emery et al., 2011, p. 20). Alimo-Metcalf (1998, p. 37), Rothstein and Burke (2010, p. 4-5), and Murphy et al. (2008, p. 259), all cited in Pienaar and Nel (2017) assert the need for further research on the self-identity of the leader, as the implications of understanding the self, have a direct influence on understandings of leadership.

Extrapolating the work of researchers mentioned in the above paragraph to Archer's social realist theory on identity and leadership as a social construct can be seen to be epistemologically located as a mechanism with its structural emergent properties (SEPs). In critical realism, leadership is evidenced and experienced by leaders and followers in the actual and empirical domains**.** Humans are fallible, and, as such, leaders are fallible beings, making the experience of leadership prone to error and shortcomings. Leadership research focusing on identifying the antecedents of leadership also becomes fallible because the invisible mechanisms at the level of the Real are not taken into account (Archer, 2000, 2012). The same set of circumstances in similar events and activities will not necessarily have the same leadership effects, even if the conditions are the same. This is overlooked in the plethora of leadership development courses and theories offering typologies of leadership. In the context of this study, an added layer of complexity is the tendential, transient nature of the interplay between PEPs, SEPs and CEPs and leadership identity within the university. The implications are that leaders' projects and activities that lead to change in one institution will not always lead to change when replicated, even if the structural and cultural conditions are the same. Chapter 6 draws on leadership theorists to support Archer's (1998) morphogenetic theory through the method of retroduction.

6.3 SOCIAL ACTORS AND HIGHER EDUCATION IDENTITY FORMATION

Individuals constantly strive to shape their identities and have their identities impinged upon by discursive powers and properties within organisations (Archer, 2000; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003, p. 1165). Identities, in turn, shape, and are shaped by the roles social that actors choose to take up, as well as by the identity of the organisation itself, as this affects the way individuals think and feel about their work (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003, p. 1168).

As already indicated, social realism moves away from the notion that who we are is a result of sociocultural powers and forces at work on people. The sense of self is formed at birth and precedes our sociality. It is through interaction with the world that the individual's self-consciousness is shaped (Archer, 2000, p. 7).

Research Participant F shares the following reflection on the emergence of their personal identity:

> But I suppose that first three years at the [X University] … was hugely formative and because you were amongst people who looked like you, spoke like you, had similar backgrounds as you, that was also a hugely important safe space in hindsight, where there were opportunities to grow in confidence and in ways that perhaps would not have been possible in a historically white university. And that's where I cut my teeth on initial student politics, and that's when my understanding rapidly began to grow, and I became quite politicised. So, that first experience at [X University] at the age of just over 17 was hugely formative in my life. And so whatever happens after that, and when I do move to the university in 1978, after three years of [X University], really becomes an extension of what began at [X University], and it becomes a development and maturation of my political interests and involvement and so on. (Research Participant F, October 2017)

The interviewee's reflection on their formative years shows the push and pull of emerging powers and properties exerted on the individual from birth in the natural, practical and social orders of the society into which they were born. The continuous sense of self emerges throughout the individual's stages of life and is synonymous with being human in what Archer (2000) calls self-identity (p. 10). Research Participant F draws on the past self and personal identity's powers and properties extending into the continuous emergence of personal identity. This, in turn, is shaped by interests in the natural, practical and social orders. An important point to note is that the PEPs of Research Participant F's personal identity draw on SEPs and CEPs in the structural and cultural domain of the X University's political ideology as an opposing emergent property to the constraints of the Apartheid state exerted by the dominant SEPs in the sociostructural domain.

This concept of a continuous sense of self-emergence over time is further elaborated on by Research Participant C's reflection below:

> And so, from a young age, I was always given independence: I had a bicycle, I used to navigate, I used to, you know, I was in command of my own life in a sense. My mom and dad both worked; neither of them had a university education. But I could navigate and get around. I had the freedom to move. I started working at a young age. My first job was a volunteer job in junior school. I helped out at the local municipal library Saturday morning. Then, in high school, I had a number of holiday jobs to raise pocket money for myself. I worked in a bakery, I worked in a departmental store, I worked for a doctor as a receptionist, and so on. And I

> think all of these experiences helped to form the sort of organisational and strategic and sort of qualities that I think I have in my leadership. (Research Participant C, September 2017)

Research Participant C is cognisant of how past experiences have shaped their leadership and of the way the emergence of a continuous sense of self shaped their emerging personal identity through selectively interacting with the sociostructural domain. Participant C was born into a social group that had privileges that other social groupings could not access, and this provided more enabling conditions in the form of opportunities to exercise social agency. These enablements included access to social goods such as social positioning and choice at a young age, as well as to material goods in the form of a bicycle and holiday jobs.

The continuous sense of self and the personal emergent powers and properties (PEPs) determining leadership practices and choices can only be accessed through reflexivity and is reflexively understood (Archer, 2000, 2012; Chernilo, 2017). This perspective is clearly evidenced in the reflexive processes of the research participants as they share reflections and recollections of their personal identity and social identity formation.

The individual self reflexively engages with the socio-cultural domain, and the interplay of their PEPs with the generative mechanisms in the form of SEPs and CEPs leads to the formation of the individual's unique personal identity. The projects and concerns that the individual chooses to take up or forgo shape their personal identity and their personal integrity and that which they value through the choices they make as a consequence of the interplay of their PEPs with CEPs and SEPs in the contexts they encounter (Archer, 2000).

During the interview process, the following research participant shared how their love of teaching was shaped by experience and the freedom to choose, thereby revealing the interplay of personal identity with the socio-cultural domain during their formative years:

> It was an obvious thing to do teaching. But I discovered very early on, and I think it was because of my subject area. Geography was just . . . I loved [it] at school and the thought of being able to teach it and do exciting things with young people. I think … what made it was the people interaction. It made me choose teaching as opposed to librarianship or something like that. The other interesting thing at university, with geography was that I was very keen in my third year of doing geography and doing town planning. I absolutely loved doing geography, and again, you know, that would give you the spatial planning aspect of who I am. (Research Participant C, October 2017)

Research Participant C does not consider the prior context as constraining. Rather, it enables the emergence of the individual's modus vivendi. Birth into a social stratum that privileged certain groups above others provided opportunities for career choices to be pursued.

The formation of the personal and social identity of Research Participant C is very different from that of Research Participant F, because of the socio-cultural emergent powers and properties which constrained the choices as to where each could live and study, and which career pathway each could follow. Despite the sociostructural and cultural constraints imposed on Research Participant F and the flipside offered to Research Participant C, both chose higher education as their modus vivendi, emerging as social actors in the same educational institution, with very different ways of approaching their projects. So, too, the emergent powers and properties of self and personal identity – forged in very different social strata – shaped their leadership styles as social actors. How Participant C and Participant F engage the sociostructural and cultural domain differs, as the institutional structures and cultural emergent properties exert different enablements and constraints on each, based on their social classification and institutional positioning. The way they exercise their PEPs as social actors through the choices they make and the projects they choose to pursue is shaped by their self-identity, emerging personal identity, and social identity (Archer, 2007, 2000; Stets & Burke, 2000).

Archer (2000, 2007) draws on the work of Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) and Piaget (1896–1980). All people become primary agents at birth, placed into social stratification with their assigned resources, without personal choice (Archer, 2000). As part of this collective or social position, privileged or non-privileged, individuals share the same life chances as everyone else within their social group. This view is shared by Stets & Burke (2000). Whether primary agents remain within this space depends on their reflexivity and desire to transform (Archer, 2007, 2013). The possibility of change depends on how they reflexively exercise their PEPs in choosing to become part of a group willing to engage in collective action towards social change. This group, known as corporate agency, may or may not emerge, depending on the tendential nature of CEPs and SEPs in the sociocultural domain that can enable or constrain their transformational efforts. It is through the activities of corporate agency that positions and roles are created, giving rise to the emergence of the social actor who may choose to take up the positions and projects as situational opportunities. The research participant's activities in the following interview excerpt illustrate the emergence of corporate agency and the social actor:

> I was born in [Town] in [Province], to a family – mother and father – who were from a working-class background. Went to school there, I went to a boarding school for my high school then to University [Y] and that's where one became politically conscientised, got involved in student politics, the student formation, I think at university I got a lot more involved in

> leadership positions. And then from University [Y], I went to the USA and did my doctoral studies at [Z] University where one was *called upon* to exercise leadership. In the African Student Association, for example, I became the president of the organisation and held lots of positions there. (Research Participant B, July 2017)

The social identity of Research Participant B emerges through interaction of the PEPs of corporate agency and the PEPs of the social actor leading to change in the sociostructural domain through the appointment of the social actor to a leadership role. Research Participant B's decision to accept the leadership nomination is contingent on whether the social position has resonance with and relationality to self-identity and the emerging personal identity which is dialectically linked to the social identity. According to Archer (2000), this aligns the social actor's modus vivendi to their projects and concerns in the world and allows them to take up the leadership positions, thus becoming a social actor. All of this is reflexively mediated (Archer, 2007, 2012, 2013). While the social actor acts within their own personal identity as an individual with their own PEPs, the role or position they choose to occupy also has its own SEPs. The process of becoming politically conscientised is best described in the work by Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010, cited in Lord et al., 2016) as a theoretical construct [ontological dimension] that integrates the individual's knowledge, structures and motivations into the construct of personal identity that draws on the past, interprets this in the present, and projects this into the future.

Research Participant F, Research Participant C and Research Participant B are born into very different sets of circumstances. Their social identity in relation to their personal identity is reflexively mediated by drawing on personal powers and properties in the cultural and structural domains as they engage with distinct cultural and structural mechanisms. This might involve engaging with discourses and beliefs requiring a letting go of past frames of references or constructs.

Archer (2000) states that, although personal identity and social identity are dialectically linked, personal identity always forms the meta-frame (p. 12). It is the individual who identifies which project or interest to invest in; how they will shape the role or project; and, ultimately, what the emergence of their social identity will look like in relation to the role.

> So, as much as it would have been tempting just to go back to [University W] where I would have been very comfortable, there were others who were saying, "Well, look..." So, in total, there were seven choices for me after [my previous position], none of them guaranteed, none of them anointed. Some of them were entirely greenfield virgin territory where you would have to start something from scratch and I had a great joy of doing that with [my previous

position] of being one person in 1999 and leaving it in 2006 as [an entity] of almost 50 people. (Research Participant A, August 2017)

Participant A's personal identity, shaped within the natural, practical and social domains, comes to the fore when deciding how much to give of themself to their social identity and what they are prepared to forfeit in the process. The social actor's choices and commitments are reflexively deliberated on continually. Bargh et al. (2008) call this "episodic memory" which is the ability to draw on the past as we continuously locate the self in the present, in all situations continuously interpreting whether what is presented in the sociostructural domain meets our goals and needs. The personal identity in this process becomes the mediating structure linking contextualised understandings of what is confronting the individual to situationally appropriate actions (Lord et al., 2016) as a continuous emergence as a consequence of the interplay of PEPs, SEPs and CEPs (Archer, 2012).

Agreeing with Archer's (2007) social realist explanation of identity formation, Emmeche (2015) likens the complexity of the formation of agency in relation to the sociocultural domain as semiotic scaffolding. This scaffolding involves a layering of the self, personal identity and social identity and is continually shaped through the interplay between agency and the sociostructural and sociocultural domain as the individual engages with the world around them (ibid).

6.3.1 Individualism and Collectivism

What Archer (2000, p. 8) terms 'upward conflation' constructs human beings ('modernity's man') as capable of creating society through the choices they make. For Archer (2000, p. 8), "modernity's man knows the price of everything and the value of nothing". Archer debunks the notion of modernity's man as existing outside the order of reality, therefore incapable overcoming rationality in order to develop ultimate concerns (ibid). It is humanity's ultimate concerns that people have about one another that forms the essence of personal identity (Archer, 2013, p. 13).

In cultures where individualism is valued, members of society are viewed as autonomous separate entities, free to pursue personal goals without consideration for the collective, and this conditions the exercise of their agency in the future. This notion is linked to that of the 'enlightened man' (Archer, 2000). Being unique and able to exercise self-expression as an independent agent are considered to be positive characteristics. In other cultures, the self is considered part of the whole with shared goals. Personal characteristics are shaped towards the social context with high value being placed on group harmony and collective expression (ibid). An example of this way of being could be collective cultures

in Africa shaped by the notion of Ubuntu[9]. These preferences become sociocultural emergent properties that tendentially influence the social actor during their decision-making processes. As a result, some individuals are conditioned by the values of communalism before taking up leadership roles. Another consideration is cultural norms. Tight cultures strictly enforce social norms and loose cultures do not (Gelfand et al., 2006; Gelfand et al., 2011, cited in Yates & De Oliveira, 2016). There is a tendency toward tight cultures, that is to adhere to collective decision-making, and loose cultures to value individual decision-making processes. Decision making in a collective will involve taking into account the perspectives, values and views of others. It is not only an expected way, but a valued way of decision making (Savani, 2011, cited in Yates & de Oliveira, 2016). The opposite holds for individualistic cultures where individuals determine their own course.

The notion of individualism and academic autonomy and the cultural emerging properties that emerge from these discourses can be seen to stand in opposition to other discourses dominant in the contemporary higher education space. Neoliberal discourses, such as those promoting managerialism and New Public Management (NPM)[10] work to form collectives to deliver on an institutional or national imperative (Ferlie et al., 1996). As a result, the university, faculty boards, senate and council may experience NPM as a set of emerging causal mechanisms that act in constraining or enabling the projects and concerns of higher education leaders.

The university forming the focus of this study performs in a way that conflicts with the structural and cultural norms and values of individuals working within this space. The university is following the NPM model as is illustrated in the extract below from an interview where a research participant speaks of the constraints experienced as a result of new management practices:

9 Ubuntu as a worldview is difficult to define. It has been described as a philosophy of life, which in its most fundamental sense represents personhood, humanity, humaneness and morality; a metaphor that describes group solidarity where such group solidarity is central to the survival of communities with a scarcity of resources, where the fundamental belief is that motho ke motho ba batho ba bangwe/umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu which, literally translated, means a person can only be a person through others. In other words the individual's whole existence is relative to that of the group, this is manifested in anti-individualistic conduct towards the survival of the group if the individual is to survive (Mokgoro, 1998, p. 1)

10 According to Bleiklie (2018, p. 1), new public management can be described as a model [or construct prescribing] the quality and efficiency of the [university] that involves the introduction of management techniques and practices predominantly from the private sector. The result is that universities become complete organisations with clear goals and strategic objectives (ibid).

> You also want to institute a culture where people think freely and there was no groupthink as far as possible, your way is actually taking away autonomy and it's becoming too top-down and so on. (Research Participant F, November 2017)

In addition, in the following interview extract, the research participant speaks of the constraints experienced as a result of new approaches to management:

> Quite a few of our academics have accused us of moving towards managerialism; that managerialism is taking over. I don't know what it's like at other universities, so I don't know. There is a little bit more red tape that we have to go through. A lot of this is fobbed off onto HoDs, which I think this is unfair on HoDs. Their time should be spent making academic decisions and not be managing people and filling in forms. What's interesting: we've had from the Fees Must Fall many disgruntled, mainly female black academics, young academics who were offered jobs at other universities and they left. Almost every single one of them wants to come back. And I have a suspicion it is because there is performance management. They have to clock-in; they have to write a certain number of papers; they have to be there all the time; they get told what to do. So that could either be that we actually aren't that managerial as other universities or that we're actually quite slack and that we should be expecting a [lot] more work from our academics, who might think that they only have to work 26 weeks a year and once they've marked their papers their work is done and they can go on holiday. (Research Participant E, October 2017)

The individual's personal identity and their reflexive being will draw on the cultural norms when making life choices, as they determine which projects to take up and which roles to embrace (Archer, 2013). The way in which they then exercise agency in these roles is contingent on the interplay between PEPs, SEPs and CEPs. An example of how powerful the emergence of PEPs in higher education leadership settings is illustrated by the following interview excerpt:

> So I am meant to be chairing and I find this very odd. The registrar is there, the finance registrar is there, the director of finance is there, the director of communication is there, and so I say to the registrar quietly, as people are getting their teas and coffees: "So where are the deans?" and I was told the deans are not part of this body. So I didn't say anything, but I said to myself, "This is very interesting. The core of the university who are the six deans, are not considered to be part of the senior management of the university. That's interesting".
>
> Then I went back to the so-called senior management group and said, "Listen, colleagues, this is no offence to you, but I find something bizarre here.

> You and I are actually here to serve the academic project. The academic project is not in this room, and this is a very dangerous situation, so I assume you won't be having any real opposition if I invite the deans next week and if the senior management is reconstituted as the deans plus the heads of different areas". And, of course, even if they had wanted to contest that, no-one said a word. So, within a few months, the senior management was reconstituted to include all the deans. Of course, the deans were very happy and then, in due course, we then changed certain things. We called that the Academic Leadership Forum. (Research Participant F, October 2017)

Research Participant F reflexively drew on their personal identity and social actor PEPs in affecting change in the structural domain by creating a forum that changed the modus vivendi of the so-called 'senior management team' and, as a result, the way the university leadership was constructed. By drawing on the discursive mechanism constructing the academic project as led by the professoriate, the institutional leader transformed the leadership structure and culture from the constraints of managerialist approaches, thus enabling triple morphogenesis in the domains of structure, culture and agency (Archer, 2000, 2007, 2013).

Leadership theorists state that leaders are not always in control or do not always have the freedom to choose in determining a leadership pathway, as leadership theory often suggests (Beinhocker, 2006; North, 2005; Shaw, 2002; Shaw, 2005, cited in Karp & Helgo, 2008; Stacey, 2003). Researchers also agree that the behaviours of leaders are complex and ambiguous and that the best the leader can do is to be aware that what will emerge from their leadership in a space cannot be controlled (Karp & Helgo, 2008).

6.3.2 Emotions and Leadership

Archer (2000) writes that emotions form one of the main constituents of our inner being (p. 194) and are intertwined in the natural (physical well-being), practical (performative competence), and social (self-worth) orders of reality. Emotions are distinct from moods and give rise to expressions or commentaries on the leader's concerns. Emotions can either lead to inaction or action on the part of the leader (Archer 2007, p. 13). Emotions carry emerging powers and properties are causal mechanisms produced by significant events, and are not part of a stimulus-response process. As generative mechanisms, emotions are tendential, forming part of our irrational being and are fallible (Archer, 2000).

Further research by Sy et al. (2005) suggests that the leader not only influences the collective, but the emotions of the leader also affect the mood of the leader-follower. The notion of the leader's emotions as contagion is explored by Hatfield et al. (2014). This implies that a leader's emotions can be transferred to others. Furthermore, individuals are often not aware that the leader's emotions are influencing their own emotional state (Neumann & Strack, 2000). This could be due to people mimicking and synchronising the movements and facial expressions of those with whom they interact (Hatfield et al., 2014).

This mood-congruency or effect infusion (Forgas & George, 2001, cited in Bono & Ilies, 2006; Dinh & Lord, 2012) has led to the understanding that emotions pose a structure on memory. When a leader expresses a certain emotion, for example happiness, memories and judgements consistent with that emotion are stirred in those around them (Dinh & Lord, 2012). Therefore, a leader's experience and mood are not merely transferred to followers. They evoke strong memories that affect their emotional state (Sy et al., 2005). This has profound importance for organisations such as universities because of their hierarchical nature and the power-laden positions held by leaders (ibid). Since followers form emotional attachments to leaders (ibid), emotions carry powers and properties that allow for motivational states of followers to function as mechanisms in a university setting:

> I said this last year: the last 18 months have been the most traumatic of my career. It's been incredibly emotionally draining because you feel and empathise with the students, but, you know, often it's just the means that they've gone about these things, you know, the destruction of property, which I certainly can't condone. I struggled with that. I have been right at the forefront of it being a dean and being in all the meetings and having to respond to the demands. It's been hard in that it's not always rationality that prevails and, as much as you try to respond and try and meet the responses, we would just be presented with a new set of responses and often there was demands … there were things out of the university's hands. They were much bigger, sort of societal and political issues that we can't resolve. But I found the anger, that was a huge surprise for me. I just did not realise how angry young people were and could get, and dealing with that, ja. (Research Participant E, 2017)

When faced with emotional dilemmas such as those reported by Research Participant E, the emergent personal identity will choose to focus on the natural (physical wellbeing), practical (performative competence) or social (self-worth) order of reality through the inner conversations or reflexivity, although all three orders are reflexively engaged with at the same time (Archer, 2007).

Table 3 outlines the emergence of emotions as three distinct clusters linked to the natural, practical, and social orders.

Table 3

The Emergence of Emotions as Three Distinct Clusters Linked to the Natural, Practical and Social Order

Object of Emotions	Concerns	Imports	Emergence From
Natural order	Physical well-being	Visceral	Body–environment relations
Practical order	Performative achievement	Competence	Subject–object relations
Social order	Self-worth	Normative	Subject–subject relations

Note. Reproduced from Archer (2007)

Emotional reactions to events draw on the social actor's ultimate concern and, in turn, affect the social role and self-worth together with the way practical concerns emerge as decisions. This includes how the practical shows up in terms of the leaders' decision-making and performance (Archer, 2005).

Research Participant E's primary concern is located in the natural order, through the emergence of body–environment relations (Archer, 2000), expressed through a love for geography and teaching, as stated in the earlier text:

> But I discovered very early on and I think it was because of my subject area. Geography was just, I loved [it] at school and the thought of being able to teach it and do exciting things with young people. (Research Participant E, October 2017)

The event that triggered the emotional PEPs in Research Participant E was traumatic as it conflicted with the participant's ultimate concerns about spatial planning and teaching in the natural order. Responding to the situation brought into play this leader's emotions in the practical order and social order. The leader's emotions and the related emergent powers and properties constrain them from being able to respond effectively to emergent powers and properties in the domains of structure and culture. The leader draws on the emergent powers and properties of reflexivity in order to respond in a process called symbolic interactionism (Holmes, 2010), where emotion and reason intertwine in a process of feeling and reflexivity termed by Burkitt (2012: pp. 458) as emotional reflexivity.

The ensuant emotional reflexivity influences the leader's actions and decision-making, and the interplay between emerging PEPs, SEPs and CEPs creates sociostructural elaboration or morphostasis within the institution.

Another example of emotional reflexivity is observed in the following extract:

> I'm reasonably comfortable there are a number of rules and regulations – those [that] are quite straightforward and those [that] are codified – and I have absolutely no qualms in applying a rule. I'm not going to give you a degree until such time that you have earned it. I don't laugh off a whole lot of courses. And I think I can say I'm unemotional about it; if you haven't got the things, you are not going to get a degree, and I'll explain it to you, and the story is over. (Research Participant A, September 2017)

The interviewee explained the conscious exercise of emotional reflexivity in order to uphold institutional structures and used this in the decision-making process. In doing so, the leader displays a personal identity preference for the practical order, as in Table 4.

Table 4

Emergence of Emotional Reflexivity in the Practical Order

Practical order	Performative achievement	Competence	Subject–object relations

Note. Adapted from Archer (2007).

6.4 SOCIAL ACTORS AND REFLEXIVITY

Archer (2003) states that reflexivity is the mental capacity of people to understand and consider themselves in relation to their social context (p. 4). This should not be confused with Goleman's (1996) concept of emotional intelligence, which is an increased awareness of emotions for the sake of performance enhancement in the work environment, as argued by Burkitt (2012). A critical stance would involve asking the question: Whose emotions are being identified as intelligent? Researchers, such as Clarence (2021, p. 221), claim that ideal conceptions of agents in the university as "rational, objective, capable of reason and master of their emotions and thinking" stem from ideas that first emerged in the Enlightenment of 17th and 18th century Europe.

> The second formative, hugely formative experience for me was the Soweto Uprising of 1976, and that's when my eyes opened to politics. So, I would say that I'm the Soweto of the '76 generation. That year I came to understand a lot about the nature of the society that I lived in

> and there were people who were linked to the Black Consciousness Movement and people were linked to the Unity Movement at X University, as indeed there were people linked to the ANC. [These] were all hugely important in answering the kind of questions I had, and so on. So that was very formative in moving beyond simply an anti-white perspective to becoming much more educated about the nature of South African society and that one had to also look beyond questions of race, to look at questions of class and economic domination, and so on. So, Soweto '76 Uprising also then set me on a certain trajectory. (Research Participant B, 2017)

Also

> So I was interviewed on 12th September; it's a very historic day, 2005, the day that Biko was killed. So that's how I ended up at [this university], so it was a kind of national duty again if I might put it that way, but it was a choice that I made, and my family made. (Interview Participant D, 2017)

These extracts illustrate the reflexivity of higher education leaders in relation to their context. As Archer (2000, 2003, 2007, 2012) states, reflexivity in the form of the "internal conversation" enables social actors to exercise their PEPs to mediate SEPs and CEPs.

This turn in internal conversation emerges from the dialectical relationship between the emergent powers and properties of the higher education leader's role (SEPs) and the emergent powers and properties of the personal identity of the leaders (PEPs), which are informed by the self. Research Participant B reflects on a transformative moment in drawing on PEPs in order to engage with structural and cultural constraints in the sociocultural and structural domain in the extract from the previous interview.

The ability to conduct dialogue with the self is an emergent power, and this inner dialogue forms a dialectical relationship between social identity and personal identity, which is emergent from the continuous sense of self. Research Participant B lets go of a constraint in the form of perceptions of the power of a social group privileged thanks to apartheid. Reflexivity results in an ontological shift of being, as well as deliberations on the way that engagement with a structural and cultural domain steeped in racism could proceed. Participant B's emergent personal identity is dialectically linked to the social identity through reflexivity or the inner conversation, and it enabled the ability to draw on values of the self embedded in experience and together with their ultimate concerns (Archer, 2000). This capacity to articulate our concerns and what we care about in a social role and personifying this expression is the essence and expression of the social identity (ibid).

6.4.1 Self-awareness, Reflection and Reflexivity

Sturm et al. (2014) speak of self-awareness as the leader's ability to see themselves in relation to how others may see them as leaders (p. 658). Butler et al. (2014) state that increased self-awareness in leaders leads to heightened consciousness of how their behaviour affects others. The leader's success can be dialectically linked to their success as a leader and the success of the organisation (p. 87-88). Taylor (2010) extends the argument for self-awareness, stating that the development of the leader depends on this self-awareness, which, in turn, is linked to the psychological well-being of the leader (p. 58).

Reflection is concerned with finding patterns, logic and order, and spotlighting assumptions and beliefs, and thoughts and feelings pertaining to the experience in the process of proactive critical reflection (Boud et al., 1985; Cunliffe, 2002; Gray, 2007, cited in Vickers, 2010). This point of view is outlined in the following extract:

> But I found it very useful to design for myself this kind of idea of how do I work around the notions of visibility, impact and outcomes. How do you maximise the outcomes once you're in your stride, and impact and so on, and so I can also then use that to reflect critically on whether you got the balance right and whether you should have maximised some of the outcomes earlier rather than later and so on. (Research Participant D, 2017)

Vickers (2010) helps to understand this interview statement by noting the distinct difference between reflexivity and reflection within sociocultural conditioning and how social actors choose to exercise their PEPs. Research Participant F exercises agency to draw on SEPs and CEPs through reflexivity but also engages in reflection of the experience at a cognitive level in terms of outcomes and impact.

The participant's response in the following extract makes this distinction clear:

> To be honest, I've actually decided I've got better research to work on than something like that, even though I think it could be important, not because of a single story but about a reflection, as possible, about what perhaps I would do differently if I was given, if I was starting again. So, I have a good sense of those things in my head, and if I ever have to do, you put it on paper, but I'm really more excited about the book [I am writing now], and that's what I want to be concentrating on for my next book. (Research Participant B, August 2017)

The research participant distinguishes reflection as part of a process that involves an output and a cognitive process, such as research and an outcome involving engagement in universities at a practical level.

6.4.2 Reflexive Mediation

It becomes possible to argue that the modes of reflection and reflexivity are socially contingent on the interplay between CEPs and SEPs and the conditioning of the environment in determining how and whether the higher education leader chooses to exercise their PEPs, as well as whether the higher education leader will draw on reflexive PEPs or whether this will become a reflective engagement. Reflection is limited to the individual, whereas reflexivity as a causal mechanism draws on the CEPs and SEPs to create change in the sociostructural domain.

As a mediating mechanism, reflexivity can lead to the university leader's morphogenesis or morphostasis. Therefore, being self-aware or reflective is insufficient when seeking to effect change in the sociostructural and cultural domain (Stirling, 2006; Vickers, 2010).

This point is illustrated by one of the research participants as follows:

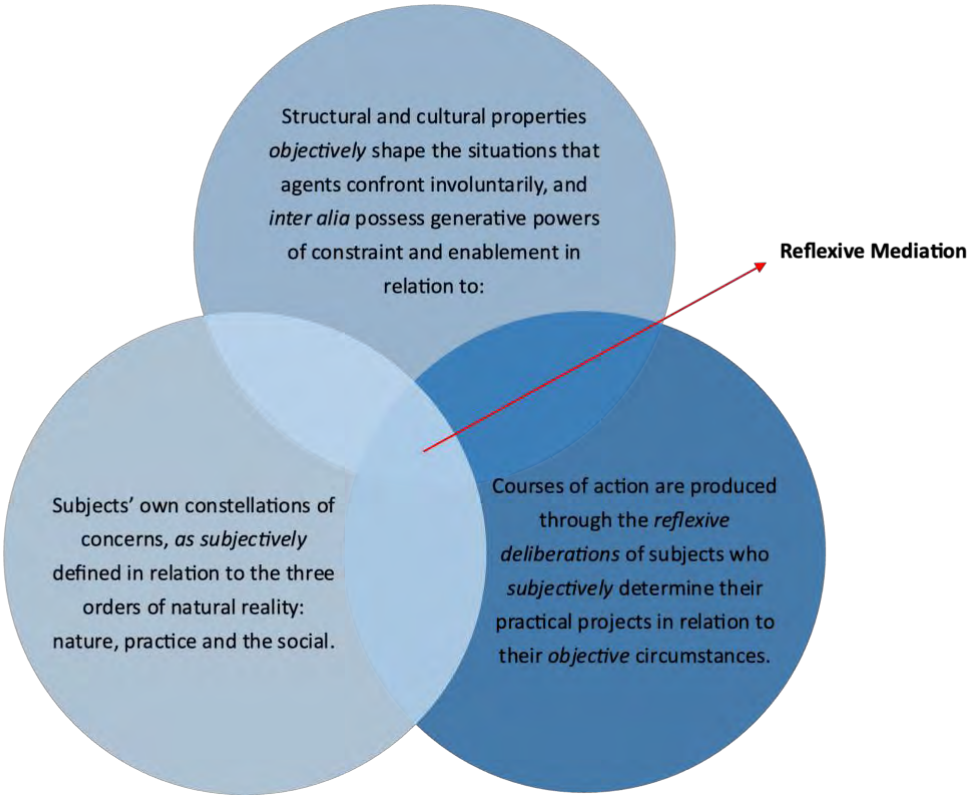
> At that point, I had indicated that to the Minister, and the Minister had said to me, "Well, what do you think you might want to do now?" And the Minister engaged me along one set of trajectories about possibly how you could contribute to the country. And this idea of you just going back and becoming a researcher and a lecturer back at V University is a little naïve. You cannot simply do that now, [having acquired] all the knowledge and expertise over the last seven years. You need to think beyond just being a researcher and a lecturer. (Research Participant A, 2017)

Research Participant A's narrative shows reflexive mediation of the projects and concerns that matter most in the desire to effect change in the higher educational landscape. When the leader encounters the generative CEPs and SEPs, a process of reflexive mediation occurs (in the natural, practical and social orders) and the invested concerns of the leader. It is through this process that Research Participant A subjectively determines its course of action considering objective circumstances.

Research Participant A's experience is explained by Archer's (2017) process of reflexive mediation and is captured in the Tree Stage Model in Figure 18.

Figure 18

The Three-Stage Model Illustrating Archer's Process of Reflexive Mediation



Note. Reproduced from Archer (2017, p. 17).

6.5 SOCIAL ACTORS AND CORPORATE AGENCY

As stated, Archer distinguishes between two types of agency: primary agency, which is undetermined in focus and direction, and corporate agency, which has determined a modus vivendi or goal by forming organised interest groups (Archer, 1995). It is the primary agency that forms the milieu that ensures the reification of structures and perpetuates a system or reproduction of structures (Ibid).

Karlsson (2020) notes that, more often than not, corporate agency, formal and informal, constrains primary agents. The role of agency is more complex than it might seem, and the impression that primary agents can transform themselves into a group of corporate agents if they can access opportunities and goods, be they economic, social, or structural, is flawed.

By artificially separating agency from structure and culture, it becomes possible to explore the interplay of corporate agency and social actors in the university context. How corporate agents undergo morphogenesis to assume leadership positions as social actors is contingent on their ability to mediate the sociocultural and structural enablements and constraints of the institution.

In the South African context, the Apartheid legacy continues to constrain the morphogenesis of agency. Although the structural constraints of segregationist policy and practice may have been removed formally, cultural constraints remain. So, too, do individuals who use their personal powers and properties and the SEPs accruing from the roles to which they have been appointed to draw on racial and social inequalities to further their individual agendas and projects.

Research Participant A reflects on points in the preceding paragraph in the following statement:

> There's a smug satisfaction there, but, yeah, so how do you engage around that, on the one hand, being loyal to the institution, on the other hand, recognising that this is what you have to work with? To be honest, and gradually people retiring, and hopefully you're bringing new blood in, and not having the money to suggest to a whole lot of people, "Don't you want to go and farm maybe?" because you certainly don't seem to be wanting to bring about any major changes at the university. (Research Participant A, 2017)

In many respects, the powerful and privileged groups who dominated during Apartheid remain in place in higher education institutions to this day (Bunting, 2006). Govinder et al. (2013) term this an embarrassment, and Soudien et al. (2008, cited in Breetzke & Hedding, 2017) describe leaders' attempts towards transformation as painfully slow.

Research Participant A states that what could be mistaken for loyalty in white senior male academics (Bunting, 2006; Soudien, 2008) could be a constraint.

Archer (2007) writes that, as a collective, when corporate agents seek transformation, the system becomes modified in the process. Accepting, and not challenging, conditioning mechanisms by waiting for leaders to leave or retire could be linked back to dependency on power relations between those with resources and those without, between those that discriminate and those discriminated against, in that Research Participant B connects money with institutional change. Material reasons or vested interests of institutional leaders constrain the morphogenesis or transformation of structures, thus perpetuating the social conditioning within the university.

Archer (2007, p. 267) gets to the heart of the issue by asking, "What are the conditions for morphostasis or morphogenesis of social agency?" One could extend the question to include "*and for the transformation of the university and its leadership to be realised*?" Leaders need to undergo double morphogenesis by moving from being corporate agents to becoming social actors. However, this change does not mean that institutional transformation will follow in terms of the morphogenesis of the structures or culture of the institution.

6.6 THE BLIND SPOT

Leadership theorists often focus on leaders' dispositions (Foti & Hauenstein, 2007; Wolff et al., 2012). The term ‘leadership blind spot’ describes a leader unwilling to receive feedback from those around them or unable to see and acknowledge their own bias and prejudice. Blakely (2007) states that all leaders have blind spots and that it is the self-aware leader who seeks to overcome this limitation.

The inability of leaders to see themselves the way others do could result in them asking the question: “What would it be like to work with this person as a leader”? The development of self-awareness is not often understood, as this may relate to the people positioned around them contributing to its development through challenge and discussion. The challenge for, and the inability of, followers to give leaders feedback does create conditions for behaviours and beliefs that constrain transformation. Blind spots can result in poor decision-making and unwanted consequences. Blind spots are rooted in the self-perception of how the leader sees themselves and their self-identity.

While social structures condition the leader on what can and cannot be done by positioning the leader in a certain way, it is the leader that, through activities and projects, *strategies* and, in doing so, effects elaboration or stasis. Failure to act leads to structural morphostasis. Dinh et al. (2014) identify strategic leadership together with contextual leadership as an emergent theory which concurs with the views of Archer (2013) and Danermark et al. (2002).

However, Research Participant F identifies a constraint on the ability to strategise in the form of work demands and their impact on well-being. One participant explains how this affects the exercise of agency:

> So that’s a way of saying, look, you can go in with all kinds of wonderful ideas. You then discover that you’re already working 15/16 hours a day, but you also have to make sure you don’t completely burn yourself out. So, yeah, it’s always a challenge around what’s an appropriate strategy and tactics, what’s the appropriate pace, and so on. But, on the other hand, you also learn that if you’re not more assertive ... assertive is perhaps the right word … I don’t want to use the word ‘aggressive’ or something like that. If you don’t, then some things don’t happen sometimes, and you have those regrets later on. (Research Participant F, 2017)

6.7 AGENTIAL ELABORATION AT T_2–T_3

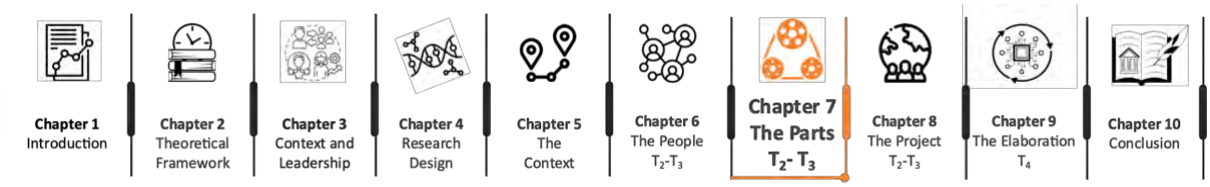
Lawler & Yoon (1996) state that class is embedded in people's history, and class mobility leads to dissonance between who you are and who you are becoming or the leader's self-identity and social identity. Furthermore, upward mobility between classes causes a sense of separation and loss of belonging, resulting in working-class individuals continuing to live their lives in the present and being unable to break from the past (ibid). Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) liken this to social structures exerting a destabilising and decentring notion of identity. In essence, this leads to the reproduction of social class as well as morphostasis within the social class (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; McLeod, 1991).

In South Africa, the issue of social class is complex because of Apartheid and the oppression of social mobility among black groups. In academic contexts, dominant 'ways of being', which, in critical realist terms, can be seen to emerge as sets of practices at the level of the actual and experiences at the level of the empirical as a result of the interplay of mechanisms, including discourses promoting particular values, are often identified as being white and middle class. This observation attests to the complexity of identity formation in the universities and to what might be valued and privileged as acceptable or not in a leader.

6.8 CONCLUSION

Archer (2007, 2000) brings hope when stating that the answer does not lie in upward or downward conflation. Hope springs from humanity's ability to transcend rationality and pursue ultimate concerns as individuals are dialectically engaged in shaping a sense of self with the concept of self. The ability to hold the space as a social actor or leader within higher education is therefore not contingent on the self (Archer, 2006) but rather on the nexus of reflexivity, thought, memory, emotionality and belief (ibid). In Chapter 7, the study focuses on agency and culture, utilising the morphogenetic theory to explore the activities of university leadership and cultural interaction at T_2–T_3.

7 CHAPTER 7: THE PARTS



The Parts refer to the emergent properties that arise from the relations between (emergent) structures and the people to embodied agents… . It is indeed profitable to distinguish between orderly or conflictual relations maintaining between groups of actors from orderly or conflictual relations prevailing between the parts of society – Archer, R. (2005)

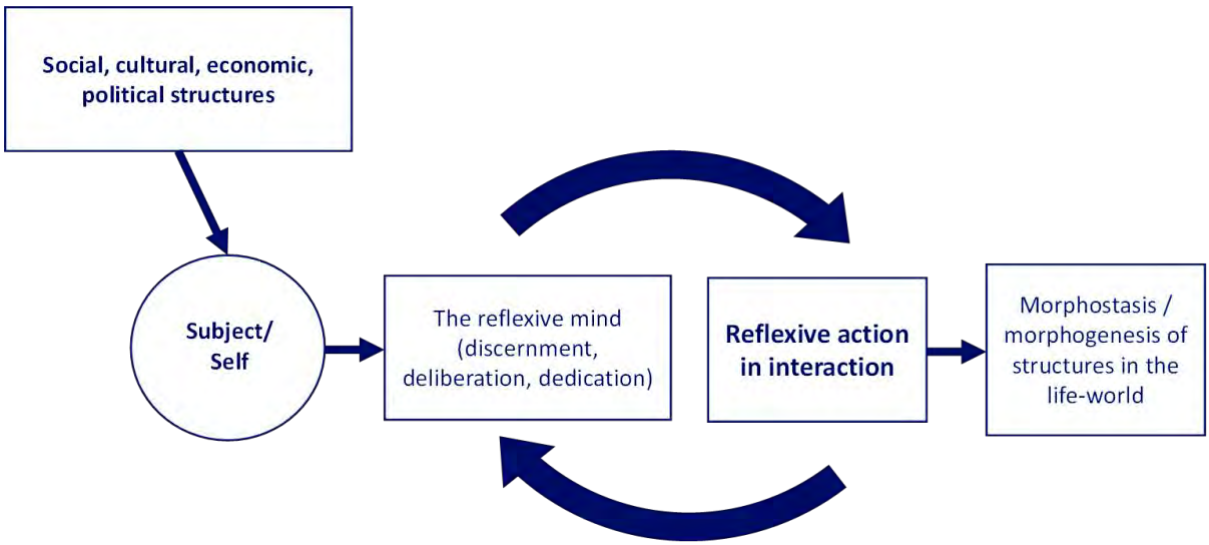
7.1 INTRODUCTION: SOCIO-STRUCTURE AT T_2–T_3

In South Africa, national education is governed by two governmental departments: the Department of Basic Education (DBE), responsible for primary and secondary school education (Grades R to 12) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). The apartheid legacy has had an impact on the entire educational system, with poor and marginalised communities most affected. Tertiary education is viewed by the marginalised as a path to social mobility and a way out of poverty (Chetty, 2014). The majority of black youth in the 18–24-year-old age group are excluded from higher education owing to economic and historical circumstances, and this then directly impinges on their ability to secure employment and an income. Despite the educational reform that has taken place since 1994, education continues to be structured along racial and class divides. This places tremendous pressure on university leaders. An added pressure is the poor throughput rate, with students sometimes taking up to six years to complete a three-year qualification, clogging the system and constraining new students from entering the system (Jeynes, 2016). These pressures are compounded by the quest for institutional efficiency flowing from the incentivised funding formula introduced in 2004 (Department of Education[DoE], 2004). In so many ways, equity and efficiency compete in South Africa. Underprepared students need more time to complete their degree, yet the funding formula rewards completion of the degree in minimum time. The answer has been seen to lie in improved teaching and curriculum design, but even here, institutional leaders face challenges (Scott et al., 2011). Curriculum change has not been achieved at a meaningful level despite all the calls made for curriculum renewal since the late 1980s (Boughey, 2023).

Donati (2013, p. 88) argues that an agency's engagement with structure is a matter of individual reflexivity at a structural and interpersonal level and is contextually specific. Figure 19 illustrates socio-structural engagement by reflexive agency (ibid).

Figure 19

Socio-Structural Engagement as Reflexive Agency



Note. Adapted from Donati (2013, p. 88).

In Chapter 6, covering The People: T_2–T_3, the research focus is on the formation of the leader as a social actor. Chapter 7, The Parts: T2–T3, utilises the morphogenetic cycle to explore the construct of leadership and how the leader engages with the socio-structural and cultural domain. This exploration draws on the implication of Donati's (2013) diagram in examining the implications and effects of structural emergent properties (SEPs) and cultural emergent properties (CEPs) on the personal emergent properties (PEPs) of the university leadership at T_2–T_3.

Chapter 7 emerges from the empirical data as set out in Table 2: Morphogenesis of Higher Education Leadership on pages 91 to 94. Each of the sections in this chapter discusses the interplay of agency with structures and culture within the university at T_2-T_3 of the morphogenetic cycle. Utilising data documents, literature reviews, and interviews, as well as following the methodological processes of analytical dualism, abduction, and retroduction, the research findings at T_2-T_3 shape this chapter. Whilst some aspects of the higher education landscape and conditioning are discussed in Chapters 2, 3 and 5, the explanatory tools of analytical dualism and retroduction are now applied to the leadership literature, participant interviews and document analysis, allowing for deeper exploration of causal mechanisms located in the domain of the Real. Chapter 7 explores the role of the university leader and the varying conjunctions with structure and culture that account for the reification of the social order. In doing so, an ontological distinction is made between the parts and the people within the university.

7.2 THE PARADOX OF LEADERSHIP

Griffin and Stacey (2005) state that the hegemonic forces are tilted towards the leader in the leader-follower relationship. While power may be invested in the leader, this can change at any time. Leadership, according to Karp and Helgo (2008), is, therefore, about the unknown, the emergence of PEPs, CEPS and SEPs, and their interplay, leading to morphostasis or morphogenesis.

As stated in Chapter 6 - The People: T_2–T_3, the activities of leaders are linked to their identity construction (Day, 2011). Leadership identity, therefore, becomes a mechanism to build relational trust, which, in turn, allows for the structural embedding of leadership as a construct with its emergent PEPs. Leadership becomes, by extension, an emergent property of relationality, and this emergence involves interaction between the social actor, structure and culture (Archer, 2003, 2007). Interaction is dynamic, socially enabled and socially constrained (Klein et al., 2006) by SEPs, CEPs and the PEPs of other agents in the institutional domain.

All this makes it possible to speak of leadership identity in relation to a role inhabited by social actors, which has its own emergent powers and properties. Leadership identity is related to self-development and corporate agency, with emerging SEPs and CEPS in a pre-conditioned institution. Leadership identity, as an emergent property, is dependent on the relationships in which it is forged and is, in turn, contingent on the reflexivity of the leader (Archer, 2007; Day et al., 2009) as the leader exercises PEPs related to their own personal identity as well as those related to the position or role.

7.3 THE CONSTRUCT OF LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Hogg (2002, p. 188) describes higher education leadership aptly: “Leadership is about how some individuals or cliques have disproportionate power and influence to set agenda, define identity, and mobilise people to achieve collective goals”. Leadership has long been a focus of research for social psychology and the wider social sciences (Bass, 1990a; Chemers, 1987, 2001; Eagly et al., 1995; Fiedler & House, 1994; Graumann & Moscovici, 1986; Hollander, 1985; Stogdill, 1974; Yukl, 1981; cited in Hogg, 2001). Leadership is not about traits and personality (Stogdill, 1974; Yukl, 1981, cited in Hogg, 2001). Leadership studies done decades ago lean closest to the theoretical underpinnings of this study, stating that leadership emerges when the situation or context is inductive (Bales, 1950; Sherif, 1966; cited in Hogg, 2001) and the effectiveness of leadership is contingent on the leader’s behaviour which, in turn, is contingent on the situation and context (Bales, 1950; Fiedler, 1965, 1971; Lippitt & White, 1943; Stogdill, 1974; cited in Hogg, 2001).

This is expressed in the statement by Research Participant F as follows:

> By 1980, I was no longer just an ordinary participant; I was exercising leadership through various positions. (Research Participant F, October 2017)

Leadership categorisation theory (Hogg, 2001) describes the process whereby the behaviours of leaders are patterned into schemas, which create preconceptions about how a leader ought to behave and what a leader ought to do in situations. These categories become fixed mental models (Lord et al., 1984; Nye & Forsyth, 1991; Palich & Hom, 1992; Rush & Russell, 1988; Nye & Simonetta, 1996, cited in Hogg, 2001), which then condition the leadership role and context. Furthermore, assumptions about leaders and their behaviours are generated on the basis of these schemas, which are situation-dependent (Berger et al., 1977; Ridgeway, 2000, cited in Hogg, 2001). Thus, implicit beliefs, values and norms are built in an unspoken narrative that enables and constrains socio-structural and cultural change. As such, leadership in higher education is perceived to have a path or trajectory that in itself carries structural powers and properties, either constraining or enabling leaders. This perception is reflected by one of the research participants as follows:

> But I think that it was really hard to be in a leadership position with my academic trajectory not where it should have been. You know, if I had to give any advice now, I would say to people: [don't go into these things prematurely]. At the same time, you know, is there ever a good time? You look at many leaders in the world ... It was okay in the end, but it was hard. (Research Participant E, October 2017)

Both the cognitive approach and the schema approach have received criticism for ignoring the social context in which the leader is embedded (Haslam & Platow, 2001; Lord et al., 2001). As Braun et al. (2011) note, context is four-dimensional, taking in situated materials and external and professional context—all of which the leader engages within a higher educational setting.

7.3.1 Perceptions of Institutional Reflexivity

Institutional learning through reflexivity, reflectiveness and unreflectiveness (Stirling, 2006) as an interdependent process at the individual (micro), corporate (meso) and leadership (macro) levels can support institutional learning through the establishment of structures and conditions that enable or constrain organisational transformation (Hannah & Lester, 2009, p. 34). How a university environment transforms can also be constrained or enabled by structures such as resource allocation and the positioning of key social actors and by cultural constraints such as beliefs and values encompassed in discourses that configure sociocultural and structural networks (Smith-Jentsch et al., 2009).

The experience of Research Participant E is a powerful exemplar of the positioning of leaders and accepted discourses that become normalised and constrain the university in exercising reflexivity at a micro, macro and meso level.

> Remember, one of the mantras at [the institution] when I joined was it was being said because it's trite and it's seen as trite but it was always being said to me in different ways, [If it ain't broke, don't try and fix it; if it ain't broke, don't try and fix it] and it was coming from different sides to the point where at some point I had to say, I think in Senate I said, [You know, it's very interesting, this thing about 'ain't broke, don't fix it], so let me respond to that now today because I cannot keep quiet any longer. From whose perspective ain't it broken? That's what I would like to ask all of you. I speak to women, and things are badly broken. I speak to black staff, and things are badly broken. So from whose perspective is this thing about [it ain't broke, don't fix it?] (Research Participant C, September 2017).

When the attention of the institution is focused only on specific aspects of the *parts,* Archer (2016) defines this as unreflectiveness*.* Furthermore*,* unreflexivity has unintended consequences that lead to the institution being unable to address the underlying structures and mechanisms, together with the causation, which results in morphostasis (ibid). The construction of leadership in higher education can, therefore, constrain or enable learning and, by virtue of this, impede or expedite transformation.

Another example where universities are unable to deliberate reflexively (Archer, 2007) is in addressing the issue of Fees Must Fall, a constraining structural impediment to transformation that continues to replicate morphostasis within higher education to the present day. Even though the Fees Must Fall movement won significant concessions in terms of funding the lower-income group, funding is contingent on the combined income-per-household income brackets. The issue of student debt (monies owed to universities by students who do not, or partially, qualify for the state subsidy) also continues to constrain the higher education system.

Motley Universities of South Africa [USAf] statements such as [How universities will manage walk-in students during the 2018 registration], [Universities will not allow walk-in registrations] and [Free education is not possible at this time] (Gumede, 2017) in response to the request for clarification of announcements of free higher education illustrate the complexity of the way in which structural conditions continue to constrain higher education leadership projects and purposes despite policy shifts and regulations.

7.4 POWER, POLITICS AND KNOWLEDGE

Foucault (1983) considers power as a generative mechanism that is exercised by the individual rather than possessed. Power, rather than being viewed as binary (power/powerless), emerges through discourses via the mechanism of relationality (ibid) between leaders and followers. Allan (1999, pp. 126-127, cited in Allan et al., 2006) distinguishes between three modalities of power that are useful for this study: *power-over* as dominance and control; *power-to* involving the attainment of an objective, be this positive or negative, routinised in everyday social relations; and *power-with,* used to act as a collective where power is an expandable resource that is produced, reproduced and shared through interaction.

Leadership research shows that it is the followers that bestow power and status on a leader in return for helping them achieve their goals (Bass, 1990b; Hollander, 1985; Lord & Maher, 1991; Nye & Simonetta, 1996, cited in Hogg, 2001). Power, therefore, is symbiotically linked to the social actor and primary agency through mutually beneficial relationships which generate PEPs of their own in the form of *power-with* (Allan, 1999, cited in Allan et al., 2006).

Within the university context, power, politics, and privilege become the troika that cements structural and cultural barriers. These barriers are insidiously placed so as to become the norm, seldom questioned for fear of retribution and withholding of resources and promotions. This section unpacks the troika in one university to understand its effects.

7.4.1 Power, Freedom and Visibility in Academia

Higher education researchers see reform as being shaped by neo-liberal discourses of managerialism, performance management and public management (Giroux & Giroux, 2006; Giroux & Dawes, 2014, cited in Ryan, 2016). The effect is to make performance visible, measurable and competitive with contractual obligations to deliver on outputs (O'Hara, 2015, cited in Ryan, 2016). The act of measuring performance informs the dynamic of power relations and hegemony (Laval 2013, p. 250, cited in Ryan, 2016). This form of depoliticised power forms a generative mechanism that constrains structural and cultural elaboration within the university.

In addition, accountability is linked to transparency, becoming a key driver in the process of embedding neo-liberal discourses, most specifically in the quality assurance of higher education (Ryan, 2016). Neo-liberal discourses are structurally embedded through umbrella bodies such as the Council on Higher Education (CHE), the body responsible for quality assurance in South Africa.

Quality assurance and related statutory bodies feed the discourse of education as a driver of economic growth. This, in turn, fuels competition among institutions for market share (ibid). The promise of education as a means to economic prosperity then fuels the pressure on the university to provide access to the material goods that can offer a way out of poverty for millions of South Africans. Slaughter and Leslie (1997) call this [academic capitalism], which results in [curious partnerships] (Trottier, 2015, pp. 535-536) between private, personal and public entities. The unintended consequences of the institutionalisation of neo-liberal discourses are monitoring and evaluation, as well as quality reviews. These consequences, in turn, lead to routinisation and distrust, with the locus of control becoming external to the institution (ibid). How this is set out in higher education is illustrated by the interview comment as follows:

> But now it's getting to the stage where the minister is going to be able to enforce all sorts of things: the quality audits, for example, that we have to comply and it's moving out of the realm, which I thought was okay, of persuasion by peers. That's what the old quality audits from the CHE were. Now it's, if you don't comply, we're gonna hit you, coming from the minister, and the constant threat of sending in administrators and all of that sort of stuff, and the situation is getting really just very complex, and it's not just a matter of steering anymore, it's now becoming ... It's not happening yet, but it's heading towards taking on something of a management role in universities. (Research Participant C, September 2017)

The impact of performance measurement and quality assurance mechanisms is that they condition the academic environment towards competitive measuring, targets, indicators comparisons and excelling where excellence is understood as out-performing other institutions (Ball, 2003, cited in Ryan, 2016). Allan (1999) would consider this as *power-over* the university that is distinguished by dominance, control and hierarchy (Beckwith, 1999, cited in Allan et al., 2006).

Social media and websites such as ResearchGate and Academia.edu have influenced the way academic credibility is constructed. Credibility resides in the number of reads, citations, views and downloads with the invitation to [See who is reading your papers] sent to participants, resulting in competitiveness (Moller & Dimeo, 2014, cited in Ryan, 2016). The effect is that being visible is equated to being credible and authentic. The online academic discourse has added to the competitiveness by shifting the goalposts from winners and losers to being credible enough to stay in the game. This extends from the macro level of policies and practices at the national and international level to the meso level involving institutions to the micro level of the academics themselves.

Once more, the social system is conditioned by the individual's reflexivity in response to institutional structural constraints, together with relational reflexivity and structural reflexivity due to increasing performance measurements and technological demands in academia.

7.4.2 Power Relationships

Power not only coerces, oppresses or binds, but it can also constitute and condition freedom (Foucault, 1983, cited in Ryan, 2016). Weber (1978) states that power can be defined as the ability to get the goods despite experiencing socio-structural and cultural constraints. Oppenheim (1987) defines power as one agency exerting control over another agency and affecting the activities of other individuals. Power, therefore, is construed as causal, with agency required to activate this (Dowding, 2008). Social actors in higher education combine structural power by virtue of their position, together with knowledge and their reflexivity through personal PEPs to influence and effect change, as illustrated in this comment from Research Participant D:

> And then he excluded me from his executive management team, but that lasted just two weeks. Then he had to invite me back again 'cause they couldn't cope without me with all the knowledge that a registrar brings. By that, my institutional memory and things got better in our relationship. He began to discover, for example, that I was ANC, that I'd served on a constituency committee in East London, and so on, and I think his perception of who I was and what I was about changed to some extent. So, yeah, who the VC is quite important. (Research Participant D, November 2017).

Research Participant D drew on structural as well as cultural emergent properties to assert positional PEPs together with personal PEPs to effect agential elaboration. The power interplay is reflexively mediated through the relational emergent properties of a shared project. There is something much deeper than leadership style or developmental ability that shapes the construct of power in higher education. It involves the higher education leader drawing on the culture and structure of the university to further concerns and projects but also to exercise PEPs in subtle, often covert and manipulative ways to attain their modus vivendi.

7.4.3 Collegiality as Power

> To be a political actor is a function, a feature of acting in terms of equality with other human beings. …. The exercise of freedom is something that does not come from you or me but from what is between us, from the bond we make at the moment when we exercise freedom together, a bond without which there is no freedom at all. (Butler, 2015, p. 52)

Butler writes that collegiality provides a sense of freedom and mutuality that exists as a bond forged in relationality, but this, in itself, constitutes a form of bondage that constrains true freedom (Butler, 2015, p. 52). The university reinforces the notion that the ability to engage with others as colleagues and build collegiality is key to being effective as a leader (Lumby, 2019).

The interview extract below expresses Research Participant C's experience of collegiality as follows:

> But he was also quite shrewd in saying to me, [If you don't go and get yourself involved in the institution. …] He said, [When I am saying get yourself involved, I am saying you got to go and join a staff association; you got to go and join a union; you got to go and meet people; you got to go and talk to people]. He said, [You'll never understand how the institution works unless you go and meet people. You got to go to meetings with influential people so that you can listen to what they're saying]. So, I had some very good advice at a very early age. (Participant C, August 2017)

Developing relationships with others is considered essential for getting ahead and conforming to the values and requirements within the university (Hogan et al., 1985, p. 178, cited in Lumby, 2018). In building these collegial relationships, the leader draws on the emergent relational goods, utilising these as a causal mechanism to navigate the complexity of the higher educational context.

Archer (2010) speaks of a [reciprocal orientation… collective intentionality] when collegial bonds are formed that require those involved to maintain the [emergent relational good] (pp. 202-203). The relational goods carry emergent PEPs as generative mechanisms that link those involved, creating alliances that endure structurally as a result of this bonding (ibid). The effects of these power relations are made visible by Research Participant D's reflection below:

> When you have a smaller university, it becomes more now that I am a super-head of the department and I have 14 departments beneath me, so then I have this ability now to work with other people, and we can discuss things. But if I have to put my foot down, then I know that in certain instances, I would be backed. (Research Participant D, September 2017)

The way collegial relationships or goods are structured in the university can lead to morphostasis or morphogenesis, depending on the situation (Archer, 2010, p. 204). The way in which leaders orient themselves to collegiality and the emergent relational goods or relational negatives creates relational reflexivity as institutional leaders become aware of the powers of collegiality itself (Donati, 2010, p. xvi). This, in turn, creates a power mechanism that exceeds the individual as well as the aggregate of social actors (ibid). Collegiality within a university setting carrying prior conditioning that constrains

transformation will, therefore, result in stasis in the socio-structural and cultural domains. Collegiality can also lead to abuse of power, coercion and manipulation when social actors place their personal interests ahead of their social roles within the university. Collegiality is contingent on relationality and consensus building that is normed in the university as practice invariably represents the dominant group acting to silence dissenting voices (Allan et al., 2006).

7.4.4 Power and Normativity as Autonomy

When extending the construct of collegiality as normed within the university, a key consideration arises as to who is in control when this becomes normed. Norms in themselves do not determine a leader's behaviours and actions. However, they can act as a causal mechanism in the emergence of a given effect (Elder-Vass, 2005, p. 243; Bhaskar, 1978). The norm arises from the group which has power, regardless of whether this is *power-over*, *power-with* or *power-to* (Allan et al., 2006). Dominant discourses construct the power and properties of the normed group, and the members norm the beliefs through relationality (Elder-Vass, 2005). Divergent views are not tolerated as this will weaken the structure of the practice, and deviants are usually punished. In turn, compliance is rewarded and recognised. It is through the relationality of leadership that dominant discourses are enforced and embedded in the culture of the university and accepted without question. The interrelationality of acceptance of these normed discourses becomes a generative mechanism, giving the normed group emergent causal powers and properties (ibid). This power becomes structurally embedded, affecting behaviours within, as well as without, the university. How this plays out in the university leadership is described by Participant C:

> A thing that I have to think about is the registrars' [imbizo], and I think the registrars' imbizo is still on the right track. As I was saying earlier, registrars are the keepers of the rules, and I think my colleagues understand that as well. It's a common understanding. Now, there are things that go wrong in other institutions where particularly vice-chancellors get very authoritarian, but they will get caught out and, so I'm not too concerned at that stage. If I had a real concern, it is the erosion of institutional autonomy, but now I understand there's got to be a balance between accountability and autonomy. (Research Participant C, August 2017)

The interweaving of structures and mechanisms related to position, politics and autonomy creates the conditions for Participant C to exercise *power-over*. This is done through combining personal and positional PEPs, as well as drawing on a discourse constructing the registrar as the "keeper of the rules", which can supersede the authority of the most senior leader of the university. The discourse of autonomy, according to Meyers (1989, cited in Allan et al., 2006, p. 10), allows the leader to "make

decisions unencumbered by societal constraints such as social pressure, external coercion and cultural patterns". By drawing on the discourse of autonomy, the leader is able to act on the presumption of holding moral and political autonomy to proceed in efforts to improve the institution as they see fit.

Autonomy, however, stands in opposition to relationality, thus causing conflicts within social structures. The autonomous self supports the leader in the right to define their choices and preferences within a personal capacity. This invariably leads to tension within the university and its existing social and cultural systems (Barclay, 2000; Code, 1991; Friedman, 1997; Meyers, 1989, 1997, cited in Allan et al., 2006, p. 10). Conflicts such as this arise in the higher education sphere where the leader exercises their PEPs, as well as those accruing from their position as a social actor, by drawing on institutional structures (rules and regulations) and the discourse of autonomy to effect change in the structural and cultural domain. The result is morphostasis due to the conflict with the emergent relational PEPs of the social groups. The way a leader navigates this complexity is contingent on the structural and cultural powers from outside the university together with their role as a social actor, as in the preceding interview extract of Research Participant C drawing on the relational properties from the registrars of other universities.

7.4.5 Knowledge as Power

Foucault (1978) states that power as a generative mechanism is produced and reproduced through knowledge and discourses within organisations.

All knowledge involves the interplay between the properties and powers of the subject (people) and the object (knowledge). What people learn to do in nature (embodied knowledge), skills required in practice (practical knowledge), or the propositional elaborations made in the cultural system (discursive knowledge) results from the confluence of our PEPS and the powers of reality as natural, practical and social (Archer, 2000).

The interview excerpt below shows how the university leader recognises that knowledge carries power within the university setting and works hard to acquire institutional knowledge. The interviewee, perceived as knowledgeable by his predecessor, received increased recognition and support, which in turn increased his sense of self.

> So I made suggestions, and I really worked hard at understanding the rules, as we called them in this discussion, the Act and Statute and so on, and often when there was a dispute in Senate, he'd do what he did with my predecessor and say, "What is the situation?" and I was fortunate enough because I'd done enough homework to be able to answer all those questions, and so

> he was actually – he became very, very supportive. He mentioned to the vice-principal at the time that he was astonished that I'd picked up the reins so quickly, and the vice-chancellor told me that, which helped me because it gave me much more confidence, and so I became less scared of the old guy. (Research Participant C, August 2017)

Weiler (2011) states that, in hierarchical higher educational settings, knowledge manifests itself in a symbiotic relationship with power, with the result that knowledge and power legitimate each other reciprocally. Participant C draws on his knowledge to exert power to build relationality by drawing on the PEPs of the role and exercises the power that comes with knowledge as an expert in the requirements of the statutes and acts governing higher education. The legitimation of knowledge and power reveals the reciprocal relationality between politics, power and knowledge. The higher education leader, as a social actor, draws on the constructs of power, politics and knowledge to further their projects and modus vivendi. There is a call for critical exploration of the production and mediation of knowledge as a political process (Weiler, 2011) by institutional leaders, together with an understanding of how the culturality of knowledge and the role of knowledge legitimates political power (ibid).

Another observation is the effects of the triple helix of knowledge, power and politics in altering the perspective of the higher education leader (Participant A) in becoming "less scared" to draw on the SEPs in relation to the exercise of their PEPs. Therefore, exploring the notion of knowledge as power in relation to politics as power becomes critical in determining the generative mechanisms at play that create the conditions for triple morphogenesis to occur. The social actor may also draw on SEPs and CEPs together with their reflexivity as an emergent mechanism to constrain morphogenesis within an institution.

7.4.6 Power, Hierarchy, and Influence

Chemers (2001) considers leadership to be a group process in which leaders may be able to exercise disproportionate influence through consensual prestige and power over the attitudes, behaviours, and destiny of group members. Research Participant C illustrates this as follows:

> When XXXX was the registrar, he was there until just recently, when he was the longest-serving registrar in the history of the country. He was an immensely powerful figure at [another institution], and so XXXX came to [this university] thinking in a sense – and I'm probably overstating this – that the registrar must be taken seriously and listened to and so on. So I was really helped by that sort of attitude which gave me the freedom to participate, again, quite fully and he ... I can't remember any dispute we ever had.

> We actually got on quite well as individuals apart from the working relationship, so that was fairly okay, and it was much less formal than when XXXX was here, but it still was a fairly formal kind of relationship. (Research Participant C, August 2017)

The discourse above illustrates how social actors, drawing on the PEPs of other social actors through being supported and mentored in the institution, invariably assimilate the values and practices of their mentors, thus replicating a certain way of being (Andrews, 2011). Participant C links power to a way of being in the institution that transcends the institutions themselves, thereby creating an established practice that registrars have undisputed power and should be taken seriously and obeyed within the university. The relational reflexivity between the social actors structurally embeds the discourse of power and influence through an intricate network of friendships within the university. It becomes a matter of knowing the right people and connecting to those with power in order to legitimate the notion of knowledge as power-over. These affiliations become constraining mechanisms within the university, inevitably placing limitations on alternative pathways to transformation.

7.4.7 Protests and Contestation

Archer (2000, 2007) states that resource allocation precedes agency and that primary agents are born into societal structures without choice or say in the matter. This resource allocation and positioning at birth creates a socioeconomic divide, which, in South Africa, was further entrenched by the hegemonic political policies of the Apartheid government. The Struggle of the subjugated people of South Africa was, in essence, a revolt against the oppressive regime that constrained agency, limiting the social mobility and life chances of black people. In order to gain freedom from the structural and cultural constraints of apartheid, like-minded social agents formed constituencies with the shared intention of bringing about morphogenesis in the structural domain. In doing so, morphogenesis of agency occurred as primary agents transformed themselves into groups of corporate agents. This created opportunities for new social identities to emerge and access social goods as a way out of poverty and achieve a better life. Craig Calhoun (1994) likened this to [identity politics] (cited in Archer, 2000).

What had been an ongoing protest against financial exclusion at historically black institutions became a significant trend on social media platforms from March 2015 onwards. The defacing of the Cecil Rhodes statue on the campus of the University of Cape Town (UCT) with human faeces shocked the world, marking the start of the Fallist movements. The protests followed various phases, with the first phase focused on the slow pace of transformation and pervasive coloniality at universities. By May 2015, the protests had spread to institutions with an Afrikaner culture and language (Jansen, 2017).

Students demanded that the Afrikaans language be dropped as the language of instruction. The Stellenbosch University *Luister* video (*Listen* in English), together with Open Stellenbosch (a student movement aimed at addressing racism and patriarchy and creating a platform for inclusive institutional dialogue), emphasised the deep-seated racial prejudice embedded in the culture of this predominantly white institution. Student protests gained strength and momentum when, on 9 April 2015, UCT removed the Cecil John Rhodes statue from its decades-long perch to cries of victory from students and onlookers. By October 2015, the student protest movement had shifted its focus from Rhodes and decolonisation to fees and financial exclusion (Pillay, 2016).

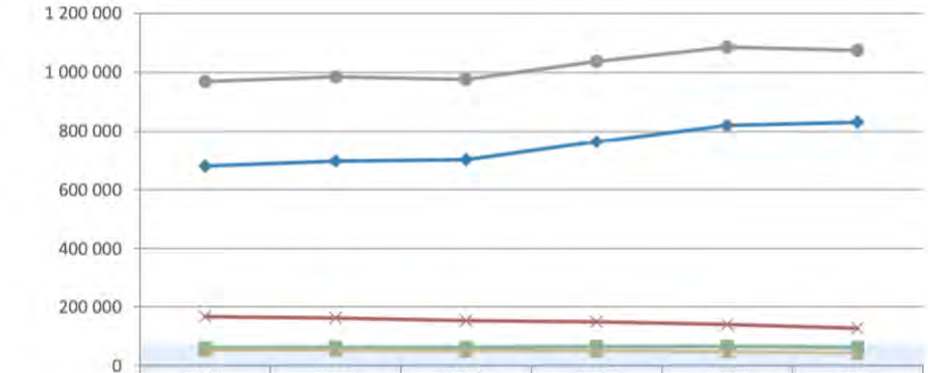
7.4.7.1 Student Collective Agency

The annual battle of hundreds of thousands of South African students for access to education is essentially a call for a different future for students and the families and communities in which they live. As thousands queued in extreme temperatures outside the University of Johannesburg, a stampede ensued (Bauer & Parker, 2012). A prospective student said, “We rushed the gate because we need to register; we need education” (ibid). This act of desperation shocked higher education leadership, accelerating the morphogenesis of student collective agency.

A report released by the Department of Higher Education and Training in 2015 stated that 47.9% of students did not complete their degrees, with black students having the highest drop-out rate, with 32.1% leaving university in their first year (Gumede, 2016). Annual analyses of student performance data produced by the CHE (2021), in the form of the VitalStats series, show the same persistent pattern: regardless of the university at which they are registered, the field of study or the level of qualification for which they are enrolled, black South African students fare less well than their white peers. This is graphically illustrated in Table 5 and Table 6.

Table 5

Student Enrolments by Race – 600 000 students in 2014 to 800 000 students in 2019.



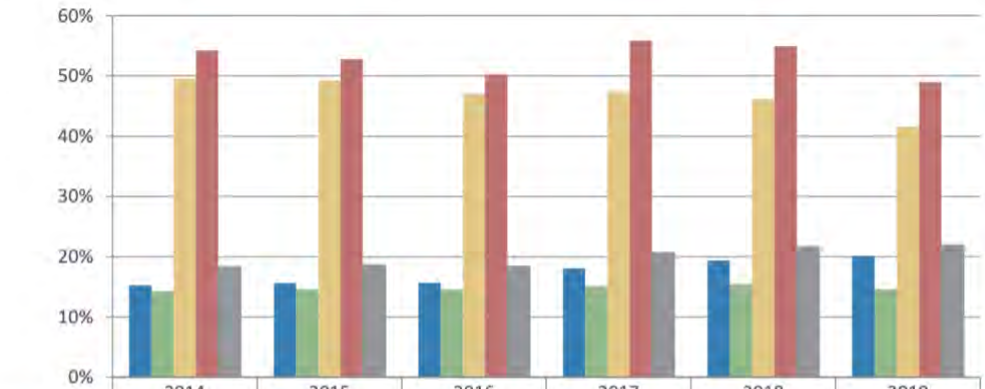
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
African	679 800	696 320	701 482	763 767	820 619	830 797
Coloured	60 716	62 186	61 963	64 772	65 911	62 362
Indian	53 611	53 378	50 450	50 131	47 865	43 330
White	166 172	161 739	152 489	148 802	140 304	126 755
Total	969 154	985 212	975 837	1 036 984	1 085 567	1 074 912

Note. Adapted from CHE, VitalStats (2021).

Table 5 shows black student enrolments steadily increasing over the years from 600 000 students in 2014 to over 800 000 in 2019 (CHE, 2021).

Table 6

Student Participation Rates by Race



	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
African	15%	16%	16%	18%	19%	20%
Coloured	14%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%
Indian	50%	49%	47%	47%	46%	42%
White	54%	53%	50%	56%	55%	49%
Overall	18%	19%	18%	21%	22%	22%

Note. Adapted from CHE, VitalStats (2021).

Table 6 evidences the consistently low level of black students participating in higher education in comparison to the overall black population representation with a population representation of black African 80.9%, coloured 8.8%, white 7.8%, Indian/Asian 2.5% (CHE, 2021).

Statista (2023) reported similar statistics: 4.3% of black South Africans aged between 18 and 29 participated in higher education, even though they are the majority in terms of population.

Research Participant A makes the following observations about the multiple ways in which students exercised their agency during the protests and the various identities they adopted:

> Students literally leave the crowd as it's shouting and screaming outside, walk into my office and say, "Oh, Prof, I need some guidance on this course selection. Can we just chat about it?" Then we'd chat about it. Then they'd say "Thank you". Then they'd walk out and carry on bashing against my wall. So, the contradiction is steeped. And try to convey that to staff by saying there are different personas in this. There's the protest persona in this: you're a proxy for people's anger, but they're also humans. They drove me bloody mad in that protest action, but they're just people in my office. I'd be sitting in meetings, they'd be banging on my desk and shouting, then screaming, and then they decide to leave because they're going to do it somewhere else, and then they'd shake my hand and say, "Okay, bye Prof". So it's a weird time that we're living in and to try and navigate through those. (Research Participant A, July 2017)

When expanding on Gramsci's term [organic crisis], Martin Hall (1988, cited in Badat, 2016) elucidates that this not only erupts in the political domain but also in every aspect of the sociocultural domain. Socio-structural conditioning is directly linked to [the crisis of hegemony or crises of the state] (ibid), thus linking politics, power and institutional leadership in relation to corporate agency seeking morphogenesis, only to find systemic morphostasis. Badat (2016) speaks of the rise of a powerful constituency within the socio-structural domain of politics and institutional leadership that will continue to exert powers and properties over universities.

Higher education leaders, balanced on the explosive mechanisms in the form of a potent mixture of anger and the unrealised political promise of liberation, may well wonder at the start of each academic year when, not if, the next episode of an emerging 'organic crisis' will erupt. Students forming corporate collectives exert their PEPs towards mobilising mass national protests for morphogenesis of the socio-structural domain, bringing into question the political model of higher education with the unrealised promises of equity, social transformation, access and redress.

7.4.8 Of Protests, Social Movements and Socio-Structural Change

On 16 December 2017, former President Jacob Zuma announced that education would be free for students from poorer households with an income below R350 000 per annum. Zuma made a landmark decision that has had both structural and cultural implications. He revised the definition of people experiencing poverty by stating that poor and working-class students would refer to "currently enrolled TVET Colleges or university students from South African households with a combined annual income of up to R350 000" (Areff & Spies, 2017). Zuma linked this construction of poor and working-class students to structural implications by stating that "students categorised as poor and working class, under the new definition, will be funded and supported through government grants, not loans" (ibid). This served to insert a new discourse into the institutional structures, carrying ramifications for every part of South African society with a direct effect on universities and the institutional leadership. The question which arises is whether students have altered the structural conditioning regarding access to university by exercising their power as groups of corporate agents.

Chalari (2013) helps us to understand the emergence of social movements and protests through her work that links reflexive internal and external conversations as pivotal to expressions of outward activity and emotion. Most important for this study, she states that the impact (of resistance) lies within the internal conversation about resistance (p. 74). Archer (2012) states that it is the agency's reflexivity that determines the choice to act or not when presented with projects and activities. Without the internal voice, people's activities are reduced to the empirical, which does not help their understanding of the phenomenon that gave rise to the activity. How protest activity is conceived and perceived is unique to each individual, as the internal conversations people have will draw on different experiences sometimes of the same event (Chalari, 2013). Structure and culture do not operate in a predetermined, automated fashion (Archer, 2007). The resulting resistance on the part of students gives rise to critical questions not only about the way student collective movements are formed but also about what enables their formation and why (Sayer, 2012, cited in Brock & Carrigan, 2015).

Protests are considered relational, generative mechanisms that give rise to networks, both actual and symbolic, in which agency is embedded (Brock & Carrigan, 2015). For students, this would be the relational network of the national student movement as well as their lived experiences of the mechanisms influencing their choice to be involved. These relational mechanisms are constrained by the context and specific moment in time, making it temporal at best (ibid). Relational reflexivity, as a generative mechanism, may lead to collective efforts of a protest movement, as agency replicates the collective relational mechanisms conditioning the space for the protest activity to emerge.

The outcome of the protest becomes contingent on the relational reflexivity and the individual's reflexivity (ibid). This deliberate relational reflexivity has the potential to lead to unintended consequences, which serve to reframe the purpose and direction of the protest activity. An important distinction is not to conflate social relations and relational reflexivity with interpersonal relations, as relational reflexivity has irreducible powers and properties which can lead to the emergence of events in the broader context. Research Participant B's experience shows the reflexivity of the social actor in relation to the student protests:

> It was difficult because you're on this sort of cusp; you are a part of some sort of bigger management, I'd say leadership team, and you make, you can't do anything, because of the way the protest has been structured by the students. You mustn't do anything – it must just go on and on and on. There can never be a resolution. And then, of course, you have staff that are beginning to join in. I came to the realisation: You know what? It is absolutely beyond our control. It has nothing to do with the locals; it is all national. The students would accuse you of being a rape apologist or this apologist or a this or a that. And you know what? You just got to suck it up; it is nothing personal. It's got nothing to do with [this institution]. Actually, it's got nothing to do with me, actually. And, as soon as that happened, it became very manageable, very manageable. (Research Participant B, August 2017).

Using Archer's explanatory theory, corporate agents exercise their personal emergent properties despite constraints such as the poor socioeconomic conditions that remain as a legacy of apartheid. Social actors, in turn, engage reflexively with corporate agency and recognise that issues are not only relational but also due to structural constraints such as lack of redress, access and success within the university system and beyond. In turn, students, as corporate agents, socioculturally constrain morphogenesis owing to discourses that feed the belief that it is only through tertiary education that the system can change – by offering enhanced life chances to the socioeconomically marginalised population. Badat's (2016) critical question as to whether protests lead to transformation or whether this constrains morphogenesis of the socio-structural domain remains unanswered.

7.5 GENDER

As discussed, social positioning carries powers, rights, and privileges, and the social role carries normative expectations that are internalised in order to be effective. Gender, therefore, cannot be collapsed into social positioning and vice versa. Mader (2016) states that gender is neither a social position nor a social identity; rather it is a meta-identity as it is constitutive of shape and content which allows for different forms of access.

The term gender positionality is used by Martinez Dy et al. (2014) to describe gender as a structure which intersects with other structures, such as class and race, producing and reproducing patriarchal inequalities over time. Universities powerfully reproduce this through symbols, metaphors, artefacts, rituals and beliefs that value patriarchal hegemonies, preventing women from being treated as equals and constructing women as unreliable knowers (Gherardi, 1995; Maddock, 1999; Davies & Holloway, 1995, cited in Mader, 2016). Gender positionality generates unequal power to act, thus structuring the institutional space by providing different opportunities and expectations for leaders holding gender positionality as men or women.

Gender positioning, located in the domain of the Real, becomes accessible only through abstraction. Concrete action situations, in turn, are located on the level of the actual since they are the site where social structure (objectively) affects people's lives (Martinez Dy et al., 2014, p. 463), but are always simultaneously shaped by a multiplicity of structures and powers. The causal powers of gender manifest themselves in an action situation through interaction with other powers within the university, thus revealing that positioning in the gender structure carries tendential properties and powers that can constrain or enable the higher education leader's life chances. The leader's PEPs will reflexively mediate the assigned gender positionality with the social position in engaging with the SEPs and CEPs (Archer, 2007; Mader, 2016). This is illustrated by the experience of Research Participant D in the following statement:

> I remember, before being elected dean, I was deputy head of department. I remember going to a senior meeting – can't remember what it was – representing the dean and the HoD, [who] couldn't go, so they asked if I would go. I'll never forget: a senior male colleague in the university actually came across to me in the Council Chamber. He said, "What meeting are you meant to be in?" because he obviously did not recognise who I was. But I mean, that doesn't happen now; that's history. (Research Participant D, September 2017)

Tomàs et al. (2010) state that university leaders holding gender positionality as women are not considered proper candidates for certain positions or capable of effective leadership. Research Participant D was questioned as to why she was even in the Council Chambers. Sex cannot be detached from, or reduced to gender, but the causal powers of gender positionality are contingently related to the dense web of gender beliefs and gendered practices (New & Fleetwood, 2006).

Glazer-Raymo (2008) emphasises the need for universities to research the intersectionality of gender, race, ethnicity and social class in tension with the social and political conditions set out by discourses on new professionalism (Blackmore & Sachs, 2000).

7.6 RACE

Race is understood differently in different contexts as socially, culturally, and politically informed, as opposed to a strictly biological concept (Omni & Winant, 1994). Racial stratification and racial identity are processes through which an individual assumes a racial self-concept in a race-based society, and higher educational settings serve to reinforce racial structuration (Ndimande, 2015).

Gramsci's (1971) work influenced the development of racial theory through the understanding of hegemony and social stratification and how this is created and reproduced through coercion and consent. Systems of ideas and practices regarding race are developed through education, religion, the media, and so on, becoming accepted norms (ibid). This common sense leads to the formation of discourses that are accepted (Omni & Winant, 1991) within a university. The work of Leonardo (2005) promotes the concept of racism as an ideology and as cognitive in origin by noting that [ideology is not an aberration to consciousness, which provides ideology with a sense of autonomy. Rather, it is an integral part of it, embedded and unrecognised in the consciousness] (p. 401).

Extending Archer's (2000, 2007) work on self-identity encapsulating personal identity and social identity, racial identity could be ascribed to self-identity or the ontological being. By utilising the process of abduction, race, therefore, becomes part of the socio-structural mechanisms at the level of the Real that serve to constrain or enable the activities of university leaders who, in turn, draw on the PEPs of their designated racial classification. Race as ideology, therefore, becomes ontologically embedded and retained at an epistemological level (Reason & Evans, 2007), enacted through what Mills (1997, cited in Cabrera, 2014) calls an epistemology of ignorance. Teaching about race and trying to develop deepened racial awareness only serves to retain race at an epistemological level, thereby increasing the effects of racial ignorance (ibid).

Within higher education, the intersectionality of race and gender as social constructs either enable or constrain leaders' activities contingent on their respective racial and gender positionality. The complexity of the interplay between the emergent SEPs of race together with the CEPs of the discourses regarding race and gender is overlayed by the reflexivity of the social actor, as expressed in the interview excerpt below:

> So, I've got a department that's headed by a professor who will be retiring in a year and a half's time. We've just appointed two new staff members to that department. One started two months ago, and the other started – his first day was on Monday. The staff member who arrived two months ago still doesn't have an office. She's a black woman … and she doesn't have an office. But she walks past the white staff member who was appointed the same time she

> was, and his name is next to … It was an empty office for two months with his name on the door. Okay, now you can see why you won't change culture. But I know this academic means well, but he will never be able to … He's like my father, just not willing to change. So, I'll pick my battles carefully. (Research Participant F, October 2017)

Research Participant F chooses not to exercise the PEPs of their social position in addressing racial prejudice in the faculty but rather likens the issue to a personal experience. In essence, the decision not to intervene and address social injustice and racism can be construed as the university leader reflexively engaging in the matter by drawing on experience as to how racial issues are to be dealt with. In essence, Research Participant F's epistemological response to the racial and gender incident reflects the leader's ontological positioning towards race and gender positioning.

The government's policy on affirmative action adds another structural mechanism where many question the merit of departmental appointees or an attempt to meet the equity requirements (Unzueta et al., 2008, cited in Cabrera, 2014). The question arises whether the situation involving Research Participant F involved an affirmative action appointee that further served to alienate the gender-positioned, racially stigmatised black woman. The question of what it must be like for the black African female academic to experience systemic racism and sexism is not considered by the leader at all.

Rankin and Reason (2005, cited in Cabrera, 2014) explain that racial discourses frequently play out in universities, and black people often experience racial climate differently from white colleagues. Racial prejudice is regularly overlooked in universities and dismissed as a once-off incident or treated as a matter of misinterpretation or over-sensitivity (Harper & Hurtado, 2007, cited in Cabrera, 2014).

The term 'white denial' is used to describe what individuals classified as white think about racism versus the persistence of racial inequality (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Omni & Winant, 1994, cited in Cabrera, 2014). Moreover, literature on whiteness in higher education tends to lack the criticality of whiteness in relation to racial oppression. Rather, the focus tends to be on helping the marginalised work through their issues in developing their racial identities and, in so doing, becoming racial justice allies (Cabrera, 2012; Reason and Evans, 2007).

Microaggressions are the common, subtle everyday slights against marginalised people, which have cumulative, negative impacts stemming from this racial stress (Yosso et al., 2009). Much of this wilful ignorance is predicated on white people wanting to maintain a positive view of their racial selves (Unzueta et al., 2008, cited in Cabrera, 2014).

This becomes problematic when a positive view of self interferes with white people's abilities to see the realities of systemic racism. Research Participant A expresses the following:

> I can't deny that, and of course, some people were simply and plainly racist … and that was just beyond belief. (Research Participant A, August 2017)

The experience of Research Participant A shows how racist behaviours are experienced within the university, revealing how individuals who purport not to be racist end up enacting racist behaviour because they have not reflected on their racial biases and privileges (Trepagnier, 2006).

Research conducted by Peet and Sevig (2003, cited in Cabrera, 2014) reveals that people tend to avoid acknowledging the historical, systemic legacies of racism, thus creating the conditions for racial stratification to be maintained through what white people think and feel about race (Feagin, 2014).

Racial theorists argue that one cannot rationalise the issue of racism because, as Archer (2012) states, people are irrational, fallible human beings, and their emotions drive their actions. What white people think and feel about racism, in effect, maintains systemic racism (Feagin, 2014). White supremacy, together with the privilege of being white, is embedded in culture through centuries where structural mechanisms such as slavery, apartheid and continued institutional racial prejudices and discrimination prevailed (ibid). Race as structure within higher education continues to affect the *modus vivendi* of its leadership, acting to constrain the transformation of structure, culture and agency.

7.7 SOCIO-STRUCTURAL ELABORATION OR REPRODUCTION AT T_2–T_3

The structural implications of the South African government's policies in the period prior to the new democratic dispensation, as well as thereafter, are creating conditions that constrain transformation in higher education. Using Archer's theory to explain this phenomenon, the analysis attempts to show how agents exercise their personal emergent properties despite the constraints in the educational system, evidenced by structures such as apartheid and poor socioeconomic conditions, finances, access to and placement at universities, poor primary and secondary educational systems, the decline of government subsidies and the rise of social movements. Structural and cultural morphogenesis is further constrained through discourses that feed the belief that it is only through tertiary education that the entire system can change by enhancing the life chances of the socioeconomically marginalised population. Structural constraints are exacerbated by neoliberal discourses of enrolment targets, together with the notion that transformation equates to exchanging white bodies for black bodies and providing education as business with knowledge as the product. The tension of how these discourses

interweave to constrain the socio-structural domain is evident in the statement of Research Participant C below:

> Our enrolment targets? I mean, there's no question anymore about equity among the student body. It has been transformed. It can't change any more. In fact, it's dangerous if it changes any more, unless we can replace the dwindling percentage of white students with middle-class black students because we need fee-paying customers. (Research Participant C, August 2017)

The notion of students as fee-paying customers ties in with the neoliberal discourse of education as an economic product, which is conflated with the politics of equity and transformation. This raises the question: What is the purpose of the university in the milieu of politics, power, and knowledge?

When agency draws on discourses within the cultural (CEPs) domain and social structure (SEPs), these combine to produce hegemony and include and exclude enabling or constraining transformation in the socio-cultural domain. Within the university, hegemony and power are constructed, embedded, and exercised by its leaders in the cultural domain.

The emerging themes across all research participants reveal an educational system that can either be oppressive or transformative by exerting SEPs that impinge on individuals' identities, particularly individuals' understanding of their relations to social institutions (Darder, 2015).

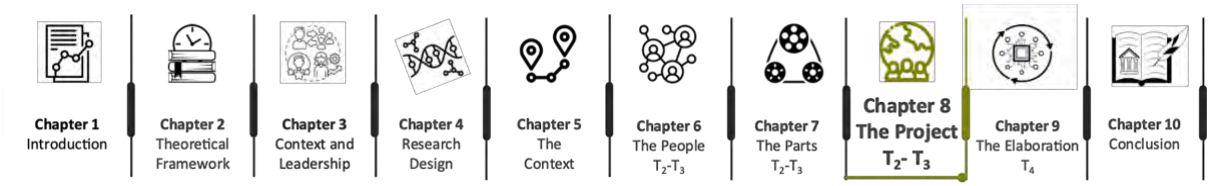
7.8 CONCLUSION

Socio-political conditioning intending to effect change, such as the various policy instruments of government, however well intended, has resulted in socio-structural morphostasis within higher education. Issues such as access, equity and redress remain central to the agenda of the higher education system as universities are considered "agents of social justice and mobility" (Boulton & Lucas, 2008, p. 4). The challenges of throughput, attrition and academic support remain and have the potential to destabilise the transformational gains made to date (Ramrathan & Pillay, 2016).

Leadership must be coached in something other than socio-political terms that are associated with neoliberal discourses on economic prosperity together with the call for change in culture, equity, inclusivity, access and language. Higher education leaders will draw reflexively on the diversity of their social positionality, as well as their personal and social identity when furthering their projects in the natural, practical, and social order. Higher education leaders will draw on the properties and

emergent powers of their ontological positioning in terms of class, race and gender, epistemologically responding to the structural constraints, and, in doing so, ensure the replication of the socio-structural domain of universities. The constraining structural emerging powers are further embedded through social actor relationality as the discourse of collegiality, exerting a hierarchical hegemonic force to retain the status quo of knowledge, power and politics. As one senior university leader aptly stated: [Universities are not for sissies]. It is tempting to ponder precisely what universities are for and why university leaders are enabling the very types of structures that are in need of transformation.

8 CHAPTER 8: THE PROJECTS T_2–T_3



Each person has to deliberate about what is to be done to achieve good in order that his or her life promotes their ultimate concern … they have to work out a modus vivendi that is commensurate with their values – Archer (2007)

8.1 INTRODUCTION: CULTURAL SYSTEMS AND SOCIOCULTURE AT T_2–T_3

Archer's (1998) morphogenetic cycle explores the relationship between structure and agency, as well as culture and agency over time. By means of analytical dualism, Archer distinguishes between the cultural system (C.S.) and sociocultural integration (S-C). C.S. refers to relations between the components of culture, such as bodies of ideas, theories and ideologies. S-C relates to the relationships between agents, for example, between a head of department and dean, how ideas are exchanged, and how ideational projects are forged (Archer, 2020). The sociocultural level and the cultural system are logically and sociologically distinct and should not be viewed as a community of shared meanings (Archer, 2020, p. 153). The key tenets of the social realist theory of culture are covered in Chapter 2, pp. 16-17. However, salient points are mentioned at the start of this chapter that highlight the interplay of culture, structure and agency at T_2-T_3.

An important aspect of this chapter is Archer's (1998) social realism non-conflationist perspective that rejects the notion that culture exerts power over university leaders and leaders become powerless recipients of culture. Equally important to this study is the avoidance of the downward conflation of culture, where sets of beliefs determine the will of the leader without recourse (Archer, 2020, 2005). In higher education, the tendency is towards central conflation of culture, making it very challenging to distinguish between the people, parts and projects (Archer, 1998). The notion of central conflation of the cultural system combined with sociocultural integration is most evident in higher education, where the issues of equity, redress, diversity, social inclusion and institutional culture (DoE, 1997) are combined with racial transformation. According to Booi et al. (2017), the Equity Index devised by Govinder et al. (2013) is an example of how transformation is reduced to the measurement of race and gender equity, negating the importance of institutional culture, diversity and ideation.

Chapter 8 emerges from the empirical data as set out in Table 2: Morphogenesis of Higher Education Leadership on pages 91 to 94. Each of the sections in this chapter discusses the interplay of agency with culture within the university at T_2-T_3 of the morphogenetic cycle. Utilising data documents, literature reviews, and interviews, as well as following the methodological processes of analytical dualism, abduction, and retroduction, the research findings at T_2-T_3 shape this chapter. Whilst some aspects of the higher education culture and agency are discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the explanatory tools of analytical dualism and retroduction are now applied to the leadership literature, participant interviews and document analysis, allowing for deeper exploration of S-C and CS mechanisms located in the domain of the Real. Chapter 8 explores the role of the university leader and the varying conjunctions with culture that account for the reification of the social order. In doing so, an ontological distinction is made between the projects and the people (leaders) within the university.

8.2 CULTURAL MORPHOGENESIS – A RECAP THROUGH THE LENS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Cultural morphogenesis begins with cultural conditioning that comprises ideas shaping university leadership at any given time. Archer (2020) states that cultural conditioning is characterised by logical relations between the structures, culture, and agency of the university, which can either be complementary (enabling) or contradictory (constraining). Contradictions result in constraints for university leaders, while complementaries enable the concerns, projects and practices of university leadership. Archer terms this process as situational logic. Situational logic comprises relations that are either causal, as dependent on other people, or logical, as dependent on ideas. Figure 20 illustrates situational logic within the cultural system and the sociocultural domain.

Figure 20

Sources of the Cultural System and Sociocultural Domain

Cultural Level	Dependent Upon	Type of Relations
CULTURAL SYSTEM	Other Ideas	Logical
SOCIO-CULTURAL	Other People	Causal

Note. Reproduced from Archer (2020, p. 150).

Archer (2020, p. 152) explains situational logic as follows:

> Contradictions and complementarities are logical properties of the world of ideas, that is, of the contents of libraries and archives. This concept is used every day when, for example, the

> ideas of X (university leader X) are consistent with those of Y (university leader Y), or that theory or belief A (e.g. higher education as a public good) contradicts theory or belief B (e.g. higher education as a private good). In so doing, it becomes possible to state that a cultural system has an objective existence and autonomous relations among its components (doctrines, theories, beliefs, and individual propositions). These are independent of anyone's claim to know, to believe, to assert or to assent to them.

Therefore, higher education leaders are always conditioned but not determined by the sociocultural context in which they exist. Structural emerging properties (SEPs) and cultural emerging properties (CEPs) condition the environment, and these mediatory mechanisms will shape but not determine the agency of the leader. However, the exercising of agency by the university leadership as a collective depends on the distribution of resources, both material and ideational. Collective action, therefore, becomes an emergent property of the university leadership as either complimentary or contradictory to the socio-cultural domain. The power of higher education leaders to realise their PEPs and their effects as either constraining or enabling transformation is contingent on the nature of the systemic context (Archer, 2000, p. 269). In the South African higher education context, leaders may have the opportunity to exercise their concerns and projects due to access to resources but are often constrained by the socio-cultural emergent properties, as discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

8.3 CULTURE AND POWER AS CONSTRAINING LEADERSHIP

The cultural domain within higher education can comprise hegemonic ideas and culturally dominant groups which do not encounter ideational opposition due to the position of power that they yield. Ideas are, therefore, reproduced in this process, maintaining a high level of cultural unification (Archer, 2000, p. 270). Since the cultural system and structure are mutually reinforcing, should leaders share these beliefs, hierarchical forms of organisation in higher education combined with resource allocation may prevent the formation of effective collective agency, thereby ensuring sociocultural morphostasis (ibid).

Simplicio (2012) supports this point of view by stating that university culture (socioculture) is born from the institutional history (cultural system) that is steeped in tradition. These traditional practices or ways of being and knowing in the sociocultural domain serve to reinforce the institutional and cultural system by onboarding new staff into these defined practices (ibid) or by appointing staff who meet institutional norms (Hlengwa, 2022). These practices and traditions ensure sociocultural stability and continuity, further embedding hegemonic beliefs into the cultural system. University structures

are, therefore, continually being reinforced by sociocultural practices that constrain the concerns and projects of higher education leaders who may not draw on these practices.

8.3.1 Relational Networks and Cultural Density

The South African state has linked the notion of transformation to higher education at a structural level but not at a cultural level. One way in which this is enacted is by conditioning universities to recruit a new cadre of black academics in order to correct the imbalances of the past by, for example, looking at the staff complement in quality assurance procedures. Relational networks add to the cultural density[11] of the university when senior white academics assume the role of gatekeeping to constrain access to the academic network for black academics. This academic network gatekeeping is usually held in position through unspoken normalised dispositions and practices, with access granted through assimilation of the dominant white culture (Booi et al., 2017). Interviewees explain how this unfolds at the university:

> So XXXXX University has been a very closed institution, and if you come from outside of the university, you do feel that you're an outsider. I mean, I've been there for 14 years now, but I still feel like an outsider because people know each other; they went to school together, they went to university together, and they know each other so well. So, if you come from outside, you're certainly bound to feel like an outsider. (Research Participant A, July 2017)

And

> I have had discussions with young black academic staff members. The environment here is not really conducive to their full development, and so I normally have dinner with them. I have regular dinners with the young black staff and just pick their brains on how we might make the place a lot more comfortable and welcoming for them. (Research Participant E, November 2017)

The causal relationships between groups of individuals act as constraints or contradictions to university leaders and young academics. Navigating these relationships is contingent on knowing the right people or having the right connections.

[11] Cultural density occurs when the cultural system embeds elaborate discursive practices that ensure formalisation and increased ideational systemisation. Cultural density involves strengthening of pre-exiting relationships between the parts, development and the addition of parts and relationships between unrelated parts or a combination of these changes (Hall & Hagen, 1969, p. 36, as cited in Archer, 2005).

Bourdieu (1986) likens this to relational networks maintained through the exchange of scarce information, favours, and discourses that reproduce mutual bonds or recognition.

Simplicio (2012) explains how university causal relationships constrain the activities of leaders, stating that the key to becoming part of the university network is through earning one's stripes, immersing oneself in the powerful leaders' world by volunteering for committees or engaging in their projects and publicly supporting them (p. 338). Until one can gain power, it is important not to be seen as an adversary, as adversaries will be dealt with, and the ensuing career and reputational damage cannot be repaired. Like elephants, these individuals have long memories and their recollections of the past are accepted without question. Rather than taking on the powerful elite, it is better to seek redress privately (ibid).

English (1997, p. 22) states that new deans, especially external appointees, need to understand the university culture and how this will complement or constrain their values and beliefs, as this plays a crucial role in whether they will be successful in the projects. An important distinction is made between the cultural system of the university and sociocultural integration with the leader's PEPs. A dean would need to understand the confluence of ideation and relationality in relation to their modus vivendi in order to effect change or cultural morphogenesis (ibid).

The experience of Research Participant F illustrates the implications of contradictions in the sociocultural domain where disagreeing with a powerful leader carried implications for their project:

> You wouldn't believe the stuff that is going on. We have to use lawyers from Johannesburg or Port Elizabeth to conduct the student disciplinary cases because if the local lawyers, particularly the XXXX Department, get involved, they are victimised incredibly, absolutely mercilessly dealt with on social media, violence threatened and stuff like that. It's a very, very different place, and in that context, we need, I think, a very strong leader who'll say, "Listen, this is the line in the sand. You can't cross that, and if you do, there's gonna be consequences", and I'm not seeing that to any great extent in our current leader XXXXX. (Research Participant F, July 2017)

By not exercising his PEPs to counter the alleged victimisation of lawyers involved in disciplinary cases at the university, the leader contradicted the values of collegiality the informant drew on in the extract. Archer (2000) explains the above by stating that when ideas are drawn upon, interest groups invested in a particular outcome may uphold their ideas even if this undermines the ideational projects of other groups. This results in systemic structural and cultural powers being activated, which can either work to their advantage or disadvantage.

The S-C, through its emergent powers, can resolve these contradictions or exploit the complementaries, thereby modifying the cultural system (ibid). In this instance, the modification of the cultural system acts to embed relational networks as a way of maintaining hegemonic practices that exclude and marginalise some at the expense of others. The experience of Research Participant F illustrates the contradictions that occur when certain university practices are normed, particularly how this shapes perceptions of a leader's capability. The "line in the sand" alludes to the intense contradictions that exist not only at the structural level but also at the relational level, which constrains morphogenesis at the sociocultural level. There is an implicit yearning for a strong leader who will be able to reshape socio-cultural practices and transform the cultural system. The irony is the research participant experiencing the constraints of the university's cultural practices sees leadership's power to address the cultural constraint as outside of themself.

8.4 HIGHER EDUCATION VALUES: COMPLEMENTARIES OR CONTRADICTIONS

Archer (2015) states that values form an element of culture. In the cultural domain, values do not occur in isolation but form complex ties with other values and beliefs. The following sections discuss these complex ties and their implications.

8.4.1 The Value of Academic Freedom and Collegiality

Collegiality, autonomy, shared community and mutual support are cherished ideals underpinning the value of academic freedom in higher education. Academic freedom entails determining curriculum, institutional governance and standards, among other activities (McAreavey & Muir, 2011).

A research participant expresses collegiality as a value in the statement below:

> We always value universities as being collegial spaces. You must think [of] collegiality as being the ability to agree or to disagree and to argue and to debate things through. So, this model provides more scope for debate and engagement for people, but, as I said, it slows things down. We have vibrant faculty meetings where we can discuss things. (Research Participant B, September 2017)

The cultural system (C.S.) has the potential to contradict the value of collegiality by increasing regulation and control in the guise of transparency and compliance required by governmental structures and stakeholders (Archer, 2020). The constraining contradictions at the C.S. include practices associated with managerialism that are directed towards making universities more efficient and economically effective with little regard for the political and social values that underpin core

activities. Explicit hierarchical management practices have replaced the collegial practices of academics marked by values of trust and autonomous governance as the norm (Deem, 1998).

The cherished academic freedom at S-C is impinged on by shifts in the C.S., in what Giroux (2015) calls the neoliberal move, where universities operate as businesses seeking revenue for venue hire and incentivisation for research outputs and the sale of knowledge (McKenna, 2020, p. 79).

8.4.2 The Value of Public Good

Increasingly, university labour is measured by how much income can be gained to offset the costs of time and materials expended in the process of delivery as opposed to the value contributed to the public good or to adding value and meaning to intellectual life and other activities (McKenna, 2020, p. 80). The academic project, underpinned by knowledge as a value that can contribute to the common good for the betterment of society, contradicts the traditional cultural system of the academy through the social-cultural integration of market values. An example is where the values of academics are obscured and overruled by managerialism discourses when researchers experience contradictions in what is ethical in research through experiencing ethical monitoring as instrumental to research (Scott, 2005). Research ethics have become entangled in research management and institutional risk management, where ethical regulation becomes a technological process hinged on power and culture (Bolden et al., 2008).

The idea of university and knowledge as public goods is constrained by the cultural system and the discourses of economic prosperity, where access to the good of higher education means social mobility. Boughey & McKenna (2021, p. 73) note that, in the context of the 'knowledge economy':

> It does not take much to move from understanding the value of knowledge within an economy to placing a value on knowledge itself. This shift in thinking was accompanied by the fact that universities, as knowledge producers, had the means of creating knowledge that could lead to profits in this new knowledge economy. Rather than being a public good and existing for the good of humankind, knowledge increasingly came to be understood as a commodity, a private good, with the potential to benefit those who had it or who could generate it.

The construction of the university as a public good highlights the logical relationships between the components of the cultural system, revealing the causal influences exerted by the cultural system on the sociocultural level. The state views the university as an extension of its economic strategy, and the university, compelled by the ideals of collegiality, academic freedom and the public good, creates the conditions for morphogenesis in the cultural system when it seeks to modify current logical

relationships and introduces new ones through the introduction of new ideas and projects (Archer, 1996).

The notion of 'good' as a public good can be recognised and acted on, generated and regenerated for the benefit of all who have a stake therein (Archer, 2005, 2017, 2020). The common good, therefore, resides in relations that connect individuals, and, as a relational good, it is possible to understand the inner connection with others (Donati, 2010). For good to be a common good, the good requires social integration where most participants contribute to its generation, ensuring that the marginalised also experience the relational goods and being in relationships (ibid).

8.4.3 The Ideals of Excellence and Quality in Higher Education

The nexus of Archer's (1998b, 2000, 2003, 2017) logical propositions is powerfully illustrated through the cultural conditioning of the demi-regularities of neoliberalism, globalisation, financialisation and new managerialism that has emerged as discursive practices related to what is constructed as excellence and quality in higher education. The discourses of excellence and quality serve to reproduce dominant norms, values and practices within the university through accepted cultural processes (Booi et al., 2017). For Marginson (2009), discourses of excellence and quality are underpinned by performance measures, output-based funding, measures of economic value, tests of relevance and impact, and relations with funding agencies based on contracts, accountability and audits (p. 587).

Cultural conditioning is reinforced within higher education by the structural conditioning of the Apartheid legacy bringing into stark contrast the differences between historically white universities (HWUs) and historically black universities (HBUs). This reinforcement is expressed through contradictory causal relationships between groups and individuals at the sociocultural level through causal PEPs from the cultural system influencing the sociocultural level (Archer, 1994). Booi et al. (2017, p. 4) term the reproduction of existing patterns of power and privilege through routinised knowledge practices as moral and epistemic injustice. According to Amsler and Bolsmann (2012, cited in Booi et al., 2017), the issue of social (in)justice, transformation of institutional cultures, and the politics of knowledge reproduction is seldom, if at all, considered as part of the university global rankings. Furthermore, if excellence and quality are equated with what is accomplished by HWUs, which draw students from private and former Model C 12 feeder schools, discriminatory practices that perpetuate economic injustice and reproduce patterns of privilege become a contradiction to change (ibid).

The cultural conditioning of the Apartheid ideologies in the C.S. is reinforced by structural access to resources for HWUs, thereby creating cultural morphostasis.

Archer (2005) defines this as 'cultural density', where the cultural system, through neoliberal discourses such as new public management, embeds elaborate discourses constructing excellence and quality to ensure formalisation and increased ideational systemisation. Cultural density thereby ensures the strengthening of pre-existing relationships between the ideals of globalisation and economic development together with additional parts of the socio-cultural system such as performativity, audits and relationships between unrelated parts such as academic freedom, collegiality or a combination of these changes (Archer, 2005).

When cultural density occurs, higher educational leaders may be in a position to negotiate their ideational projects and secure resources. However, most primary agents or staff are forced into contradictions within the sociocultural domain, as expressed by the following interviewee:

> I don't know what it's like at other universities, so I don't know; there is a little bit more red tape that we have to go through, and a lot of this is fobbed off onto HoDs which I think is unfair on HoDs – their time should be spent making academic decisions and not be managing people and filling in forms. What's interesting we've had from the Fees Must Fall: many disgruntled, mainly female black academics, young academics who were offered jobs at other universities and they left. Almost every single one of them wants to come back. And I have a suspicion it is because there is performance management: they have to clock in, they have to write a certain number of papers, they have to be there all the time, and they get told what to do. So that could either be that we actually aren't that managerial as other universities or that we're actually quite slack and that we should be expecting more work from our academics who might think that they only have to work 26 weeks a year and once they've marked their papers their work is done and they can go on holiday. So the answer is I don't really know, so I don't have anything to compare it with. I'm in a situation where I've not been a HoD, so I don't know what paper had to be processed. What I'm trying to do – this is where I'm a bit hybrid between [Institution XXX and Institution YYY]– is that I want to put structures in place to cut down the red tape for HoDs. So I want to employ someone, to redeploy someone who is a sort of grade 15 or grade 16 post who is in charge of all the high-level departmental decisions, so we don't need departmental managers all over the place. We just need one super manager. (Research Participant E, September 2017)

The interview extract contains several socio-cultural contradictions. The primary contradiction is between academic responsibilities and the managerial tasks required of the H0D.

Secondly, the black staff member choosing to leave because of Fees Must Fall and whose return to the university is innocuously linked to managerialism by the interviewee and not socio-cultural contradictions of race and power. These socio-cultural contradictions act to constrain morphogenesis at the structural and cultural level and serve to illustrate the complexity of transformation in higher education.

The notion of quality and excellence as discursive practices undergirding global rankings act to reproduce cultural hegemony in higher education by silencing alternative ways of doing and being that do not reflect the dominant culture (Bourdieu, 1997). Institutional discourses of excellence and quality spurred on by global rankings reinforce C.S. inequalities, as historically situated individuals are not equally positioned to access resources to compete for the notion of academic excellence structured by white-privileged S-C. in South Africa. The demi-regulators of globalisation and neoliberalism discursively enacted through the global university ranking systems as discourses of excellence and quality at S-C act as a constraining contradiction to reproduce the hegemonic inequalities of privilege and power at the C.S.

8.5 DECISION MAKING

'Decision' refers to a commitment to a course of action that is intended to serve the interests and values of particular people (Yates & Potorowski, 2012, as cited in Yates and Oliveira, 2016).

By its very nature, decision-making in universities is a messy, complicated process involving ambiguity, power dynamics, sense-making, politics, history, and time (George & Dane, 2016). Not only can the state influence decision-making in myriad ways, but memories of past emotional experiences and glimmers of future feelings and emotions surround many of the decisions people make in work settings and beyond. Regret can be seen as an unintended consequence of decision-making and an antecedent to making the wrong choice (Simonson, 1992; Tsiros & Mittal, 2000; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2007, cited in George & Dane, 2016). Research shows that when individuals are in a positive emotional state, they are more likely to view the outcomes of their decision-making positively (Nygren et al., 1996, cited in George & Dane, 2016). Emotions have an enduring effect on decision-making and tend to influence the individual's future decision-making processes. Past experiences tend to influence present decision-making processes.

People tend to behave consistently with past actions and cognitions, and earlier choices – unconsciously based on fleeting incidental emotions – can become the basis for future decisions and hence outlive the original cause of the behaviour (Andrade & Ariely, 2009: p. 6). Fong and Wyer (2003) argue that decision-making is influenced by emotions that people anticipate they will experience and that these emotions mediate the potential influence of other factors that could determine the choice. Van Dijk and Zeelenberg (2005) note that, in their study, regret in decision-making was reduced when the outcomes were uncertain.

Moreover, when there was a potential for someone to take over the situation (social takeover), the leader's emotional state also influenced decision-making.

Archer (2000) states that emotions carry PEPs and, by extension, how leaders in higher education make decisions will, therefore, have relational causality between groups and individuals in the higher educational setting. Decisions carry not only the emotions of the leader but also the values of the sociocultural system. The following interview excerpts illustrate the way university leaders make decisions:

> So we've identified the values that we all [have], and there's consensus, and we put into that document. It's a living document, so we update it usually on a yearly basis. We haven't done it this year. We've just had a workshop. But we actually go back to when we say that any decision that we make has to be informed by values. So it's respect for diversity; it's tolerance; it's basically the values of the Constitution. But I [am] finding it very useful as a touchstone as well. Because it's been a bottom-up process, everybody's been involved, um, it's something that sort of, it's the glue that keeps us together in our very different areas that we work, and I think that's also helped in the way we make decisions and so on. (Interview A, September 2017)

And

> There are times when one has to lead from the front when you just have to make decisions and know that you just have to live with the consequences of that. And so, for me, and I think Nelson Mandela put this quite aptly, there are times when one has to lead from the front, and there are times when one has to lead in the middle, and there are times when one has to lead from behind. And when one has to lead from the front, one has to make important decisions and persuade others to buy into those, and fortunately there haven't been too many of those that I've had to make a firm decision.

> And where I have done that, and I've had to inform people of a decision and the reasons behind this particular decision, people have been accepting, and I made it very clear to my team from the start that I would never exercise executive authority. I never say that [I hold this particular powerful position]. I am making an executive decision that things will happen this way or that way. (Research Participant C, August 2017)

The notion of value-laden consensus decision-making is evident in the interview extracts above. However, it is important to note that the university leader draws on their PEPs both from personal reflexivity and as a social actor, as in the case of Research Participant C.

Furthermore, decision-making is underpinned by collegiality and academic autonomy within the university, two cherished ideals discussed in Section 8.3. This process of decision-making is a form of situational logic as complementary (enabling) or contradictory (constraining)higher education leaders' projects at the sociocultural level.

8.5.1 Values and Decision-Making

Ethical decision-making has attracted increasing interest from researchers, who are shifting away from Kolberg's (1985) view that the cognitive process is pivotal to a view that emotions and intuition play a crucial role in ethical decision-making. Moral judgements are formed rapidly through sensemaking (Sonenshein, 2007). Narvaez and Hill (2010), as well as Schwartz (2011), believe that people can and should engage reflectively and deliberately during decision-making. Research shows that the process that people engage in when making decisions is critical in terms of ethics. How this is done is contested among researchers, with some contending that intuitive decision-making is the most effective for ethics (Zhong, 2011), while other researchers disagree with this approach (Gunia et al., 2012). A few researchers have sought the middle ground between divergent views on what constitutes ethical decision-making (Moore & Tenbrunsel, 2014).

The process of ethical decision-making is value-laden and draws on the leaders' reflexive PEPs, as expressed by the following interviewee:

> I'm also aware of where discretion can be applied, and I'm quite comfortable doing that. Now, there are a number of people who are uncomfortable with discretion because they've got to provide a reason for it. So, you will often find in the public sector and elsewhere people don't want to make a discretionary decision because you got to apply judgement, then you got to argue why you applied your judgement the way you did. (Research Participant B, September 2017)

In this instance, the university leader exercises decision-making by drawing on his personal identity and social PEPs. This is likened to applying discretion and judgmental rationality. The leader's decision-making is influenced by his emotional state and modus vivendi, as discussed in section 8.5.2.

8.5.2 Difficult Decisions and Ethical Dilemmas

Dilemmas differ in kind when university leaders encounter each of the three orders: natural, practical, and social (Archer, 2007). As university leaders invest more of themselves in one order rather than the others, this may mean the subordination, rather than the exclusion, of the remaining orders (ibid). Researchers term this as 'bounded rationality' in that the leader chooses to delimit a social order to further their projects.

Bounded rationality argues that ''human rationality is very limited, very much bounded by the situation and by human computational powers" (Simon, 1983, p. 54; cited in Bazerman and Sezer, 2016). Bounded rationality most commonly manifests in systematic and predictable mistakes which people make on a regular basis (Bazerman & Moore, 2013; Kahneman, 2020). Bounded awareness describes the finding by Bazerman and Sezer (2016) that much of the information we miss is not visual. During decision-making processes, people often focus only on the data in front of them and ignore other information and contributions. This point is illustrated in the interview extract below:

> And I try and make decisions based on evidence or in a principled way because one must be able to give reasons. This is really important: why you've made the decision that you have. And if I don't understand something, I won't make a decision; I'll first ask for more information and, ja, and I also try, I always try and put myself in the person's shoes if the decision is about the person – how would they feel and what will be the impact on them. (Research Participant F, October 2017)

When leaders exercise their reflexivity by aligning decisions to their personal identity and values, it is possible to overcome the limitations of bounded rationality (Gino & Bazerman, 2014). Research indicates that factors outside of the leader create the environment for bounded ethicality to emerge when they act against their own deliberation. The leader's exercising of reflexive decision-making is expressed in the interview extract below:

> So, of course, lots of things can be done, but what are the choices that you make that are responsible, that won't bankrupt this institution, because I would like other generations of students to come here, and especially more so Black and rural and [from this province] and working class and so on.

> So that's the second part of the personal part of it is about how you navigate these dilemmas and difficult decisions you have to face all the time, which – whether you like it or not – you have to because otherwise, you're not providing leadership; otherwise all you're doing is you are posturing, you're a populist, to be honest, like Zuma and Trump and so on. You're making hard, tough decisions that keep you awake at night and constantly asking yourself: Can it be different? Could we do something differently? Are we sure we've reached the limit of financial aid now? Can we not find another billion somewhere, and so on? (Research Participant C, August 2017)

When leaders' projects and vested interests need evidentiary validation, data may be viewed and interpreted to suit the decision (Moore et al., 2014). A large body of research suggests that even leaders with special training and knowledge are susceptible to the same decision-making biases that affect others (Moore et al., 2006), and even ethical people are not immune to failure. Unethical decision-making can involve assigning roles where biases and vested interests can come into play. In a higher education sector fraught with maladministration and unethical behaviour, it is important to understand the conditioning that makes the sociocultural domain conducive to unethical decision-making and to put cautionary practices in place. An example of how a leader does this as practice follows:

> So you will never be told outside a meeting if a decision went a different way, 'How come you kept quiet', or 'How come you went in a different direction?' You can have the confidence that I will never ask you that question. I try to instil amongst every dean and every HOD: 'Learn to say no to the president and the premiers and the mayors and so on'. Don't even come to me about the president's daughter or the premier's grandson, who doesn't help with the qualifications to go to this university, asking me what to do. If you don't know how to do it, you can come to me. I will sign it and say reject it, but you can do it knowing that I will never overturn that decision as long as you are being scrupulous all along, as long as it's neither the president's daughter nor the CEO of some big company that you have affiliations with. (Research Participant E, August 2017)

Modelling ethical behaviour is a way of preventing others from making unethical decisions. This strengthens the complementary by enabling causal influences between leaders at the sociocultural level. In doing so, this may perhaps introduce new sets of discourses and normed behaviours, resulting in the morphogenesis of the cultural system and, by the same virtue, the morphogenesis of leadership. The interview extract above points to the reflexivity of leaders as they draw on their PEPs as part of their ultimate concerns to effect change in the socio-cultural system.

8.6 SOCIO-CULTURAL ELABORATION OR REPRODUCTION AT T_2–T_3

Archer (2005) poses an apt question for higher education leaders: "What explains a syncretic set of ideas failing to take hold in society or a systematised conspectus failing to be reproduced?" Low social-cultural integration of ideation can prevent new ideas from flourishing, according to Archer (2005). This is a result of the social distribution of material interests not matching the situational logic of the cultural system at any given time (Archer, 1995: Ch. 7). Furthermore, "cultural conditioning works ceteris paribus unless structural conditioning contravenes it" (ibid). In essence, how resources are (re)distributed in higher education will influence leadership's ability to affect socio-cultural morphogenesis.

However, high socio-cultural integration is experienced due to a disproportionate exercise of cultural power where leaders have the position and resources to control who receives what in terms of resources. This acts as a containment against individuals in the university with minimum influence and can last for a very long time, as explained by Archer as follows:

> … exercises of cultural power can buy centuries of quietude in the history of a civilisation – especially when ideal interests and the structural distribution of resources are closely superimposed. What is of particular importance is how far structure differentiates material interest groups that reinforce or cross-cut the sociocultural alignments conditioned by the cultural system. (Archer, 2005, pp. 189–195)

to be able to understand precisely why the university can experience structural but not cultural morphogenesis is due to the conditioning and nature of cultural, systemic power locked into powerful complex relational networks at the sociocultural level that endures.

8.7 CONCLUSION

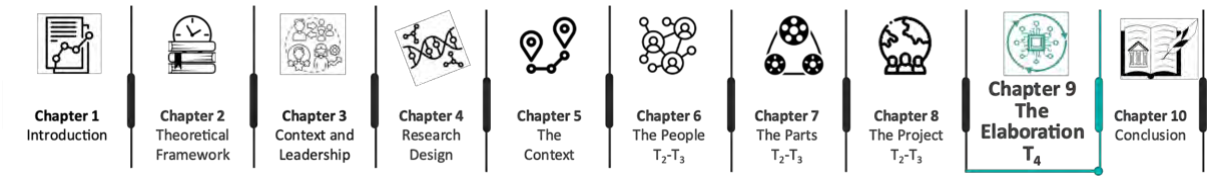
Booi et al. (2017) state that dominant actors collude with one another to exclude outsiders and maintain their positions of power. The field of higher education in the global competitive environment acts as a mirror to a social space "that permits the realisation of social classification in guises that allow it to be accomplished invisibly. In this way, universities contribute to the 'misrecognition' and therefore 'naturalisation' of structures of domination" (Naidoo, 2004, p. 46).

This finding alerts one to the fact that dominant–subordinate positions are dependent on the amount of social and cultural capital brought to bear on shaping and maintaining the rules of the field. Higher education leaders use the unspoken codes and rules of the institution, consciously or unconsciously,

to transform or maintain oppressive university practices by drawing on the structural and cultural system. The possession of or access to privileged institutional networks of social capital is a powerful resource for realising these aims. Bourdieu (cited in Wacquant, 2013) posits that while power is reproduced culturally, it is socially grounded in the material world. Drawing on the work of Bourdieu (cited in Wacquant, 2013), Amsler and Bolsmann (2012) argue that the global ranking industry strategically reproduces social inequality by obscuring "struggles of unequal power as struggles for meritocratic recognition" (p. 294). In South Africa, at least, the consequences of these normed practices may result in black academics feeling excluded, rejected and invisible and that their ability to interrupt the fundamental features of dominant-raced, classed and gendered institutional practices and cultures is limited (ibid).

Inequalities in structural power relations, disguised as neutral and objective values of academic credentials and ratings, may be used by powerful university leaders to sustain their privileged position and to reproduce the culture of the university. In this way, the ability of university leaders to interrupt prevailing institutional cultures is blunted, as they tend to 'adjust, manage and cope', thus reproducing the dominant institutional values and norms which serve to perpetuate alienation, marginalisation and exclusion. The university becomes a game of performativity in which performance is measured as an end in itself, with little regard for teaching and community engagement (Amsler & Bolsmann, 2012). The study now focuses on T_4 of the morphogenetic cycle, exploring the socio-structural and sociocultural constraints and enablements of higher education leadership.

9 CHAPTER 9 THE ELABORATION (T_4)



Applying Critical Realism takes time - Archer (2017, p. 146)

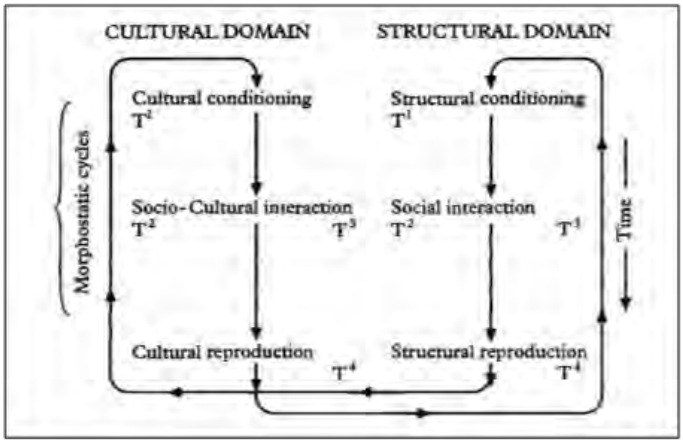
9.1 INTRODUCTION: SOCIAL ELABORATION AT T_4

The preceding chapters of this study discussed leadership as an emergent property of the social system (Sturm et al., 2014, p. 659) in order to respond to the research question: 'How is leadership enabled or constrained in higher education in South Africa?' Leadership forms a relational process where the leader, by means of reflexivity, is able to draw on personal emerging properties (PEPs) as an individual and as a social actor (Archer, 2000, 2003, 2007, 2016, 2017, 2019). Elder-Vass's (2007) statement that the social world cannot be theorised or explained into being without an explication of its ontological foundations of critical realism forms the bedrock of the study underpinning the thesis. Social realism's morphogenetic approach, together with analytical dualism, provides the tools to explore the emergence of higher education leadership through artificially separating structure, culture and agency (Archer, 1995, 1996, 1998a). Chapter 4 explores the social conditioning of university leadership at T_1. Chapters 6 to 8 explore the sociocultural interaction of higher education leadership at T_2–T_3, where leaders interact to transform or reproduce university structures. This chapter discusses whether the interplay between leadership, structure and culture at T_2–T_3 results in morphogenesis (transformation) or morphostasis (reproduction) at T_4.

Figures 21 and 22 illustrate Archer's (1995, 1998a, 1998b) morphogenetic cycle and the three phases of analytical dualism leading to elaboration or reproduction.

Figure 21

Structural and Cultural Morphostasis/Reproduction as Mutually Reinforcing (No Structural or Cultural Change Occurs)

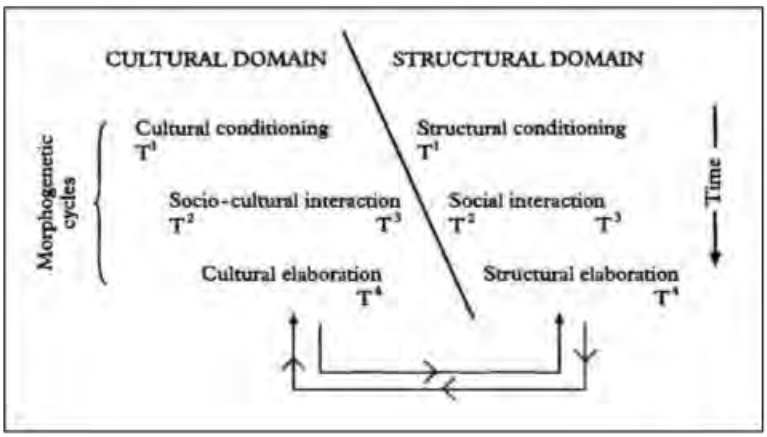


Note. Reproduced from Archer (1995).

Figure 21 illustrates the structural–cultural interaction between the outcomes of the two cycles where both structural and cultural reproduction lead to morphostasis, i.e., no structural or cultural change occurs (Archer (1995, pp. 306-324). It is important to note that the stability of the structural replication reinforces the stability of the cultural reproduction (ibid). When there is partial morphogenesis, morphogenesis occurs either in structural or cultural interaction and morphostasis occurs in the other. The change in structure disrupts the stability of the other (Newman, 2018). When morphogenesis of both structure and culture occurs, the change in one enhances the other, as illustrated in Figure 22.

Figure 22

Structural and Cultural Morphogenesis/Elaboration as Mutually Enhancing (Structural and Cultural Change Occurs)



Note. Reproduced from Archer (1995).

9.1.1 What Matters Most and Why?

The morphogenetic cycle as an explanatory framework helps to present the complexity of the university's social system and the dynamics at play over time. In cases of morphogenesis, elaboration at T_4 represents the time during which the elaboration of structure and culture emerges. Archer (2017) states that there needs to be an awareness and ability to recognise when ontological change has occurred and that this may be contingent on research interests (p. 142). The interview question '*What matters most and why?',* which was put to research participants, signalled the entry of T_4 as each leader expressed their ultimate concerns and projects for the future.

This chapter is organised to reflect the morphogenetic framework of structure, culture and agency at the third and final phase (T_4) and explores the morphogenesis or morphostasis of agency. This final stage will also draw on the reflections of higher education leaders and consider whether the leaders' ultimate concerns, projects and university practices lead to structural and cultural elaboration or reproduction. In order to do this, the chapter also draws on reflections from preceding chapters, outlining the activities of leaders at T_2–T_3.

9.2 AGENTIAL ELABORATION AT T_4

At T_4, the actions or inactions of higher education leaders from the preceding level at T_2–T_3 condition the structural and cultural domain for the start of the new cycle at T_1. The research discussion in Chapter 6 explores how leaders' identity and reflexivity shape their ultimate concerns and focus on either natural, social or practical domains (Archer, 1998).

9.2.1 The Implications of Identity Formation for University Leadership

This study shows that university leaders' personal and social identities emerge over time. The understanding of the sense of self as ontological and the leaders' personal identity as forged through experiences, commitments, and social conditioning (Archer, 2000) is an important distinction for this study as it means that leadership is ontological in nature (see Chapter 6). Leaders draw on their PEPs accruing from their personal as well as their social identity in reflexively mediating concerns and projects in the structural and cultural domains. These activities are linked to the leaders' identity construction (Day et al., 2009). In turn, the university structures and culture enable or constrain the projects of leaders. The activities of leaders within the university enable the morphogenesis of agency. The fact that the leaders' identity and the leaders' emergent reflexivity are dialectically linked to causal mechanisms means that structural and cultural change requires individuals to draw on past

experiences when enacting their modus vivendi (Archer, 2000). As social structures are dependent on the leaders' actions, there are often intended as well as unintended consequences due to unobserved causal powers and properties at play (Pratten, 2019). These unintended consequences, in most instances, act to constrain structural morphogenesis (for example, in education policy formulation) and cultural morphogenesis (for example, in values-based decision-making).

9.2.2 The Reflexive Imperative for University Leadership

The importance of leaders' capacity for reflexivity and the way the context of the university induces reflexivity in leaders have implications for social change in structural as well as cultural domains (Davidson & Stedman, 2017). The following interview extract illustrates the reflexivity of a higher education leader in determining their modus vivendi and the implications for resetting the morphogenetic cycle at each of the stages in their life:

> What matters most changes from time to time. It's when you're 20 years old [that] what matters to you is different from when you're 35, and when you're 45 and you're 55 and so on. So it's a conjunctural thing. It's a set of confluence of factors that shape what matters to you. But some things have been constant in my life, and it really starts in 1976 and the Soweto Uprising. This – and I have spoken about this, I think, in my inaugural – about this incredible shame I felt and this kind of ... it's shame, and it's anger that I feel about the nature of society and about the fact that 1% of the society can dominate in every aspect the other 99% through their wealth or through their access to political power and so on. (Research Participant F, October, 2017)

For this research participant, reflexivity acts as a mechanism that leads to agential morphogenesis. However, reflexivity on its own is unable to create structural and sociocultural morphogenesis, hence the leader's emotions of shame and anger at the prevailing conditions in society. These emotions in themselves carry emergent PEPs, which serve to provide motivation to effect change (Archer, 2007).

Lawler (2001) comments on the dissonance that social class creates between personal identity and social identity and notes that this dissonance causes a sense of loss and belonging when people are unable to break away from the past. Owing to Apartheid, the complexity of social class continues to prevail in higher education, and this structural conditioning constrains leaders through contradictions in cultural practices and ways of being and doing within higher education leadership.

Donati (2011, p. 25) emphasises that emergent effects or structural elaborations are not produced directly through the intervention of social reflexivity. This depends on the personal reflexivity of

university leaders when they draw on SEPS and CEPs to effect change (ibid). It is when the reflexive university leader exerts an influence on society through public discourses, such as graduation speeches and written texts, among other activities, that institutional change and, thus, morphogenesis at T_4 becomes possible. This could further lead to changes in the relations of power, the redistribution of resources, and shifts in social interactions at the new T_1. Essentially, the PEPs of leaders' personal and social reflexivity carry implications for elaboration or morphogenesis.

9.3 STRUCTURAL ELABORATION AT T_4

The structural morphostasis experienced in universities at T_4 becomes T_1 of the next cycle.

9.3.1 Who Gets to Access the Goods

For Weber (2002), the contested notions of academic access and success are about equity and justice for marginalised people. Considerations of access and success should, therefore, encompass social background, race, class, and so on. Mathekga (2012) believes it is a misnomer that equity should be viewed as a hindrance to academic excellence and that it drags higher education to a lower standard of performance. This notion of access, success and redress as central to the academic project forms part of a research participant's modus vivendi, which is expressed as follows:

> What is important is facilitating access, but equally important for me are issues of success. In fact, I would even argue that at this stage, when almost 50% of young people who access our public higher education system leave that system without any qualification, which is a huge indictment on the state and higher education, a colossal waste of human talent [occurs], and so I would, much as I would support very strongly whatever is done to facilitate access, I would be equally strong in persuading ourselves to ensure that they have greater success. (Research Participant B, November 2017)

However, at T_4, the constraints in the socio-structural system lead to morphostasis in both the structural and cultural systems. Recruitment of students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds remains power-laden, based on meritocracy[12], particularly in the disciplines of science, technology, engineering and maths (Mathekga, 2012).

[12] Meritocracy is a social system in which people's success in life depends primarily on their talents, abilities, and efforts. The idea of a meritocracy has served as an ideology through the argument that social inequality results from unequal merit rather than prejudice or discrimination. "The selection criteria for admission at HEIs are mainly based on meritocracy" (Mathekga, 2012).

While black student enrolments have increased, the retention and throughput rates reveal that 763 767 students enrolled in 2017, with just 161 244 students graduating in 2019, and just 21% of students completed their degree in the minimum required time (Council on Higher Education, [CHE] VitalStats, 2021).

Boughey and McKenna (2017, 2021) argue that socioeconomic background affects students' ability to succeed and that success cannot be reduced to enrolment and throughput status (see, also, Case et al., 2017). The term 'discourse of the decontextualised learner' was created by Boughey and McKenna (2016, 2017) to counter the dominant discourse of meritocracy. The decontextualised learner is deemed to be solely responsible for their academic success or blamed for failure to achieve, without consideration of the way the structural and cultural systems of higher education privilege some, typically those from educated middle-class homes, at the expense of others. In Archerian terms, the discourse of the decontextualised learner is a form of upward conflation (Boughey & McKenna, 2021, p. 56). Boughey and McKenna (2017) pose an alternative to the discourse of the decontextualised learner in the form of the 'discourse of the student as a social being', which acknowledges the role of structure and culture in the emergence of success. The notion of meritocracy legitimises, as well as entrenches, social inequality and views the university spaces and curriculum as neutral (Boughey & McKenna, 2021), thereby exonerating leaders of the need to address the structural and cultural constraints encountered by students. Sobuwa and McKenna (2019) go further in stating that meritocracy entrenches the injustices of the past (p. 14).

Student access to the 'goods' of the university is keenly felt by the following research participant. However, the cause of success is viewed as due to failures in the schooling system with no acknowledgement of the way the structural and cultural systems of universities themselves constrain student success.

> Probably what matters most is that we produce high-quality teachers because I think teachers are critical in actually enabling us to achieve quality in schooling and higher education because, if we don't get it right from the start, it is not going [to] happen; it is not going to trickle right through the system. I think teachers are really important to me. (Research Participant E, October 2017)

Sobuwa and McKenna (2019) consider the 'articulation gap', or the mismatch between high school and university, as causally linked to inequalities of education in historically and currently disadvantaged schools (p. 14). Schooling systems and university systems differ significantly from one another, each with distinct social practices (Geisler, 1994, as cited in Boughey & McKenna, 2021). The

flawed notion of the disadvantaged learner exonerates the university from reflecting on the students' needs for what Morrow (2009) terms 'epistemological access', or access to the forms of knowledge and ways of knowing privileged in the disciplines.

The convergence of the discourses of the decontextualised learner and student access and success, as well as the role of the higher education leader, creates what Archer (2007) calls situational logic. This is evidenced in the disjuncture between data showing success and attrition rates that are shaped by social class and race, as well as the beliefs of university leaders who profess commitment to broadening student access and success. According to Boughey and McKenna (2021, p. 71):

> All universities have clear data providing the demographic details of their students and their success rates and so on. And yet most institutional documents that we reviewed were silent on macro-level structures such as race and how this correlates with student success more broadly and their own institution more specifically. Racially differentiated pass rates and other inequalities have not to date been widely used as the basis for deep reflection on [the] transformation of curriculum or pedagogy. Such blind spots make it possible for some academics, even those who understand themselves as activists strongly committed to broadening access, to ignore their role in maintaining the status quo through teaching in ways that constrain epistemological access.

9.3.2 The Curriculum as Specialised Knowledge

Lange (2017, p. 32, cited in Boughey & McKenna, 2021, p. 82) defines curriculum as "the process of engagement with students and staff with knowledge, behaviour, and identity in different disciplinary contexts". Young (2008, p. 1), drawing on Bernstein's (2000) distinction between 'horizontal' and 'vertical' discourse, noted the way that the curriculum of formal education draws on the latter. Vertical discourse is sometimes termed 'specialised knowledge' or 'powerful knowledge' (Wheelahan, 2012). Powerful knowledge enables students to think theoretically and innovatively about the world, which is a precondition to building a socially just society (ibid). The research participant in the following extract understands the importance of a curriculum that has specialised knowledge as well as everyday knowledge (Bernstein's 'horizontal discourse) as a prerequisite to addressing the inequalities in society.

> And quality, you know, we can't just look at quality in terms of matric results, etc. We've got to look at the quality of the curriculum and what's being taught and how it's being taught and whether we're equipping young people. It's about the vision, what sort of young person are we wanting to produce, given the 21st century we find ourselves in. I think there's a great

> danger that a gap, the disparity is going to increase because, you know, we talk about the 4th Industrial Revolution and robotics and so on, and I just keep saying to myself: Where are we in South Africa preparing young people to be in a world that is going to be very different in the future, with machines doing a lot more of the work and labour? We also live in a very flat world. … I think there's a danger that if we don't get equality addressed quickly, we will get young people who just don't have the skills to participate productively in the economy. It troubles me that we have so many young people that are not in employment, [not in] education, not in formal training. (Research Participant D, October 2017)

The purpose of the university is to be the guardian of specialised knowledge, yet it is conditioned by structural and cultural mechanisms that constrain the academic project and protect the interests of the powerful and privileged, who can access the 'goods' that accrue from the possession of this knowledge (Boughey & McKenna, 2021). However, student performance data in the form of the CHE's VitalStats series (see, for example, CHE, 2021) shows that, although structurally morphogenesis has occurred since the vast majority of students in the higher education system are now black, the formal access granted to them has not been matched by 'epistemological access' (Morrow, 2009). For Boughey and McKenna (2021), this is because of morphostasis in the cultural domain, more specifically in the discourses drawn upon to construct students, their learning, curricula and teaching. While the university leaders are able to articulate their concerns and convert these into projects in the practical order, the intention for the transformation of structure and culture is constrained on multiple levels, leading to replication of the social system at T_4. Archer's (2015) perception that the pace of social change is intensifying does not hold true in the case of who can access the 'goods' that a qualification from an institution of higher education can lead to. Discourses constructing access and success, as dependent on meritocracy, contribute to ensuring the replication, at least in terms of success, at the new T_1 at the start of the new morphogenetic cycle.

9.3.3 On the Matter of Higher Education Policy

The South African government deems higher education to be a key lever for social transformation, social mobility and social justice. In the higher education context, transformation means the absence of barriers to success, inclusivity and equity. The policy actions emanating from the White Paper (MoE, 1997) and the National Plan on Education (DoE, 2002) were intended to enact transformation in higher education. The government's policy decisions included structural changes such as mergers and closures. For the state, transformation in higher education is an indicator of policy success and social progress, as expressed through the removal of barriers to access, widening access, increased

throughput rates, and increased participation (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007). The state's policy instruments and policy implementation over time are discussed in full in Chapter 3.
A research participant had the following to say about state and institutional policies and their effects on the academic project:

> To [replace policy] messed-upness …, to take a course that is not working so well to make it work well, to people who are not working well to working well together, to put a good policy together I think is good, work with the policy to see that it's working and to have the courage to amend it if it is not working well. (Research Participant F, August 2017)

Arguably, although structural change has been effected by policy enacted since 1994, the dominance of powerful discourses constructing success in higher education as related to meritocracy as well as others drawing on what Boughey and McKenna (2021) term the 'model of the decontextualised learner', morphostasis in the cultural domain has led to the continuation of what this social actor terms 'policy messed-upness.'

The interviewee's experience can be summed up in the words of Sayer (2011): A necessary condition of dignity for all "therefore implies far-reaching equality, not just in what people get in resources, but in terms of what they are allowed and expected to do. It requires contributive, as well as distributive justice" (p. 214).

For Research Participant F, policy failures can be addressed by policy revisions. However, policies are also discourse-laden, so if the revised policy does not draw on ideas that will lead to different practices and different experiences, then changing policy will have no effect.

For another interviewee, the approach to leadership in higher education requires the use of persuasion and intellectual engagement rather than coercion. These are aspects of the sociocultural domain, namely the discourse of collegiality, which was discussed in Chapter 8.

> So in a university, as I've always said, you have to have a lot of patience; you have to persuade all the time. You cannot be running a university by administration, by decrees that come out of the vice-chancellor's office. The moment you are tempted to work like that you should find another job because you've lost the plot about what it means to be at a university. It is constantly about persuasion; it's about intellectual engagement and argument and so on. (Research Participant A, June 2017)

Archer (2013, 2017, 2020) would consider collegiality as a relational mechanism that exists through social relations that can be elaborated upon to form new kinds of relationality at T_4. The position adopted by Research Participant A also relies on an understanding of academic governance in which a university is focused on the academic project (Jansen, 2021) and which, according power to the Senate and faculties, limits that of the vice-chancellorship.

In Archerian terms, the state has arguably accomplished what was intended in terms of restructuring the higher education landscape through policies, thereby ensuring structural morphogenesis at T_4. In terms of Research Participant F, the cultural system entails "messed-upness that affects socio-cultural relationality". Archer (2017) likens this to the entrenchment of winners and losers and a relationally contested morphogenesis where those whose dominance is challenged do not cede their position or vested interests, which remain largely unchanged as in the case of HWUs. Higher education policy formulation at T_4 signals partial morphogenesis, as the reshaping of structure leads to the reshaping of agency in terms of domination, subordination, and relational vested interests; new roles and positions, in terms of the constraints on some leaders' projects; and the enabling of other leaders' projects (ibid). For Archer (2017), losers in the struggle for institutional transformation continue to press on, thus conditioning the next iteration of the cycle at T_1 (p. 143).

9.3.4 The Language of Belonging in Higher Education

The state's educational policy decisions conditioned the higher education sector in a certain way where political motives for economic and social redress did not take into consideration issues such as language, access and resources (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007). Massification is a strategy identified as needed for redress in early policy documents such as the Report of the National Commission on Higher Education [NCHE] (1996). From the early 1990s onwards, black students flooded into the universities, showing a particular preference for the better-resourced historically white institutions and technikons (Cooper & Subotsky, 2001), a pattern that continues (Cooper, 2015). Since the early 1990s, the higher education system has doubled in size to a headcount of more than one million, the majority of whom are black (CHE, 2021).

Under Apartheid, universities were divided along racial and language lines, with HWUs speaking English and Afrikaans, and language was used as a tool to divide and destroy cultures (Boughey & McKenna, 2021). South Africa has 11 official languages, of which 44% have Nguni at their roots, with the predominant African languages spoken as follows: isiZulu: 25%; isiXhosa: 14.8%; and Sepedi: 10.1%, followed by Setswana: 9.1% (Statista, 2018). English is spoken by 8.1% and Afrikaans by 12.2% as a first language (ibid), yet these two languages are the only official languages of instruction in

universities, creating a barrier for students who do not have these languages as their home languages (Sobuwa & McKenna, 2019, p. 14). However, one should not conflate home language with access to disciplinary knowledge (ibid). Boughey and McKenna (2021, p. 66) argue that access to special knowledge is more complex than simply including home language as a medium of instruction. It is about the student's identity and self-worth, which forms a crucial aspect of cultural formation and development of student agency (ibid). Nonetheless, simplistic understandings of language and the role of language in learning continue to dominate when strategies to support students who do not have the languages of instruction as a home language – with language continually cited as a reason for poor performance (Boughey & McKenna, 2021). In spite of research-based challenges to constructions of the 'language problem' (see, for example, Boughey, 2002, 2005, 2013; Jacobs 2008, 2009, 2013; McKenna, 2004, 2010), it has been very difficult to shift dominant discourses that construct students' experiences of using language to learn in higher education as related to the language itself (English or Afrikaans) or knowledge of the forms of that language.

9.3.5 Higher Education Elaboration at T4

At T_4, a shift occurs involving both the university leader and the institution, which Archer (2013, 2017, 2019) terms 'macroscopic change'. Macroscopic change involves four parts of the social order: the systemic, the institutional, the whole array, and the positional. Leaders with vested interests in social positions will be motivated to act in their own interests (ibid).

Morphostasis in higher education can be due to the enduring nature of structures. In these instances, incompatibilities arise where relationships are necessary for structure but incompatible between leaders. Those in power may be motivated to compromise in order to retain their position and structure. Where relationships between leaders are not essential for the structure and incompatibilities arise, leaders may seek to eliminate the incompatibility to preserve their status or to bring about transformation. Where structures are not required but are compatible, the opportunity for change arises with new ways of doing and being (Archer, 1995, pp. 216-218).

Morphostasis and the explanation as to why structures endure can be in part because structure can accommodate change in some form while retaining the status quo (Archer, 2013, 2017, 2019). The university as an educational system can maintain its relational aspects without remaining the same. The institution may still be able to exhibit identical properties and powers as before the current state of emergence (ibid). An example of this is the capacity of the university to continue its academic project and offer educational opportunities while enacting changes by operating as a business and embracing new managerialism.

9.4 CULTURAL ELABORATION AT T_4

Archer's (2000, 2005, 2007, 2020) theory of social change can now be used as a lens to determine whether transformation or replication of the social system in higher education has occurred. By exploring the activity of university leaders within relational networks, it is possible to determine morphogenesis or morphostasis at T_4 using Archer's (1995, 1998a) analytical dualism. It becomes possible to explore complementary and constraining contradictions in the sociocultural domain to establish whose ideas are taken up, what actions are encouraged, and who has access to the relational goods and resources.

9.4.1 On Politics, Protests and Power

Tufversson (2012) states that higher education remains the only public entity that has been left unexamined and has never been held accountable for furthering the agenda of the Apartheid regime. Universities known for their production of knowledge have a historical past of state collusion in sustaining, propagating and replicating the systems of Apartheid in its many forms (ibid). The fluid nature of political activism takes into account relational causality predicated on the university leader's reflexivity (ibid). How a university leader's political activism transcends constraints over time is expressed by the following research participants' comments:

> So I'd like to think that consistent throughout my life has been a kind of unshaken, unwavering commitment to social justice of a fairly radical kind so [as] to create a really decent society in which everyone has a prospect of exercising their talents and having dignified, productive, rewarding lives rather than what we see around us. (Research Participant A, September 2017)

And

> So the idea of social justice within society for particular social groups, for historical rectification, for the future of humankind, and so on, has been a leitmotif from 1976 when I was 18 years old, and so that has always shaped wherever I have been in a leadership position whether at the XXX, or whether at the university, or whether in the future. So it's a value, it's a big idea of [a] different kind of society and world which doesn't have the kinds of suffering, and so on that, you find now. So, I always wanted to imagine that whatever I did in my life, I could remain faithful to that idea and never compromise on that idea. (Research Participant C, November 2017)

The university leader's capacity for reflexivity leads to courses of action being produced as they subjectively determine their practical projects in relation to their objective circumstances (Archer 2007, p. 17). In the instance of the university leaders, the structural constraints, together with the sociocultural constraints, which are mutually reinforcing, produce morphostasis at T_4 and replication of the sociocultural and structural structures. The university leader's PEPs as a social actor may enable the leader to pursue their projects and concerns by virtue of the power within their position. However, the cultural system creates contradictions, acting as constraints to effect meaningful change in the institution.

9.4.2 The Power of Networks

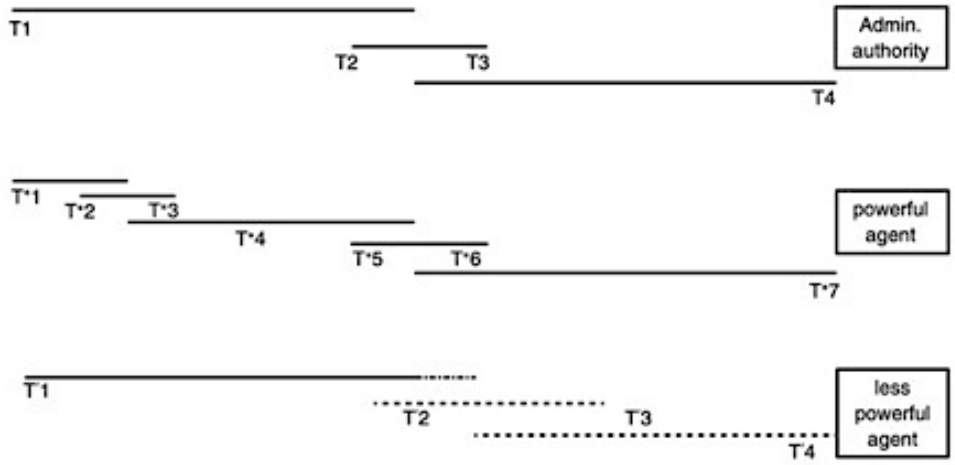
Archer's (2000, 2005, 2007, 2020) theory of social change can be used as a lens to make statements about whether transformation or replication of the social system in higher education has occurred. By exploring the activity of university leaders within relational networks, it is possible to identify morphogenesis or morphostasis at T_4 using Archer's (1995) analytical dualism. It becomes possible to explore complementary and constraining contradictions in the sociocultural domain to establish whose ideas are taken up, what actions are encouraged, and who has access to the relational goods and resources. The powerful networks as structures and the culture of gatekeeping as mechanisms that act as constraints to university leaders, especially new academics, are discussed in Chapter 8. At T_4, these power networks serve to replicate culture within the university.

9.5 THE COMPLEXITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION

Al-Amoudi (2016) observes that, as a powerful interest group, the state acts in conjunction with new social formations, interest groups and networks in order to function as a form of corporate agency. These new formations, together with new mechanisms related to technology as a result of an interconnected, globalised society, serve to compress the time phase between T_2–T_3. This means that the time available for elaboration or reproduction is shortened. Al-Amoudi's (2016, p. 129) claim is useful in considering university leaders' modus vivendi and how they draw on structural and cultural resources to take advantage of the codified rules of the social system to further their own interests. Figure 23 illustrates the concept of time compression at T_2–T_3 and who benefits the most from morphogenesis.

Figure 23

Power Differences and Who Benefits Most from Morphogenesis



Note. Reproduced from Al-Amoudi (2016, p. 129).

Figure 23 illustrates the morphogenetic unfolding of activities of three types of agency and is explained by Al-Amoudi (2016, p. 129-130) and reinterpreted for this study as follows:

Social agents [university leaders] initiate activities at T_2–T_3 after a short start at T_1, transforming their practices and status to take advantage of resources and rules operating at T_1. The greater the elaboration, the shorter the T_2–T_3 phase. University leaders can reorganise status and activities relatively quickly by the start of T_4 and can, therefore, enjoy privileges over an extended period in comparison to less powerful agents [university staff] who do not have the power and capability to reorganise their activities.

Administrative authorities [or the state], observing the disparities between social actors and agency, initiate the transformation of the codified rules through several interactions at T_2–T_3. This results in more stringent and more complex rules at T_4 than at T_1 as they seek to close the loopholes observed at T_1 in the former set of codified rules. Social actors (university leaders), in response, simply initiate a phase of sociocultural interaction at T_5–T_6 as they once more transform their practices and status, thereby retaining their former advantages and privileges (Al-Amoudi, 2016, pp. 129-130).

Al-Amoudi's (2016) conceptualisation of the morphogenetic cycle and its interplay between agency highlights the complexity of transformation in a university setting. More telling is his description of less powerful agents (students and staff) who are unable to navigate the complex sets of codified rules and end up being worse off than before.

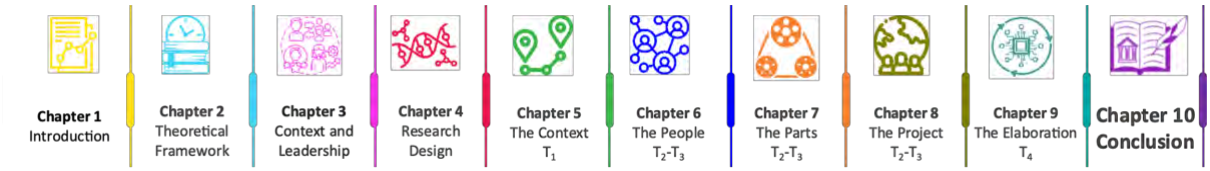
This structuring of higher education ensures morphostasis in never-ending circles as powerful actors continue to use and modify the codified rules for their benefit and privilege.

9.6 CONCLUSION

Archer (2020) states that it is the internal conversations that enable the exploration of social conditions at T_1 that are reflected at T_2–T_3 and, in turn, provide new expressions through projects and concerns at T_4. At this phase of the morphogenetic cycle, the effects of social interaction in the previous phase are worked out. The working out of T_4 entails three possible choices: confluence of desires, where there is an agreement by leaders on a course of action; reciprocal exchange, where each leader gives up something in exchange for gain; and power-induced compliance, where the will of one leader is forced on others. How the leader engages with the three possible outcomes is contingent on their access to resources (Archer, 1995, p. 218).

As leaders exercise reflexivity through their internal conversations and articulations of them, discrete—often unobservable—changes occur that influence their modus vivendi. These often-imperceptible changes provide conditions for new norms and changes in social conditions to emerge, resetting the cycle to a new T_1 (Archer, 2020).

10 CHAPTER 10 CONCLUSION



The challenge that social morphogenesis has to face is how to distinguish and foster the relational goods that bring true human happiness beyond material welfare - Donati (2017, p. 160)

10.1 INTRODUCTION: THE MORPHOGENESIS OF LEADERSHIP

Universities are constantly changing. As social entities, universities can draw on structural and ideological properties and powers and, as such, can shape and be shaped by society. Changes in the higher education landscape are initiated and sustained by university leaders. Higher education leadership is complex and operates across multiple strata, carrying with it multiple mediating powers and properties that emerge over time.

This study explored the tensions experienced by South African university leadership and how leaders balance power, politics, and academic autonomy in times of complexity and challenge. Chapter 3 discusses the South African higher education context in some detail.

University leaders draw on the structures and culture of a university to effect change. The ability of leaders to adapt to cultural and structural change depends on the concerns and projects that they take up in exercising their personal powers and properties that emerge from their personal identity as well as their social identity. In turn, university leaders' ability to exercise their reflexivity is always enabled or constrained by institutional positioning, resources, policies, and the culture of the university, which includes powerful discourses that shape the institution itself. As stated in Chapter 2, leadership researchers tend to focus on a single snapshot of leadership discourses in the cultural domain with the inclination to generalise this across all contexts. Not only does this oversimplify the construction of leadership, but it also denies its complexity.

10.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study intended to explore structural and cultural mechanisms that either enable or constrain the emergence of leadership among senior staff in a small traditional university. The time frame for the morphogenetic cycle for the research was approximately seven years (2014–2020), the tenure of a

vice-chancellor. During this period, the university employed a new vice-chancellor whose concerns and projects were included in this study. The overlap between vice-chancellorships during the study period represents structural and agential elaboration in Archerian terms. This added research depth and richness to the study as each vice-chancellor reflected on their experiences at the helm of the institution. Since this study focused on the interplay of structural and cultural emergent properties, senior leadership or social actors at the university were the key research participants, with the criterion that they needed to have held senior leadership positions during the specified time frame.

The approach of the study was to explore the theoretical underpinnings of leadership rather than the typology, applications or practices of leadership. In doing so, the aim was to shed light on the complexity of leadership and the importance of critical and social realism in understanding the formation of the higher education leader.

10.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions were approached utilising critical realism as a theoretical underlabourer and social realism as an explanatory theoretical tool. The research question and sub-questions, as posed in Chapter 1, are responded to in the section below.

Research Question: How is university leadership enabled or constrained in higher education in South Africa?

In response to the overarching research question, the study findings are as follows:

The morphogenesis of structures within universities has increased the pressures on higher education leaders as they seek to make sense of the complexity and contestation of the metanarrative of higher education's purpose in a globalised world. Structures and mechanisms are enduring, and they condition leaders before they actually take up their leadership positions at the university.

The study revealed the following in response to the research question:

i. Universities, as places of intellectual inquiry, have adopted managerialism in place of traditional forms of academic governance, thus becoming sites for academic audits and strategic indicators that act to constrain the activities of university leaders.
ii. Neoliberal discourses related to, for example, performativity and university rankings continue to reposition the university as a business, with its products of knowledge as capital sold as market-driven research and education. The university's academic project continues to be redefined and constructed in terms of economic growth, with funding models and strategies to

deliver on goals. Neoliberal ideology, therefore, acts as a powerful constraint on higher education leaders' concerns, projects, and practices.

iii. Tendential structural emergent powers and properties are reinforced by the sociocultural domain that selectively privileges certain leaders over others. In terms of relational reflexivity, self-interest has replaced the notion of collegiality as the locus of relationality, and individual interests and needs now supersede those of the collective.

iv. What appears as morphogenesis or transformation in higher education is often concealed in cultural rhetoric and veiled in leadership practices as acts of assimilating past ideology and codified rules and practices with new codified rules and practices that entrench morphostasis in higher education. The emergence of constraining structural and sociocultural mechanisms means that the dominant culture retains power, and the higher education system replicates itself. An example of the cultural rhetoric and structural emerging properties combining to replicate the structural and sociocultural system is the university instituting numerous policies and projects aimed at social transformation. Audits and annual reports usually follow this to gain subsidies without transforming the social inequalities in the university.

v. Issues of power, privilege and racial segregation continue to constrain the activities of university leaders as racial discrimination and politics of power endure in the structures and culture of the university. This is reinforced by powerful networks and gatekeeping, which determine whose voice is heard and whose decisions and projects receive resources. Structural and cultural emerging properties from socioeconomic classism and meritocracy, reinforced by the conditioning of the Apartheid legacy, continue to manifest through leaders as divisive practices even when they profess themselves to be progressive.

vi. The structural and sociocultural mechanisms combine and act to reinforce one another, constraining the activities of higher education leaders in their efforts to transform the university.

The overarching research question was explored through three sub-questions that allowed for the identification of mechanisms enabling and constraining the activities of higher education leaders and their agency in the structural and cultural domain.

Sub-question 1: How do structural mechanisms enable or constrain university leadership?

In response to sub-question 1, which explored how structural mechanisms enable and constrain university leaders, the study findings are as follows:

The Academic Project

i. The ideals of access, success and redress are constrained by structural mechanisms that ensure the replication of the unjust systems of the past. Social backgrounds, such as race and class, are finding new forms of expression and interpretation in codified rules. One such structural mechanism is the discourse of meritocracy that reinforces pervasive socioeconomic inequalities and entrenches the injustices of the past. Students who have accessed private schools and Model C schools fare better than those who attend township or rural schools and are able to access the academic goods. The roots of meritocracy are much deeper in terms of the lack of support given to very young children from marginalised backgrounds as they prepare for school and how this influences their ability to grasp knowledge concepts. The dominant discourse of meritocracy in its various forms is reinforced by university leaders when they choose not to exercise their personal emerging properties. This, by implication, makes higher education leaders complicit in the replication or morphostasis of higher education structures. An example of this would be to consider some students as brighter than others without recognising that they had the social and cultural capital that allowed them to flourish, while their peers may not have had similar opportunities.

ii. The structural mechanisms related to the recruitment target for black students from poor socioeconomic backgrounds remain power-laden and essentially set these students up for failure, as the universities themselves have not changed in ways that will allow these students to flourish. The effects of these mechanisms are reflected in the dismal numbers (45% of students do not complete their degrees (VitalStats, 2021)). The devastating impact of this mechanism also destroys the hopes and dreams of young people, their families, communities and the nation at large. The retention and throughput rates are influenced by mechanisms such as recruitment and placement policies that act to restrain the projects and practices of university leaders who seek to deliver on the institutional imperative of the academic project. While recruitment policies could act as enabling mechanisms, the unintended consequences for black student enrolments come from the interaction of emerging structural mechanisms, such as policies and emerging cultural mechanisms, such as discourses about transformation that constrain student access and success. The exclusion of these students would be the result of constraints from the emergence of structural mechanisms. How these exclusions are enacted would be, for example, the curriculum being reinforced by emerging cultural constraints in the form of dominant discourses constructing teaching and learning that prejudice students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, as discussed in Chapter 9.

iii. Conceptual knowledge and the curriculum form another structural mechanism emerging from the academic project that constrains the activities of university leadership. The commercialisation and commodification of knowledge increase the contestation of what constitutes knowledge and who owns it. As the purpose of the university is to build new knowledge, this purpose cannot be fully realised owing to the conditioning of structural mechanisms that serve to constrain the activities of university leaders. These could be the commodification of knowledge resulting in events related to pushing for research outputs and also for the production of certain kinds of research that might result in patents and other monetary gain.

Higher Education Policy

i. The study has found that the state's policy formation and implementation have led to structural morphostasis where, instead of delivering on the intended transformation goals, it has failed to address critical issues of equity and redress. National policy has resulted in an overall increase in enrolments, which has doubled since the early 1990s. Also, new enrolments are overwhelmingly black students. So, policy has resulted in more formal access. It has not resulted in epistemological access (Morrow, 2009). Boughey and McKenna (2021) argue that, for epistemological access to be achieved, changes in the domain of culture – more specifically in discourses constructing students in a certain way, learning, teaching and curricula – need to take place. Department of Higher Education policies do get implemented, as not implementing them will result in a loss of income, whether from university capacity development grants or subsidies. Implementation of the policies per se is not the problem. Rather, it is the way that implementation is constructed discursively that constrains equity. Instead, the policy formulation as a transformative mechanism and the inconsistent implementation thereof by higher education leaders has led to morphostasis instead of morphogenesis in higher education.

ii. Globalisation and neoliberal discourses related to, for example, new public management trends such as performativity and auditing have conditioned the take-up and interpretation of higher education policies in ways that have had unintended consequences for the university and its leaders, constraining their projects and practices.

Leadership Positioning

i. Leadership positioning (e.g., management or senior management) creates mutually reinforcing structural constraints and enablements. The value of collegiality strengthens this. However, this can also enable or constrain the morphogenesis of structure and culture.

The study has found that the enduring nature of university structures led to leaders accommodating structural changes, for example, in the form of the mergers and incorporations resulting from the National Policy on Higher Education (DoE, 2002), without necessarily working to effect the change in the domain of culture, which would lead to what might be considered a more meaningful transformation.

Chapters 3, 5, and 7 of this study discuss the mechanisms that constrain and enable the leaders' concerns, projects, and activities.

Sub-question 2: How do cultural mechanisms enable or constrain university leadership?

In response to sub-question 2, which explored the cultural mechanisms enabling and constraining higher education leaders, the findings are as follows:

Complementary Constraints of Culture and Power

i. The cultural domain can comprise hegemonic ideas drawn upon by culturally dominant groups, which do not encounter opposition because the groups hold positions of power. As structure and culture are mutually reinforcing, leaders' sharing of beliefs and values, combined with the power to allocate resources, prevents oppositional groups from forming, which, in turn, ensures the university's cultural system does not change.
ii. The university's cultural system is deeply entrenched in traditional ways of knowing and being, which are reinforced each time new staff are selected and appointed. This ensures the cultural stability of the university and further embeds hegemonic traditions and practices. University structures are continually reinforced by sociocultural practices that constrain the concerns and projects of leaders.
iii. Modelling ethical behaviour is a way of encouraging others to make ethical decisions. This strengthens the complementary or enabling causal mechanisms between leaders in the sociocultural domain and, in doing so, may introduce new sets of discourses and normed behaviours, resulting in the morphogenesis of the cultural system and sociocultural relationality leading to the morphogenesis of leadership. This points to the importance of leaders' reflexivity as they draw on their personal emerging properties as part of their ultimate concerns to effect change in the sociocultural system.

Relational Networks

i. The state has linked the notion of transformation at a structural level but not at a cultural level. An example is the recruitment of black academics and leaders to address the imbalances of the past. Relational networks as sociocultural mechanisms are formed by senior white academics

who act to constrain the access of black academics to resources and opportunities. However, the recruitment of black academics alone is not sufficient to ensure change, as most have been socially and culturally conditioned by the same mechanisms as their white colleagues. Hlengwa (2015) points out that new appointees are often selected on the basis of their ability to fit into the dominant institutional culture. Appointed leaders who do seek to challenge dominant discourses in the domain of culture, and where success in doing so may be contingent on having the right connections, may, therefore, be thwarted by relational networks.

ii. Discourses drawing on the need for managerialism and performativity to contradict other discourses privileging collegiality are strong. While the attempt is to make universities efficient and effective in the use of resources, there is a disregard for the values that underpin academic collegiality. This contradiction constrains the activities of the university leaders.

iii. The value of the university as a public good is constrained by discourses privileging economic gain and social mobility. The ideals of higher education as a public good also connect leaders who share similar concerns and projects as a relational good where leaders contribute to ensuring access to public goods for the marginalised. The confluence of the university as a public good with the state's vision of education as part of its economic strategy creates conditions for new ideas and projects to emerge that counter the stability of the university to function as a public good. At a practical level, this could, for example, constrain the efforts of leaders to champion community engagement and cultural enrichment projects.

Excellence and Quality

i. Discourses privileging ideas related to excellence and quality lead to the reproduction of practices conceptualised as events at the level of the empirical. Harvey and Lee (1993) problematise the notion of excellence in relation to quality by asking, "Whose excellence is privileged?" Discourses privileging excellence can then constrain equity and serve to maintain power and privilege.

These mechanisms are discussed in Chapter 8 of this study. **Sub-question 3: How does reflexivity as a generative mechanism enable and constrain morphogenesis and morphostasis?**

A major contribution of this study is to explore the way that leaders' reflexivity shapes their responses and behaviours in varying conditions and contexts.

Leadership and Identity Formation

i. University leaders' personal and social identities emerge over time and are ontological in nature. This finding has implications for leadership research that predominantly focuses on the

actual and empirical domains and negates the ontological nature of leadership. The study of leadership and identity appears in Chapter 6 of this study.

ii. When leaders reflexively mediate their modus vivendi or ultimate concerns and projects, they do so by drawing on their personal emerging properties derived from both their personal and social identities. It is through the personal identity that the social identity is forged, and it is the personal identity that will determine the projects and concerns of leaders. The leaders' personal identity and their modus vivendi will influence how they lead and which structures and cultures they will draw on in seeking to effect change.

iii. While mechanisms in the domains of culture and structure enable or constrain the leaders' concerns and projects, structural and cultural change is contingent on leaders drawing on their past experiences when pursuing their interests. These interactions between culture structure and the leader result in unintended consequences due to the tendential nature of mechanisms as well as the unobserved causal powers that may emerge during the interactions. It is usually these unintended consequences that enable and constrain the morphogenesis of agency. An example of unintended consequences would be the very different ways in which a structural mechanism, such as performance evaluation, is conducted by university leaders. The unintended consequences of measuring the performance of academics could erode the value of collegiality.

Reflexivity

i. The importance of leaders' capacity for reflexivity has implications for social change in the structural as well as the cultural domains.

ii. Leaders' personal identity and reflexive being draw on cultural norms when making life choices. Leaders' reflexivity carries personal emergent properties that draw on structure and culture as they pursue their concerns, projects, and practices in the university.

iii. When leaders exercise their personal emerging properties in order to engage with structural and cultural emerging properties as a result of reflexivity, the morphogenesis of leadership can emerge without structural or cultural morphogenesis occurring. An example might involve the establishment of a deans' forum, which results in the way leadership is constructed and experienced within a university. However, the same deans' forum might operate by drawing on dominant discourses which are not conducive to the emergence of events indicative of transformation.

iv. The emotions of leaders also influence their actions and decision-making, as emotions carry personal emerging properties of their own, as discussed in Chapters 2, 3, and 6. The interactions between the leader's personal emerging properties and structural and sociocultural emerging

properties create sociostructural elaboration or morphostasis and sociocultural elaboration or morphostasis in the institution.

I, therefore, argue that the conditioning of the university environment influences how and whether higher education leaders choose to exercise their reflexive personal emerging properties. In addition, institutional sociostructural and sociocultural conditioning influences how higher education leaders reflexively mediate their personal identity and social identity as they pursue their concerns, projects and practices in the institution and the world.

Chapters 2, 3, and 6 discuss how leaders' identity and reflexivity shape their ultimate concerns and preferred focus on natural, social, or practical domains.

10.4 ADDITIONAL RESEARCH REFLECTIONS

The laminate metaphor and the fallacy of positional leadership

I use the laminate metaphor and the way it is described in realist theory in conversation with leadership literature. I extended this concept to include the work of Don Brennis, who compares the lamination of complex phenomena to the construction of a symbol (2003, cited in Holland & Leander, 2004). The lamination of a symbol involves multiple layering of materials without any materials surrendering their original properties. An example would be a digital ID photograph used as a means of identification. Each element forms part of the overall picture yet retains the individual identity and properties that shape it.

The laminate metaphor strengthens the argument and awareness of the pitfalls of the conflationist theory in leadership studies. Care should be taken to avoid conflating 'the people' (leaders) with 'the parts' (structure and culture). In doing so, it becomes a means for higher education leadership researchers to avoid upward conflation, involving the attributing of power to effect change solely to the leader and downward conflation, which identifies society as the reason for the leader's ability or lack thereof to effect change. This metaphor also helps leadership researchers avoid falling into the trap of central conflation by identifying the inseparability of the social and personal. Each of these laminates is distinctive and carries unique powers and properties that may or may not lead to morphostasis or morphogenesis.

The laminate metaphor makes it possible to explore the way leaders draw on their self-identity, personal identity, and social identity's emerging properties in relation to the structural and cultural

emerging properties that confront them as they attempt to further the projects they have identified to address their concerns.

10.5 FUTURE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

This study provides a foundation for further studies in the area of higher education leadership:

i. More research exploring assumptions underpinning leadership in higher education that potentially denies its complexity is needed. Current studies draw on leadership theory that is built on retrospective constructs and data that tends to be located in the empirical and actual domains without addressing the ontological nature of leadership located in the domain of the Real.

ii. Leadership studies that utilise critical realism and social realism will provide a means of exploring leadership across institutions and contexts to determine the constraints and enablements operating across the system. This study has focused on one institution. More case studies of this nature would allow scholars to look across the cases to identify constraints and enablements at the system level. This is important given the efforts being made to enhance leadership (for example in the form of the Universities South Africa (USAf) Higher Education Leadership and Management [HELM] programme. Such research would consider the temporal, and therefore the tendential, cyclical nature of leadership.

iii. Research that focuses on the capacity for reflexive deliberation as a deliberate overt process is also needed. Such research would explore the reflexive deliberations of leaders who subjectively determine their practical projects in relation to their objective circumstances in a higher education setting.

iv. Leadership studies that adopt an integrated approach are also needed to explore how leaders draw on their modus vivendi when setting complex goals to guide change processes in faculties by setting long-term visions.

10.6 CONCLUSION

Most, if not all, leadership theorists agree that leadership is a complex phenomenon. This study has taken some tentative steps by exploring higher education leadership through the lens of critical and social realism in order to understand the causal mechanisms that constrain and enable the agency of higher education leaders. This study affirms leadership as a complex phenomenon and shows that many facets thereof remain hidden and tendential in nature. For now, this study draws to a close with the understanding that the morphogenesis of leadership is never-ending.

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ADDENDUM A: RESEARCH INTERVIEW AND CONSENT FORM

Dear Research Participant

Re: Request and Informed Consent to Participate in PhD Research

I am writing to you in my capacity as a PhD student at --- University. My passion is for the leadership within South Africa, notably in the core sector of tertiary education. The burning question I seek to answer is what makes it easy and what makes it difficult for leaders to exercise leadership in a higher educational setting. Literature pertaining to leadership has conflated the role of the leader with context, making it challenging to identify the conditions that give rise to the decisions and actions of senior leaders. The PhD research will explore how university senior leadership[13] balances the tension between academic autonomy, power, politics, and ethics in the field of higher education in an era of paradox and complexity (Samier, 2008).

University senior leadership would have witnessed fundamental changes within the higher educational landscape during their tenure. Recent events, both nationally and locally, bring the rapid unpredictability of change into sharp focus. I believe there is a need for research that explores the convergence of globalisation, politics, policy, institutional culture, and individual preferences on how senior leadership deals with ethical dilemmas[14] and decision-making within South African universities. This study hopes to contribute to the body of knowledge pertaining to leadership within the tertiary sector. More specifically, the study will explore the ontology of leadership, thereby hoping to contribute towards educational leadership theory. It is hoped that researchers will be able to draw on the study's findings to advance the field of leadership within the higher educational domain.

Research Procedure

My research approach will be to explore structural and cultural mechanisms that either enable or constrain the emergence of leadership amongst senior staff in a small, traditional university. The timeframe for the research will be approximately eight years which represents the Vice-chancellor's term in office.

Having identified you as a leader who plays a significant role in institutional leadership, I wish to invite you to participate in the research process as an interview participant. The focus of the interview will simply be understanding your role as an individual as well as a leader at -----University. I will ask questions regarding your educational background as well as how you came to be in your current role. The interview will take place at your office and be approximately one and a half hours in length. To maintain the essence of your words for the research, I will record the information by means of a voice-recorder. I will transcribe, code, and analyse the interview for data analysis purposes.

Confidentiality

The information gathered during this study will remain strictly confidential and stored securely during this project. Only the researcher and supervisor (Prof C. Boughey) will have access to the study data and information. No identifying names will appear on the interview transcripts; they will be coded, and the key to the code will be securely stored and password protected. Your name and any other identifying details will never be revealed

13 The renowned Leadership theorist Burns (1978), describes leadership as activity directed towards the 'accomplishment of goals established by or for a group/organisation/society' the leader forms part of (Price, 2006: 96).

14 Ethical dilemmas can be defined as decisions 'that require a choice among competing sets of principles, often in complex and value laden contexts' (Ehrich, Cranston & Kimber 2005: 137).

in any publication of the results of this study. Issues of privacy and confidentiality will be further addressed by offering you access to the transcribed interview and research findings as a way of assuring identity protection. In addition, an independent reader will be utilised to assess whether identities can be traced back to the interviewees.

Member Checking

The process of member-checking will be utilised, and my analysis and interpretations of the data will be shared with you. With your permission, I will obscure identifying details and attempt to change unique information of history that may reveal your identity. I will also endeavour to offer you an opportunity to read drafts of all research outputs to allow you to determine whether your identity is sufficiently obscured. Excerpts from the interview will be included in the final dissertation report. However, under no circumstances will your name or identifying characteristics appear in these writings. The results of the research may be published in the form of a research paper, published in a professional journal, or presented at professional meetings. It may also be published in book form. Your permission will be sought at each point pending publication of such documents.

Research Value

The knowledge obtained from this research will be valuable in guiding institutional leadership towards a richer understanding of higher education leadership. Researchers will also be able to draw on the study's findings to advance the field of leadership within the higher educational domain.

Withdrawal without Prejudice

Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation in this research at any time without prejudice. You are also free to refuse to answer any question I may ask.

Should you accept this invitation, I would be grateful if you would sign this form on the line provided below to show that you have read and agree with the contents. Please return it by email to me at ----------. An electronic signature is acceptable.

_____

Your electronic signature above

(If you have problems with the electronic signature, please call me at --- --- ----)

Upon receipt of your signed consent form, I will call your office to set up a convenient time for the interview.

Your time and involvement are immensely appreciated.

Sincerely,

Ruth Andrews

PhD Scholar

ADDENDUM B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE AND PROCESS

1. INTERVIEW SETUP
    a. Qualitative semi-structured interview introductions
    b. Consent confirmation
    c. Explanation of research background and research intent
    d. Confirmation of interview duration: approximately 90 minutes
    e. Recording and sound check

2. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

2.1 Please share with me your formative years – what was this like?

2.1.1 Follow-up questions: What stood out for you and why?

2.2 Reflecting on your choice of a career – what was this journey like?

2.2.1 Follow-up questions: what would you consider to be instrumental in choosing this specific path?

2.2.2 What and who influenced or contributed to your becoming in these formative years?

2.3 Please describe the journey to your current position.

2.3.1 Follow-up questions: How did you experience the institution when you first arrived?

2.3.2 Were there significant shifts and changes in the environment, and if so, please elaborate.

2.3.3 How did these experiences affect you?

2.4 What are the projects and concerns that fill your day?

2.4.1 Follow-up questions: please elaborate on why these projects and concerns are important to you.

2.4.2 What and who do you draw on to foster your projects and concerns?

2.5 How do you deal with conflicts of interest and competing demands?

2.5.1 Follow-up questions: and disagreeable people?

2.5.2 And difficult decisions?

2.6 As a leader, is there anything you would like to revisit in your leadership journey and do differently and why?

2.7 What matters to you most and why?

2.8 Are there any concluding thoughts?

3. INTERVIEW CLOSURE