# THE ROOTS RUN DEEP? UNDERSTANDING BRANCH POLITICS WITHIN THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Thesis Submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of

Master of Arts in Political and International Studies.


By

Nhlanhla Mkhutle


Supervisor:

Professor Sally Matthews


March 2021

**Abstract**

This thesis explores the functioning of branch politics within the African National Congress (ANC) and the influence of branch politics on the organization and its structures. The ANC has many of the characteristics of a mass party. In mass parties, mass participation is supposed to be promoted through the activities of party branches. This thesis documents the weakening of the ANC's local level structures and their political control over the organization's decisions. ANC branches are investigated as democratic vanguards of ANC's mass party persona, in relation to their functioning as the most basic units of the organization. The thesis reflects on branch members' experiences in different ANC branches to understand the interplay between branch politics, political power, and patronage politics within the ANC. This research project also explores the possibility of manipulation of ANC branches by senior leaders and would-be-leaders of the ANC. The thesis then concludes by summarising the state of branch politics within the ANC and giving recommendations on further study with regards to branch politics of the ANC.

# Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to the late Professor Alexius Amtaika, who was a role model, a father figure, and a mentor to me. We started together but alas did not finish together. May his perfect soul rest in eternal peace.

I would also like to thank my politics three tutlings who have shown me the importance of continuous learning and have revealed my other hidden talent of teaching.

To Professor Sally Matthews who took over this unspeakable task of supervising my thesis to the point of completion. I would also like to thank her for her unyielding patience, guidance and understanding throughout this thesis journey.

To Melinda Botha and family, thank you for being more than a landlord to me for the past three years. You have been a mother, sister, confidant, and friend. I will forever appreciate you and your family.

I would also like to thank uNosizwe, Bongiswa and Mamkhulu for being a constant support system. My best friends Ntombenhle, Nontethelelo, Paul, Jesse and Karl who have made my stay at Grahamstown bearable. To the Khoza family which has unofficially adopted me as their own and the friends, lecturers and the support staff who became family in the Politics department. To God Almighty who has deemed it fit that I complete this thesis with my sanity still intact.

Umuntu wokugcina nosemqoka kakhulu engithanda ukumbonga, intombendala ugogo wami owangikhulisa ngaze ngaba kulesisigaba sempilo engikusona. Uyinsika yethemba kimi, ungamandla ami, nokuphila kwami. Mina ngisho uNokhwezi, uTyani bude bongamele iziziba, Mduma, Gabela, Mahluzana, Kudiba nendonga, halala ntombendala, umsebenzi wezandla zakho uyabonakala.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| ANC | African National Congress |
| ANC YL | African National Congress Youth League |
| ANC VL | African National Congress Veteran's League |
| ANC WL | African National Congress Women's League |
| BEC | Branch Executive Committee |
| BGM | Bi-annual Branch General Meeting |
| COSATU | Congress of South African Trade Union |
| NEC | National Executive Council |
| NGC | National General Council |
| PEC | Provincial Executive Council |
| POA | Programme of Action |
| REC | Regional Executive Committee |
| SACP | South African Communist Party |
| SG | Secretary-General |
| TTR | Task Team Report |
| UDF | United Democratic Front |

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## Introduction

In a recent rather alarmist article published in the *Daily Maverick,* Richard Poplak (2021) suggests that Ace Magashule could possibly become South Africa's next president. He states that contrary to popular belief, South Africa is not governed by parliament or the ballot box but rather by party elites within the ANC and their accompanying factions. Cyril Ramaphosa, as president of the ANC and of South Africa, has considerable power, but he does not necessarily have power where it counts the most: in the voting blocs which are created by the branch-level delegates who are the ones tasked with deciding who ultimately occupies the Top Six positions of leadership within the ANC at the party's National Conferences (Poplak, 2021).

The Dlamini-Zuma and Ramaphosa presidential race in 2017 demonstrated this power dynamic. Although the Dlamini-Zuma bloc had the 'radical economic transformation' (RET) faction behind and although both camps spent large sums of money in pursuit of support, Ramaphosa ultimately won the presidential race, allegedly through aligning with David Mabuza with his Mpumalanga branches (Poplak, 2021). This made Ramaphosa able to rope in a considerably larger number of delegate power than the Dlamini-Zuma bloc. Poplak's (2021) article presents an interesting argument about how leaders of the ANC can effectively occupy senior leadership positions within the ANC through utilising the branches and their delegates.

Prior to 2007, the party presidency of the ANC remained unopposed and uncontested (Darracq, 2008a). This changed in 2007 when Jacob Zuma opposed Thabo Mbeki for party presidency in the ANC. This led to what Jacob Dlamini (2009) coins as the 'Polokwane Narrative'. This narrative posits that Jacob Zuma's win in Polokwane was based on the rejuvenation of the ANC local branches which took back power from the technocratic and democratic centralist Thabo Mbeki. Dlamini (2009) states that while this Polokwane narrative presents ANC branches as uniform with similar aims and goals, this is far from the truth. Cognisant of these ongoing debates about the role of the ANC branch in policy formulation, in the democratic functioning of the party and in the election of leaders of the party, this study seeks to understand the role of the ANC branches. It will do this by focusing on the period from the build up to the Polokwane conference to the Nasrec conference.

**Research Goals**

The primary research goal of this thesis is to understand the role of African National Congress branches and how they relate to the democratic structures within the ANC. This will be done by investigating the build-up to the 2007 Polokwane Conference up to the Nasrec Conference. This period is important in order to understand the complexities of the role of the ANC branches, and their relation to the democratic structures within the party. A second goal of this thesis is to determine the extent to which the ANC operates like a mass party. The third goal is to provide clarity as to whether manipulation happens in the ANC branches and how such manipulation affects the outcome of the ANC's decision-making structures. The fourth goal is to explore whether and how power within the democratic process is used to manipulate the delegation administration system and influence branch members.

In attempting to achieve these goals, theorisation about mass parties will be used in order to understand concepts within the ANC such as branches and branch politics. This is because literature on the mass party helps explain the ANC as a party and its structures. The concept of a mass party derives its origins from Duverger (1954) who understood these parties as having a large mass following organised into branches which elect leaders of the party and to finance party activities. Thus, literature on mass parties is relevant in attempting to reach all four goals of this thesis.

Research on the manipulation of branch politics is significant because the ANC purports itself as a mass-based democratic movement. In this movement, the branches speak to the higher structures of the ANC to make policy and organizational decisions of the party. The ANC uses this narrative in order to claim democratic centralisation of party structures. Therefore, research on the manipulation of branch structures is necessary in order to show if this is the case, or if it the higher structures that speak to branch structures and manipulate branches in their favour to further their own agendas.

**Research Methods**

Documentary research and document analysis was used in this thesis. ANC constitutions from the organization's inception to contemporary times were examined in order to understand what the ANC views the formal role of ANC branches to be. This aided me in understanding the

ANC's intentions regarding the role of its branches. I could then look to see whether or not these intentions are realised on the ground.

The consultation of organizational reports of the secretary-general of the ANC, which are presented to the ANC National Conferences, also proved seminal to my study as they highlighted the state of the branches, their challenges, and their successes. This proved crucial to my study as it equipped me to draw comparisons and formulate ideas regarding the ANC branches.

Existing case studies on ANC branches were used to further explore the functioning of ANC branch politics. This aided me in understanding how the ANC branches function on the ground. In addition to using existing case studies, I had originally intended to conduct my own research using selected ANC branches in KwaZulu-Natal as a case study. However, the COVID-19 pandemic made this impossible and so I relied on the excellent work of other researchers such as Dlamini (2010), Malabela (2011, 2015) and Piper and Anciano (2015) who provide detail about the functioning of ANC branches on the ground.

Furthermore, to fully address the third and fourth goals of my research (which relate to the manipulation of branch politics), I had hoped to do extensive fieldwork. However, this was not possible due to the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic was at its peak. Many of the potential participants in the study were elderly and there were no branch meetings happening during this period. While existing research certainly suggests that there are problems at branch level, extensive fieldwork is needed in order to determine the extent that there is manipulation happening in the ANC branches and whether this manipulation really affects the outcome of the ANC's decision-making structures. In addition to this, we need to determine whether this manipulation influences power within the delegation administration system, and whether and how this influence of power influence branch members. While some excellent studies of ANC branch-level politics already exist (see for example Darracq 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, Dlamini 2010, Malabela 2011, 2015, Piper and Anciano, 2015), further fieldwork research is needed to comprehensively answer these questions.

This research does not encompass all the ANC branches in the different provinces. Therefore, although the conclusions reached in this research are applicable to at least some ANC branches, these findings cannot be assumed to be true for all the ANC branches. This means that this study cannot provide the full picture on the state of ANC branches today.

**Structure of the Thesis**

Chapter Two, provides a broad overview of literature on mass parties, showing how have they been defined in the American and European contexts. It details the main features of mass parties. Furthermore, this chapter demonstrates the neglect of literature in relation to African Mass parties.

In Chapter Three, the history of the branches of the ANC is discussed in order to provide context for the research and to show how these branches fit within the ANC structures as a mass party. This chapter traces the history of the branches and their evolution up to contemporary times.

In Chapter Four, I discuss the ANC as a mass party in relation to the discourses surrounding mass parties. This chapter then asks if the ANC is indeed a true mass party in the conventional sense or if it has over time become more of a cartel party than a mass party.

Chapter Five provides a robust discussion on the branches of the ANC and how these branches of the ANC are used and manipulated, thus making the ANC less of a mass party and more of a cartel party. It does this by examining the current state of ANC branches in relation to how party leaders use them to buttress their power or be elected to positions of power within the ANC.

Chapter Six concludes by commenting on the state of the branches and how they are used by ANC party leaders for nefarious purposes before explaining the constraints that this research was met with and the prospects for future research in relation to branch politics of the ANC.

# CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

**Introduction**

This study looks at the functioning of African National Congress (ANC) branches. These branches are supposed to function in ways which promote democracy within the ANC. This expectation is in line with general expectations regarding the functioning of mass political parties. This chapter will discuss the concept of the mass party and its theorization in the literature. This chapter begins by introducing the fundamental tenets that underpin mass parties. Mass parties are characterised by a broad manifesto, mass recruitment and mass participation as methods of increasing their voter base. This chapter will also discuss mass parties as components of the state and the related internal erosion of their democratic character. It will demonstrate how mass parties are integral to the systematization of states. After this, I will discuss how the theorization of mass parties in literature tends to neglect Africa. Despite this neglect, mass parties have been central in the building of unity in African states.

Mass parties were first introduced into scholarly discussion by Maurice Duverger (1951) who used the term to refer to political parties ensuing from the occurrence of universal suffrage and the introduction of the multitudes of people into the realm of politics. These mass parties came to prominence in the latter part of the nineteenth century and had a significant number of members who were working class. These members acquired voting privileges after electoral changes (Goati, 2001: 25). With the extension of suffrage, political parties saw the need to organize differently from how they had before. This was imperative in order to guarantee the mobilization of the party masses, as the masses worked long hours and were therefore unable to participate in centralized party activities. Because of this, mass parties created branches as a new way to gather the masses (Mulé, 1998: 53).

According to Duverger (1954: 20), mass parties subscribe to the organizational idea of fairly transparent branches. These mass parties are parties that have a party framework where local branches are understood as being an important part of the overall party system. Mass parties are also defined by their distinctive vertical expression, with strong ties to the different organizational structures through a bottom-up process, where the lower members of the organization are reflected and represented in the high-level decision-making body of the organization (Duverger, 1954: 23). The executive leaders of mass parties are usually put into office by, and account formally to, the national party congress, which typically comprises of

delegates voted in by the lower structures of the party. They constitute the representative structure of the membership, which in turn, is the highest decision-making body within the organization (Duverger, 1954: 23). Mass parties have since their inception encouraged grassroots engagement and provided education to their mass voter base in order for their voter base to be educated politically and to play a proactive role in the decision-making process within the organization. By doing this, they strengthen the connection between the electorate and public servants of mass parties who occupy public offices (Heidar 2006; Allern and Pedersen 2007).

Writing in the 1960s, Kirchheimer (1966: 184) provides a more critical perspective on mass parties, which he says can also be called 'catch-all' parties. According to Kirchheimer (1966), mass parties are parties in which there is a weak and failing moral and intellectual enterprise. This is because these parties lower their ideological underpinnings and focus more on growing their attractiveness to ordinary people by replacing 'effectiveness in depth for a wider audience and more immediate electoral success' (Kirchheimer, 1966: 184). This is accompanied by the reinforcement of the power of high-ranking leaders of the party at the expense of individual members of the party. According to Kirchheimer (1966: 184), politics in mass parties is preoccupied with competition at the electoral polls after which party elites ignore the party members that it had mobilized and claimed to represent. This is because if deliberative and participatory democracy was allowed to happen this could undermine the party's political and organizational party efficacy (Butler, 2005: 728).

In a more recent discussion of mass parties, Matlosa and Shale (2008:7) have posited that mass parties are parties which are centred around recruiting mass membership and mobilizing this membership by creating organizational structures to sustain themselves. According to Matlosa and Shale (2008:7), in contemporary mass parties, there is a move away from a fixed ideological narrative and political dogma, such that mass parties are becoming catch-all parties with no clear ideology and with an emphasis on the importance of leadership and unification within the party. These parties focus more on being pragmatic, whilst in the process, downplaying the role of the individual members in the organization and favouring a more centralized power base which lies in the hands of the high-ranking leadership. Mass parties usually attempt to create large rapport systems to gain assistance rather than depending on specific social groups for support (Matlosa and Shale, 2008:7).

**Features of Mass Parties**

As mentioned earlier, mass parties are underpinned by a broad manifesto, mass recruitment and mass participation as methods of increasing their voter base. I will now discuss each of these features of mass parties in more detail.

*A broad manifesto*

The mass party is built around the idea of a broad manifesto. In order to ensure that the mass party is triumphant in the electoral polls, there is a party machine that is put in charge to create a manifesto that resonates with the voter base (Michels, 1962: 58). Because of this broad manifesto narrative, detractors within the mass party may be expelled and excluded from the mass party, creating a semblance of unity (Michels, 1962: 59). According to Michels (1962:5860), this semblance of unity is necessary as too robust and active pluralism can demolish the broad manifesto narrative in any party, inviting ideological discord, competitiveness between charming leaders and partisanship networks within the party (Michels, 1962: 58-60).

Weber (1946: 102) explains that when it comes to the broad manifesto notion, mass parties are the outcome 'of mass franchise, of the necessity to woo and organize the masses, and develop the utmost unity of direction and the strictest discipline' (Weber, 1946: 102). Because of the size of mass parties, their manifestos usually deal with a wide variety of issues affecting society. It is in this that society has information about the mass party and what it represents. Usually, these manifestos try to encompass all societal groups in order to gain popularity and numbers (Gabel and Huber, 2000: 100). This assertion is echoed by Gabel and Anderson (2002), who posit that in mass-level political spheres mass party groups mould their party policy manifestos following their voter trends.

*Mass recruitment as a feature in mass parties*

Mass recruitment as a feature of mass parties was first articulated by Duverger (1954: 25,63). He stated that mass recruitment was the objective of mass parties and that this objective was achieved through the basic unit of the mass party, which is the branch and its members (Duverger, 1954: 25,63). Duverger (1954: 64) further contended that mass parties have advanced organizational structures which aim to enrol a big portion of their voter base as members of the party.

Mass recruitment and the development of a broad manifesto are closely related. The mass party, in its eagerness to mobilize voters, tends to have a more 'recruit all' style, focusing on common issues such as healthcare and education, advocating for competency above ideology, and attempting to garner favourable recognition from different parts of society (Kirchheimer, 1966: 179). Mass parties recruit broadly because they understand that they cannot gain favour – and ultimately electoral victory – from focusing on bourgeois and elite class interests, as this class is a minority. These parties, particularly those on the left politically, therefore set out to appeal to a large number of voters (Katz, 2001: 284).

Mass recruitment is a crucial undertaking of mass parties as it is the basis for the election of the party's leadership and the financing of the party's activities (Duverger, 1951:61). In these mass organizations, members are the core of the organization and the subject of its activities (Duverger, 1951:61). Extensive mass recruitment within mass parties is encouraged because of the premise that states that the bigger the organization's membership is, the more effective it is. This stems from the notion of wanting electoral victory, through its conventional dependency on its members, to mobilize for elections and to ensure the party's electoral success through their undertakings (Gunther and Diamond, 2003: 179). Mass parties often employ youth organizations as mass recruitment mechanisms. These youth organizations act as a supplementary framework within mass parties to assist them by being instrumental apparatuses that create links between the society and the mass parties. They do this by being recruitment mechanisms for mass party members (Duverger, 1951; Koole, 1992). Youth organizations within the mass party structures may even have a higher membership yield than the actual mass party, and that is why they are so valuable to mass parties, because they increase recruitment and party members within the mass party (Duverger, 1951; Koole, 1992).

*Mass participation as a prominent feature of mass parties*

As mentioned above, one of the core functions of mass parties is mass membership through extensive recruitment. This mass recruitment is followed by processes of political education and mass participation (Ware, 1987). Tordoff (1993), explains that in order for mass recruitment to be effective, people need to be mobilized politically. The recruitment and mobilization of the masses is imperative because the party needs to be seen as legitimate by the masses and have the masses' support. The mass political party needs to be seen engaging with the people on the ground in order to institutionalize mass support (Tordoff: 1993).

Members of mass parties are required to participate within the workings of the party. The mass political party is not only characterized by its mass membership, but also by the participation of its members in the party and the way in which this participation is built into the structures of the party (Ware, 1987: 1-5). Because it is assumed that members are active agents in the mass party, it is understood that they therefore ought to have an opinion on the workings of the party, especially in relation to the creation of policy and the selection of senior leadership in the party (Ware, 1987).

Officially, members are assumed to be engaged activists of the party who find their voices in well-defined and properly structured local branches that are active in political activities all year round (Ware, 1987: 6-8). In reality, however, mass party members may only be afforded the opportunity to participate in the politics of the organization during election season when the elites of the organization garner for the masses' votes. According to Randall (1988: 2), such limitations on participation signify the organization's attempt to be the only authority that is legitimate in society by institutionalizing participation while also limiting it. When the masses of the party participate, Randall (1988: 2) argues that they often only participate to an extent of choosing the elites of the party and placing power in their hands to dominate them. Mass parties may even value inactive members, who are perceived as 'vote multipliers' (Scarrow, 1996: 135) who do not participate actively in party activities but who help the party to attract more members through their informal discussions  (Scarrow, 1996: 135).

**Mass party funding**

Mass political parties started out with the goal of relying on funding from members as a model of democratic financing, be it from the membership fees to the members donating money to the party. The theory behind party funding within mass parties is that they envision that the local fee-paying members should have influence within the party, in the name of preserving their larger interests in the party (Hopkin, 2004: 20). In this conception of party funding, mass parties replace capitalistic financing with democratic financing (Duverger, 1951: 119-120).

It is crucial for the party to be seen as representing the masses as it allows party leaders to assert that they are ruling by popular majority (Hopkin, 2004: 20).  This is where mass parties started founding branches as established structures whose impetus was fundraising (Matakovic and Mraović, 2015: 115). If the general membership of the mass party does not contribute to financing then there is a fear that those who do contribute will gain more influence in the party and thereby determine party policy (Hopkin, 2004: 20). This would go against the idea that

mass parties are democratic. Despite these arguments in favour of financing through contributions from the membership as a whole, membership fees and donations typically constitute a minor part in the financing of mass parties (Hopkin, 2004: 20). In many cases, these funds have proved to be insufficient for the running of successful campaigns and for paying the salaries of the working professionals in the party. Therefore, it seems that party member funding as the primary source of party finance is unviable. This is because large numbers of party members work for an extended period of time within a day and therefore cannot actively participate in voluntary work of the party (Matakovic and Mraović, 2015: 113). Mass parties have thus come to rely heavily on donations given to them by unions (for leftwing parties) or by business (for right-wing partis) (Matakovic and Mraović, 2015: 113). It became apparent that the funding model of getting large amounts of money from many different small donors was unviable for mass party funding. Because of this, mass parties who are in power often use money from the state as a resource in order to finance their party endeavours (Matakovic and Mraović, 2015: 113).

**Mass parties: a component of the state**

Katz and Mair (1995) critically explore the relationship that exists between the state and political parties. They posit that the move away from elite parties to the creation of mass parties makes mass parties very reliant on state subsidies, such that they become like components of the state (Katz and Mair, 1995: 5-6). Katz and Mair's (1995) study focuses on Europe and notes that over time European political parties' bonds with society have weakened. As these bonds weakened and decayed, there was an increase in the relationship of mass parties with the state and these relationships become perpetually rooted and firmly established within the state organizations (Katz and Mair, 1995: 7). These parties start outside the state and get absorbed into it and through this, have minimal interaction with society. Mass parties' relationship with the state has made room for these parties to become recognized as constitutionally legitimate and this in turn increases the administrative resources that mass parties that get absorbed into the state have (Katz and Mair, 1995, 2002). What this means is that contemporary mass parties can be seen as having fragile links with society and having more established enduring links with the state. These parties become 'semi-state agents' which helps them make up for their loss of support from their societal base (Katz and Mair, 1995: 12).

The growth of economic prosperity and the accompanying shifts in the manner of political engagement resulted in mass political parties losing their societal base, and looking to the state

for sustenance, resulting in these parties developing an over-dependence on the state whilst at the same time being controlled by the state (Katz and Mair, 1995: 17).

As these mass parties get absorbed within the state, and function within the parameters of the state, they now keep a tight reign over the recruitment of party members and the structural arrangement of governments and parliaments as well (Biezen and Kopecky, 2007: 236). This has caused these parties to cease being seen as instruments of representation by mass members of the party, and as vehicles of mass assemblage and mechanisms of 'interest articulation and aggregation' (Biezen and Kopecky, 2007: 236). Bartolini and Mair (2001: 328) contend that the mass party's role in societies has decreased whilst simultaneously increasing its institutional character.

In newly founded democracies in Eastern and Southern Europe, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, the social rooting of these mass political parties has been fragile from the very start of the democratization process (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995; Salih, 2003, van Biezen, 2003). Mass parties, especially ones that were abruptly created to fight against military and authoritarian rule, are common in African democracies (Burnell and Randall, 2004). Contemporary African parties stem from these old mass parties, whilst some mass parties in Africa are embodiments of what Burnell and Randall (2004) alluded to, parties systems that haphazardly organized themselves to fight against authoritarian and military rule (Kura, 2007: 64). It is in these contemporary parties in Africa in most instances, where there are weak party systematizations, very intricate and/or poor organizational systems and the proclivity to cater for the personal interests of the elites within the organization (Kura, 2007: 64).

**Erosion of the mass democratic character in mass parties**

Although mass parties are supposedly democratic, their democratic ideals can be eroded resulting in them becoming more oligarchical. Michels (1958: 31) posits that despite many political parties having democratic ideals at their core at their inception, these ideals are slowly eroded, and these parties turn oligarchic. Consequently, a handful of leaders come to dominate the party, as the party elites realise that it is not feasible for the masses to run the party and voice out their opinions as a whole.

Michels refers to what he calls the iron law of oligarchy, in that the leaders put into power by the masses of the party, lose interest in what the masses want (1958: 32). This, for Michels, is the root cause of the decaying of representative democracy and its disintegration into oligarchy.

Leaders that are elected by the masses become nonchalant about the interests and the needs of the people who voted for them, who are only listened to during election time, where these leaders engage with the masses by going to them and campaigning for their support. After receiving their electoral support and becoming re-elected by them, the leaders forget the masses and become uninterested in matters affecting them (Michels, 1958). These parties become unresponsive to the will of their members, choosing to focus more on the competitive character of the procedure of elections. High-ranking officials in the party begin to neglect their relationship with the populous, which in turn results in party members becoming unresponsive to high-ranking officials within the party, as these members now view these high-ranking members as not catering for their needs (Hopkin, 2006: 15).

As the size of the party at the grassroots level increases, the administrative nature of mass parties becomes more complex. Furthermore, more administration and structure are required due to electoral politics which warrants a structured party, conferences for the masses and campaigning that is elaborate. This is another arena where what Michels (1962) terms the 'iron law of oligarchy' comes into play: power and information becomes concentrated in a handful in the party, usually the elites of the party (Michels, 1962: 30). Leaders, he states, use the legitimacy of the organization, the organization's frameworks, and its authority to sway power from the local level within the party and utilize the power accorded to them by the mass membership of the party for their own interests (Michels, 1958). Thus, this then causes mass parties to evolve into a cartel party. The cartel party model is premised on the assertion that political parties such as mass parties have largely functioned like cartels. These parties use state resources in order to buttress their position in society whilst simultaneously limiting political opposition. The representative function that is accorded to the mass party's membership is moved from civil society to a select few within the organization who use this function to further their own interests (Katz and Mair, 1995: 8).

**Mass parties and the systematization of modern states**

Mass parties play an integral role in the building and the systematization of modern states. This is because mass parties play a role of social integration through promoting political gatherings and through organizing the masses into a new democratic regime (Scarrow, 2000: 79). Tordoff (1993) alludes to the fact that political parties play an important role in politically mobilizing people, creating policy and developing communication and patronage networks. In this way they play a role in building the state. Political parties are used as vehicles for attaining state

power, and their lifespans depend upon the recruiting members relatively rigorously, selecting appropriate candidates for office and campaigning effectively (Meny, 1993: 49). To guarantee their survival, mass parties are obligated to undergo a series of changes in response to changes and continuities in society. The success of the party depends on how certain events affect the party, the ability of leaders to deal with problems in society, and their capacity to subvert competitors at their inception (Meny, 1993: 50). Thus, notions of these political parties as integral institutions of mobilizing politically, are found within the context of mass politics.

In the context of democratic regimes, mass parties depend upon the voter base of the masses to install them into leadership positions (Smith, 2009: 109). Because of this, the mass-based political party gives the government policies, ideologies, and leadership structures which governments depend on to secure and establish their legitimacy (Smith, 2009: 109). Moreover, mass parties assist as the primary structure of communication between the elites of the government at the top and the masses at the bottom. In post-independence societies, these mass parties have played a principal part in the systematization of the state (Smith, 2009: 109). Thus, in the systematization of the state, leaders, in their official capacity, are supposed to be the vehicles that the activists of the party employ to find expression within the party. They are also supposed to have policies and decisions in place, taken from the activists of the party after rigorous internal democracy processes (Ware, 1987: 33).

As shown above, mass parties play a role in building the state and ushering its members to a new democratic regime. However, Western mass party literature does not adequately discuss party systems in Africa which, as pointed out by Sartori (2005: ix), are volatile. Much of the writing on mass parties is not relevant to Africa as it draws on Western political parties when explaining the functioning of mass parties. Narratives and case studies related to Africa are insufficiently represented in the literature (Darracq, 2008). There has been insufficient theorizing when it relates to the classification of differing parties and party systems in Africa and expansive generalizations have been made based on perfunctory statements from scholars with little understanding of Africa (Basedau et al., 2007: 11). Since the democratic dawn of many African countries and the related re-invention of a broad and diverse multi-party politics, Africanist scholars have written extensively about the African political actors who spearhead the new democratic narrative but have often labelled these African political actors' parties as unstable and not classifiable as mass political parties (Sartori, 2005). The next section of this chapter will explore the limited literature on mass parties in Africa.

**The Rise of Cartel Parties**

The rise of cartel parties came after the decline of mass, cadre and catch all parties (Katz and Mair, 1995). The cartel party is different to these other parties because of its mutually beneficial relationship with the state. This relationship helps these cartel parties stay in power, even when there is dissention and dissatisfaction from their voter base (Mair, 1997: 12).

The idea of the cartel party came to the fore as a response to the 'decline of the party thesis' which was put forward by various scholars in the late 1980s. These parties were conceptualized by Katz and Mair, with their main premise being that political parties can manoeuvre their political space and take active charge of the space, whilst simultaneously safeguarding themselves against mounting political pressures advocating for change within the state (Mair, 1997: 12-13).

When mass, cadre or catch-all political parties evolve into cartel parties, there is an underlying factor of party system instability as the basis for the evolution. This is primarily because, these political parties have failed to carry out their duties and functions characteristic to their party system (Hopkin, 2003: 1). This is why the party system develops a mutual relationship of symbiosis with the state apparatus. This relationship ensures the cartel party's survival despite the cartel party losing its grassroots support (Hopkin, 2003: 1). Dependence on state resources in the cartel party occurs because of electoral volatility, which propounds the fact that there is a schism between the cartel party and civil society (Hopkin, 2003: 1).

Cartel parties have in most instances lacked social presence and social capital, making them vigorously utilize state resources. These parties perform clientilistic practices, intervening in the economy to distribute state resources to their weakening electoral bases to continue buttressing the party's position as ruling party (Hopkin, 2003: 2). This is why Katz and Mair (1995: 15-16) argue, that the 'the "party on the ground" was undoubtedly weaker, but the party in central office and the 'party in public office were stronger than ever"(Mair 1997: Ch.6) . State subventions fuel the substantial incomes of the governing party elites of the cartel party. These elites have exclusive control over state-run-media outlets and have continuous access to these media outlets to push their agendas (Hopkin, 2003: 2). There is competition on different levels amongst other parties within the cartel party system, but the elites of the cartel party have a steady flow of state subventions in order to guarantee their position as ruling power and to stop new entrants from joining the party system (Hopkin, 2003: 3). These parties deny state

support to new political parties and capitalize on the deep-seated apathy of the electoral system thereby forming "cartels" (Hopkin, 2003: 3).

Electoral stability is of the outmost importance in the cartel party system. This is shown by the party's interparty cooperation. Voter discontent is absorbed within the party structure in order to preserve the legitimacy of the cartel party (Katz and Mair 1995: 16). This is why it is of outmost importance for cartel parties to win elections and maintain electoral stability (Katz and Mair 1995: 16). For this reason, cartel parties makes use of professional experts in their election campaigns strategy (Katz and Mair, 1995: 20).

In cartel parties, there exists a vertical stratarchy within the party system. The National (parliamentarian) party elites furthers their own agendas whilst keeping out the regional and local party leaders on questions surrounding strategic and political organizational dimensions of the party structure (Katz and Mair, 1995: 21). The regional and local party leaders also insist on exclusive control of their own regional and local structures. An example of this would be regional and local party leaders insisting autonomy in the selection of local party leaders and also having exclusive control on local politics (Katz and Mair, 1995: 21).

**The neglect of Africa in literature on mass parties**

Basedau, Erdmann and Mehler (2007) posit that there is no direct agreement amongst scholars on how to effectively classify African political parties. This is because there is no agreed upon political party typology that would give them credence to classify and order them into different party groupings such as mass parties, catch-all parties, cartel parties and cadre parties (Basedau et al, 2007: 11). These scholars point out that there is scant literature on political parties in Africa and that 'it does not seem that African party systems obey Duverger's "laws" at all' (Basedau et al, 2007: 284). Bienen (1971: 200) states that party research on African parties is deficient, because there is insufficient substantive empirical research, as African parties are thought of as authoritarian and African countries are considered to mainly be characterised by dominant party rule. Immanuel Wallerstein (1966) expressed his uneasiness of attributing a 'mass character' to African parties' post-independence based on his observations of African parties. Despite these authors writing in the 1960s and 1970s, their views regarding the neglect of Africa in literature concerning mass parties are still applicable in post-independence African states. This is because, while these authors were writing in the 1960s and 1970s, more recent research by Basedau and his colleagues suggest that African political parties and party systems remain under-studied today (Basedau et al., 2007).

Despite not being widely reflected in the Western literature, some scholars suggest that we do see the emergence of mass parties in the African setting. According to Kasfir (1976:244), mass parties in Africa emerged as early as the days of independence initiatives facilitated by African parties, and according to Carbone (2007:7), mass parties in Africa emerged between the late 1940s and the 1960s. These emerging mass parties in Africa were essentially liberation movements which were fighting against the shackles of colonialism by using popular mobilization as a tool to achieve their ends (Carbone, 2007: 7). As colonialism came to an end, mass parties began to emerge in Africa as guerrilla organizations sought to convert themselves and become legitimate dominant parties, that could run for parliamentary seats within the auspices of a formal organization (Carbone, 2007: 8). Because of the initial aspiration of popular mobilization to fight against colonialism, these movements turned into mass parties, in order to embrace diversity and use the mechanism of mass parties (which is mass recruitment) to recruit party members (Carbone, 2007: 7). Therefore, African parties were initially defined within the parameters of national movements, but these national movements quickly turned into mass parties (Kasfir 1976:244). Maiyo (2008:16) asserts that African political parties consisted of 'broad-based mass liberation movements in the immediate pre- and post-independence period' that had encompassed an ideologically unitary aspiratory goal of liberation from colonial domination. The notion that the dominant party needed to be the forerunner of democratic change means, because of the context of the liberation struggle, African political parties did not always pursue mass membership but rather focused on selecting militant activists who could drive the struggle forward (Carbone, 2007: 7). Because of this, African mass parties wanted to have control of the narrative of who gets to be their members. They did this in order to embrace tighter measures of control when it comes to party membership which was governed by a party criterion (Carbone 2005:424). One of the implications of this context was the idea that the party was central and was above the state and that the party should subdue any resistance (Carbone 2005:424).

Therefore, while some scholars do not seem to regard Africa as relevant to discussions about mass parties, the scholarship reviewed above demonstrates the relevance of Africa to debates about mass parties and democracy. Further research is needed to better understand how mass parties work in the Africa context.

**The role played by mass parties in building national unity in Africa**

The emergence of mass parties in Africa helped with national unification in the post-independence era. This is articulated by political theorists of post-liberation African political parties who state that mass parties have helped in the national unification of countries with ethnic divisions (Emerson, 1967). Carbone (2007: 9) states that mass parties in Africa go about this unification process by traversing ethnic divisions as these parties were started and supported by people of different ethnic backgrounds. This was seen in the ANC, where it banded different groups together under the liberation narrative in order to protect the unity factor of the differing societal elements of its constituency (Carbone, 2007: 9). This point was made even early in the independence era by Rupert Emerson, who stated that in a large number of African countries that have a nationalist mass party, the mass party has been the primary vehicle that integrates different sectors of society (Emerson, 1967: 296, cited in Salih, 2003).

Mass political parties in Africa rallied under the narrative of majority rule by Africans, which signalled a unifying power in societies that had deep ethnic cleavages (Maiyo, 2008:16). This is further alluded to by Ruth Schachter Morgenthau (1964: 336-341) who, drawing from Duverger's conception of mass-based organizations, argues that in Africa, mass parties strive to integrate society. They do this in order to appeal to the masses of society. They also do this in order to get an extensive number of members and a large number of votes (Morgenthau, 1964: 336-341).

The role played by mass parties in building unity in post-independence Africa is seen in mass parties not making identity political. Because identity was not made political, parties representing dominant ethnicities did not take centre stage in the political sphere, because identities were not used as a factor in building mass parties in Africa. This allowed marginal groups and dominant groups to integrate (Morgenthau, 1964: 336-341). In addition to this, mass parties promote national unity in African countries through divorcing politics from the military (Rwengabo, 2016: 11). Mass parties in Africa are premised on the assertiveness of 'national integration and unity of purpose' (Rwengabo, 2016: 20). By speaking to racial and further societal cooperation, Tanzania's mass parties, for example, push the party leadership into placing themselves as a countrywide party and not just an urban party. This allows the party to foster national integration by striving to stimulate all national endeavours to a singular resolve, which is development, national unification, and integration in Tanzania (Rwengabo, 2016: 21). When African mass parties build unity in Africa, they set the stage for the theory of precedence

(Wallerstein, 1966: 206). This theory of precedence sees the mass party presiding over the state in order for the party to unify different interest groups, using the mass party as a vehicle for integration (Wallerstein, 1966: 206).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an overview of the literature on mass political parties. As has been shown, mass political parties arise out of universal suffrage. These parties ensure that the voices of the masses are heard and respected. These parties are favourable to society because they organize their members into branches in order to have structure and ensure that all party members' interests are catered for. It is these parties that Duverger (1954) predicted would be the future of political parties. For Kirchheimer (1966), the conception of mass parties as envisioned by Duverger is inadequate in explaining the phenomena of mass political parties. He goes on to state that mass parties have become more of catch-all parties because they want to appeal to the masses whilst in the process losing their ideology. Despite these assertions from Kirchheimer, there are fundamental features that underpin all mass political parties.

The features that underpin mass political parties include a broad manifesto that is created to appeal to their voter base in order to garner voters and recruit extensively for the party. In addition to this manifesto, mass parties tend to have a recruit-all function because these parties posit that the bigger their voter base, the effective the party. It is in this premise that mass recruitment is another feature of these parties. Mass recruitment in mass political parties is important in providing the party with mass participation. Members of mass parties are thought of as active agents of the party who assist the party and garner more votes and members for the party. It is in this mass participation that mass parties envision party members becoming local fee payers and contributing to the mass funding of the party. When this funding is irregular or small, mass parties look to the state coffers in order to finance their activities.

Many contemporary mass parties have become components of the state. They have become absorbed within the state and have lost their ties with their members of society. Mass parties now have tight control over the structural make-up of governments and parliaments. Because of this, mass parties have experienced a mass erosion of their democratic character. This erosion is created by the democratic ideals of these parties which over time become oligarchic. This leads to the masses within the party not having real power, as this power is concentrated in the hands of the elite. Despite this erosion of mass parties' democratic character, these parties are still crucial in the systematization of states. This is because these parties help governments

gain legitimacy through their ideologies and policies in democratic states as their power to govern comes directly from the masses.

The main features of mass parties have mainly been developed from Western perspectives of how these parties operate while Africa has been disregarded in the process of their classifications. This neglect of Africa in scholarship has missed crucial scholarship on mass parties in the African setting which was seen in the rise in the 1940s and 1960s. It is in this footing that mass parties play an important role in building national unity in Africa. These mass parties, which were liberation movements in the African context pushed political ideology to promote integration and national unity.

One of the African political parties that has most often been described as a mass party is the African National Congress. I will now turn from this discussion of the literature on mass parties to outlining the establishment of the branches' structure within the ANC.

# CHAPTER THREE: THE HISTORY OF THE ANC BRANCHES

## Introduction

In order for the branch politics of the African National Congress (ANC) to be understood, the history of the ANC needs to be explained. This is done in order to show where the ruptures and continuities stem from and how this play out in the contemporary branch politics of ANC. The ANC asserts that its political dominance over the population of South Africa stems from the fact that its internal procedures are participatory and democratic and are truly representative of South African society (Hamilton 2011). However, some researchers report the contrary. This research, which will be discussed in detail below, shows that the reality is more complex, especially when looking at the branch level.

## The History of the ANC

The ANC was formed in 1912 in Bloemfontein and John Langalibalele Dube was elected in absentia as its first president. It was initially known as the South African Native National Congress but was renamed the African National Congress in 1923. It was formed primarily to advocate for the rights of 'native' or black South Africans to participate in the governance of South Africa and to be represented within its political landscape (Meli, 1988).

At its inception in 1912, the ANC was a middle class, Christian-centred organization with a modestly nationalist orientation. These formative years of the ANC favoured elitist and nonviolent methods of involvement such as delegations and petitions. The initial organizational structures were flexible and irregular (Walshe, 1970). The ANC comprised mostly of intellectuals, chiefs, lawyers, priests, teachers, and lawyers. Its members were mostly African men who were educated and were part of the middle-class who fought for educated African men to have a right to cast a ballot, through deputations, memoranda and petitions that were sent to Pretoria and to England (Phala, 2011:3). The frontline leaders for the emancipation of Africans, particularly black Africans, during the early days of the ANC were Meshack Pelem, George Montsioa, Sol Plaatje, Thomas Maphikela, Pixley Ka Isaka Seme, Walter Rubusana, John Tengo Jabavu, Sefako Makgatho and Alfred Mangena. These men were a product of African consciousness in the national arena, but also helped further develop this nascent African consciousness (Phala, 2011:3). The ANC of the early years was not an organization

defined by a mass character, both in its structure and in its plan of action and strategies (Phala, 2011:3). As the ANC developed a mass character, its branches became more important.

**Introduction to the ANC branches**

The ANC has a complex structure, with the branch being its most rudimentary element and the primary instrument for political activity by ANC members. According to the ANC constitution (2017: 23), the branch is the 'primary vehicle for maintaining and enhancing the mass character of our movement'. A person cannot join the ANC except through a branch and 90 percent of delegates to the national conference, which is held every five years and is the organization's highest decision-making body, must come directly from branches. Branches are also 'the place where members exercise their basic democratic rights and formulate policy' (ANC constitution, 2017: 23.4).

According to ANC documentation, branches have long been a feature of the ANC. The first ANC constitution, which was finalized in 1919, lists the following as key to the organization of the ANC: 'provincial congresses, district, and local branches, agricultural and educational societies, and industrial and economical unions' (ANC constitution, 1919: 25). The societies, unions and district branches have disappeared from the ANC constitution and only the local branch remains today as the foundational structure of the organization.

The ANC branches are meant to form part of the administration of the organization and to be a meeting place between the citizenry and the ANC-led public service and government. They are supposed to be centres of information for every South African (Darracq, 2008b: 601). Darracq (2008b: 595) reports that the ANC believes that branches should be the nerve centres of the community and should lead the community. They are responsible for marshalling their own people for their own development. More practically, ANC branches must be able to tackle community issues in conjunction with other community groups and sectors, including civics (Darracq, 2008b: 595).

The branch membership and the structures within the ANC are stipulated in the ANC constitution. The ANC constitution asserts that membership within the organization is open to all persons over the age of 18 (ANC Constitution, 2017: 4.1). These individuals can express themselves at the local level of the organization, which is the branch. Such membership needs to be approved by the Branch Executive Committee liaising with the Branch General Meeting or Regional Executive Committee if there is no established Branch Executive Committee (ANC

Constitution, 2017: 4.3). The Branch Executive Committee approves or refuses the membership of the prospective member, provided that this refusal or approval is endorsed by an upper framework structure of the ANC (ANC Constitution, 2017: 4.4).

Rights are given to provisional members when their application to join the organization is processed. After this, they are allowed to join a branch in their particular ward as non-voting members, pending permanent membership (ANC Constitution, 2017: 4.5). Any member of the organization who has an objection to the admittance of the provisional member can lodge a complaint within six months of the member being given provisional member status, to the branch, regional or provincial secretary (ANC Constitution, 2017: 4.5). After the provisional member becomes a full member of the ANC, the member is obliged to pay the annual subscription membership fee as set out by the National Executive Council (ANC Constitution, 2017: 4.5).

ANC members are entitled to voice their opinions and to relay constructive criticism in terms of any programme of action or policy initiative that falls in the ambit of the ANC structures (ANC Constitution, 2017: 5.1.3). Members also have the right to participate in elections and become elected or appointed to become part of any structure, commission, committee or deputation of the organization (ANC Constitution, 2017: 5.1.4). Every member can also hand in programmes or declarations to any structure of the ANC, be it the Branch, Provincial, Regional or the National Executive Committee provided that they are submitted through the appropriate channels (ANC Constitution, 2017: 5.1.5).

The duties of an ANC member include but are not limited to active participation within a branch and the implementation of the goals, programmes, and policy initiatives of the ANC (ANC Constitution, 2017: 5.2.1-5.2.2). These members must follow party discipline and align themselves with the decisions passed by the majority and decisions taken by the upper structures of the organization. The members of the ANC have a duty to question any decision within the branch structure which they perceive to be contrary to just and fair administrative processes (ANC Constitution, 2017: 5.2.7-5.2.9).

Members within the organization must be registered as voters within their respective structures (ANC Constitution, 2017: 5.3). Any ANC member who has been elected to public office, be it at local, provincial, or national levels, is charged to be a member of relevant congresses and conventions and to work according to the precepts of these particular structures (ANC

Constitution, 2017: 5.4). These members are required to adhere to the rules and regulations enshrined in the 2017 ANC Constitution and any other structures founded by the ANC constitution (ANC Constitution, 2017: 5.4).

The organizational schema of the ANC encapsulates different organs that make up the ANC structures. It is made up of the Branch Biennial General Meeting which chooses members who make up the Branch Executive Committee (ANC Constitution, 2017: 7.1.4). The branches, for administrative reasons, may be assembled into zones, and further split into smaller constituencies, like street constituencies. Sub-branches have the same powers and privileges of voting as the branches (ANC Constitution, 2017: 7.2). From the branch comes the structure of the Regional Congress which is put in place to choose ANC members who will make up the Regional Executive Committee (ANC Constitution, 2017: 7.1.3). The Regional structures come together as part of the Provincial Congress which votes for leaders that make up the Provincial Executive Committee (ANC Constitution, 2017: 7.1.2). Drawing together all these structures, the National Conference is formed, where the Committee of the National Executive is elected (ANC Constitution, 2017: 7.1.1). All these structures speak to each other in terms of the structure of the organization and the hierarchy of the organization (ANC Constitution, 2017: 7.1).

Rule 23 of the ANC Constitution provides that the branch is the central component of the movement. For any branch to function as a branch within the ANC, the branch is required to be noted by the Provincial Executive Committee as a branch of the ANC that is part of the ANC structures (ANC Constitution, 2017: 23). The branch has to have a standard one hundred members in order to be recognised by the Provincial Executive Committee. However, under extreme conditions, branches with less than one hundred members can be registered (ANC Constitution, 2017: 23.2.1). Every branch of the ANC is required to meet at least once every two months for a general branch meeting under the provisions of the rules of the organization (ANC Constitution, 2017: 23.2.2).

ANC branches should be a space where branch members are free to voice out their opinions about policy and are able to create policies for the organization. These members must be free to participate in branch activities and the branches must allow them the space to do so (ANC Constitution, 2017: 23.2.3-2.4). The ANC branches during a biennial general meeting must elect a Branch Executive Committee comprising of a Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, the Secretary of the branch, the Deputy Secretary, the Treasurer and lastly ten other supplementary

members of the committee (ANC Constitution, 2017: 23.2.5). An ANC branch member is required to have been a member of the ANC for at least two consecutive years before they are eligible to be elected as a member of a Branch Executive Committee (ANC Constitution, 2017: 23.2.5). However, when a new branch is being created, the Provincial Executive Committee may waiver the rule stated above (ANC Constitution, 2017: 23.2.5).

Other structures within the ANC are also provided with representation in ANC branches. Representatives of the Youth League, the Veterans' League, and the Women's League of the ANC are represented as *ex officio* members on the Branch Executive Committee (ANC Constitution, 2017: 23.2.5). A member of the Youth League within the ANC does not have to first start off as a branch member of an ANC branch within their respective regions before they can become members of existing leagues within the ANC (ANC Constitution, 2017: 24). The Youth League of the ANC admits individuals aged between 14 and 35. The scope of the league's operation ranges from the national to the provincial and the branch level (ANC Constitution, 2017: 6.4). The Youth League within the ANC functions as an independent body within the organization, but within the overarching structures and frameworks of the organization. The ANC Women's League is only available for women who are full members of the ANC. It has similar powers and privileges to those of the ANC Youth League. The main aims of the league are to protect and promote the rights of women within the organization from all different kinds of oppression ranging from societal, organizational, and gendered oppression from all levels of influence within and outside the organization (ANC Constitution, 2017: 6.3). The organizational make-up of the ANC's Veteran's League is similar to that of the Youth and the Women's League. The Veteran's League is available for membership induction from ANC members who have 'served' the organization for a period of over 40 years and are of 60 years of age or more (ANC Constitution, 2017: 7.7).

Branches that cover a large geographical area will be broken down into smaller sub-branch units that will be used for the administration by the branch and will also have powers with regards to decision-making (ANC Constitution, 2017: 23.3). General Branch Meetings do not require quorum in order to convene and discuss the day-to-day running of the branch. However, annual branch meetings within the Branch, (where the Branch puts forward the names of those they want elected or make resolutions regarding policy matters), must reach a quorum of fifty percent plus one member who are in good standing with the organization in order to vote for them (ANC Constitution, 2017: 23.5). The BEC is required to meet fortnightly and to issue

monthly reports of their activities to the REC (ANC Constitution, 2017: 23.6.3-6.4). For the BEC to reach quorum, fifty percent plus one of its members must be present in the meetings (ANC Constitution, 2017: 23.7).

This section has described the ANC's official guidelines for the operation of the branches. To understand how the branches evolved and how these guidelines arose, it is necessary to look at the history of branch activity in the ANC. While the first ANC constitution (finalised in 1919) did mention branch structures, the ANC did not make extensive use of branches until the 1940s.

**ANC branches in the 1950s**

According to Phala (2011), the 1950s were pivotal to the transformation of the ANC into a mass movement. During the 1950s, the ANC restructured and rebranded itself to such a point that by the end of the 1950s, it had reshaped and restructured itself as an organization in terms of its plan of action, constitution, standpoint, and tactics (Phala, 2011:5). Under Dr A.B. Xuma's presidency, the 1950s also saw the gradual transformation of the ANC from a moderate pressure group representing middle-class interests to a national mass organization whose main focus was liberation (Davies, O'Meara and Dlamini, 1988: 285).

This transformation was partly due to World War II which necessitated the ANC to undergo internal changes. The ANC emerged as a staunch opposition liberation movement in response to the repressive government of the 1940s. It took centre stage in the struggle against oppression and became the main liberation movement. The ANC had been internally moribund until Xuma's presidency when the Youth League was established. When Xuma became president, ambitious young members started calling for mass protests and mass demonstrations which allowed new structures to emerge (Davies, O'Meara and Dlamini, 1988: 285). Calls from young ANC members like Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Anton Lembede who wanted the rejuvenation of the organization in order for the organization to carry through black Africans into their freedom came during the presidency of Dr Xuma. This led to the establishment of the ANC's Women's league in 1943 and subsequently the Youth League in 1944 (Davies, O'Meara and Dlamini, 1988: 285). The Youth League spearheaded the protests of the 1950s for full political rights and the abolishment of apartheid (Davies, O'Meara and Dlamini, 1988: 285). During the height of these youth protests and demonstrations in the 1950s, branches of the ANC were established. Branches had been referred to in early ANC documents, but had not been established on the ground until this period. These branches were established under the presidency of Dr Xuma during 1940-1949 as local standing structures, which were

inspired by the formation of the Young Lions in 1944, which was the ANC's Youth League (Meli, 1998). Because of the establishment of the Young Lions, the ANC Youth League resorted to more militant methods to overthrow the apartheid government, such as boycotts, strikes and demonstrations (Meli, 1988). As part of this new approach, the ANC recruited a large number of members and established local branches over a significant part of segregationist South Africa in the 1950s (Tactics of the ANC discussion paper, 2007).

The ANC Youth League remoulded the ANC regardless of Dr. Xuma's vehement opposition of mass gatherings and mass protests by having mass membership become a prominent feature of the ANC (Davies, O'Meara and Dlamini, 1988: 285). In response to this new emphasis on mass membership, the new 1953 democratic ANC constitution was drafted, and an all-inclusive political plan of action was introduced. This plan of action called for a comprehensive reallocation of land and 'full political rights' (Davies, O'Meara and Dlamini, 1988: 285). This was the first time, during the lifespan of the ANC, that the movement explicitly laid out a non-racial and universal framework (Davies, O'Meara and Dlamini, 1988: 285).

The changes in the modus operandi and strategies of the ANC in the 1950s when it came to the struggle manifested itself into a new kind of ANC – an ANC of mass mobilisation and mass membership that fought for democracy and full political rights in a South Africa that is not classified by race and sex. (Phala, 2011:8). Because of these objective and substantive changes, the ANC evolved and developed into a new kind of ANC by the end of the 1950s (Phala, 2011:8).

The 'roaring fifties' further changed the nature of the ANC and refashioned the ANC into something like the mass movement organization it currently identifies as by deepening mass membership and mass participation. According to Phala (2011:8), this ANC became an ANC that puts its people at the centre, with the underpinning precept that their members are also their own emancipators. The aim of the ANC in the 1950s was to conscientize the new members that had joined its branches and other organizational structures, to effectively mobilize these new members and to further organize the organization (Phala, 2011: 8). The ANC was the primary vehicle of its members in their campaign against apartheid and the attainment of democracy (Phala, 2011: 8).

The 1950s saw the ANC adopt a broad front strategy. This strategy saw the ANC adopt a working alliance with parties and organizations that were also committed to fight against unjust

laws and to demand democracy in South Africa (Phala, 2011: 8). The ANC spearheaded the Congress Alliance initiative which comprised of the ANC, the Congress of Democrats (COD), the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) and the Coloured People's Congress (CPC) (Phala, 2011: 8). These organizations led the resistance against apartheid throughout the 1950s and in the subsequent years welcomed the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) as another member of the Congress Alliance. The Congress Alliance embarked on a Defiance Campaign against the laws of Apartheid and drafted the Freedom Charter as a directive in the fight against apartheid and the attainment of a new democratic South Africa (Phala, 2011: 8).

Continuing with the newfound plan of action, the ANC engaged in a series of mass crusades of campaigning and mass protests against oppressive apartheid laws, enlisting competent local support and at times working with other organizations. A key moment was the 1952 Defiance Campaign, during which a range of demonstrations and protests were organized (Darracq, 2008b: 591). The Defiance Campaign was a mass-based campaign by ANC members who were defying apartheid laws in the 1950s. This campaign was led by prominent ANC members such as Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu (Suttner, 2003: 129). Because of this more radical approach, the ANC captivated new members in large numbers. The leaning of the ANC towards mass action and mass protests reconfigured the ANC into a mass-based movement (Meli, 1988: 122), with a large number of members participating in mass demonstrations and protests. Membership of the ANC in the 1950s rose to a 100 000 with branches sprouting up throughout the country (Darracq, 2008b: 591).

**The banning of the ANC and its implications for branch politics**

The Defiance Campaigns and other forms of mass action in the 1950s led to the banning of the ANC in 1960. The banning of the ANC obviously had serious implications for its mass character and its branch politics (Darracq, 2008b: 591). The ANC had to struggle to keep itself relevant and to revive itself during the banning period (Suttner, 2003: 307). By the time of the banning of the ANC in the 1960s, the ANC had succeeded in transforming itself from being a party of elites to being a movement of mass character, using mass forms of protests. During the period when the ANC was banned, ANC and South African Communist Party members, used forms of struggle which were deemed illegal, culminating in the launching of an armed struggle (Ellis, 1991: 442). The result of these different forms of struggles was the creation of *Umkhonto We Sizwe* (MK) in 1961. The MK was a standalone group which was thought of as being formed by both SACP and ANC members to intensify the struggle (Ellis, 1991: 442). The MK

was created to intensify the struggle internally and build coalitions with external liberation forces outside of South Africa (Ellis, 1991: 442). Other ANC members and supporters who were still in South Africa in the 1960s and could not find expression in the MK decided to continue the struggle in other ways (Suttner, 2012: 730). These sympathisers and members of the ANC reconstituted themselves and created covert bases of operations in urban dwellings, rural dwellings, and other remote places far away from the reach of the apartheid police (Suttner, 2012: 730). They also recruited new members of the ANC and educated them about the policies of the organization and its history (Suttner, 2012: 730). Therefore, despite the banning, in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, the ANC still had pro-ANC mass activity which continued to create the mass character of the ANC (Suttner, 2008). Struggle heroes like Albertina Sisulu and many other ANC members and supporters helped in aiding ANC leaders who were wanted by the South African government to flee into exile. They also assisted by providing political education to remaining ANC members and supporters (Suttner, 2009: 112).

In the 1970s, the idea of a people's war was put forward by the ANC as a strategy of mass insurgency (Darracq, 2008b: 591). The large and significant student uprisings of 1976 increased the mass character of the ANC. During this period, the ANC deepened its mass character through interaction between the imprisoned experienced ANC cadres and the imprisoned large number of youths who were won over by the ANC (Buntman, 2003). The 1976 uprising also gave room for the establishment or re-establishment of other anti-apartheid organizations, which ranged from civics, women's and student organizations, and media outlets such as Speak and Grassroots (Suttner, 2009: 114).

The notion of a people's war continued until the end of the 1970s and throughout the 1980s. It was during these times that there were partnerships formed within the different political parties to effectively increase mass struggle and challenge government legitimacy and its authority (Suttner, 2009: 114). This mass struggle was intensified through the establishment of unions, an increase in the activities associated with the MK, heightened isolation within the international community and through the activities of a variety of state actors and independent organizations who were against apartheid and its laws (Suttner, 2008, 2009). The people's war narrative gave rise to popular power within local level structures. These structures slowly replaced the government as a source of legitimacy within the country in the 1980s. While ANC local branch structures were banned at the time, these struggles resulted in local organising through the establishment of street committees (Suttner, 2009: 114). The 1980s was also the

time of the United Democratic Front (UDF) which worked with the ANC and other organizations to mass organize and fight against the laws of apartheid South Africa (Suttner, 2003: 302). It was through this broad front of collective organizations that the ANC attempted to rebuild its mass character and reconstruct its branches underground (Suttner, 2003). The ANC reconstruction of its mass character and its branch politics continued up until the 1990s when the ANC was unbanned.

**ANC branches in the 1990s**

In 1990, the apartheid government unbanned political parties like the ANC as part of a transition away from apartheid to majority rule. After this, the ANC restructured itself within South Africa, like it did in the 1940s and 1950s, in order to revitalize itself as an organization of mass membership, committed to the advancement of the democracy narrative (Phala, 2011: 10). It re-established its frameworks and structures to solidify its presence in the country. It focussed all its endeavours and efforts on reframing and remoulding its internal and external structures in order to be seen as a legal organization premised on mass membership (Phala, 2011: 10). When this reframing and restructuring transpired, it set out guidelines regarding the separation of duties and powers and the balancing of gender in the structures of the organization. Effective disciplinary measures and policies were also put in place (Phala, 2011: 10). The ANC aimed to set out parameters in relation to the roles that the branches have and, in addition to this, to strengthen these roles whilst embarking on the maturing of its cadres and setting out structural interaction frameworks between the organization and the government (Phala, 2011: 11).

From the 1990s onward, the ANC began to use branches more directly to campaign at grassroots level where their voter base is. In relation to this, it also restructured the organization of its Youth League and Women's League (Phala, 2011: 11). This was done as a response to the Durban National Conference that was held in 1991, that had to wrestle with questions surrounding organizational renewal after the unbanning of the organization. The Durban Conference also provided the platform for the ANC structures to consider the question of ANC political prisoners, and if these prisoners would be allowed to participate in the negotiations process (ANC NGC document on renewal, 2010: 52).

At the Durban Conference, the ANC sought to unite former apartheid political prisoners who were members of the organization and those who returned from exile into the movement, so that the movement could be one well-organized entity that was unified in matters concerning

tactical responses and strategic perspectives in the context of negotiations (ANC NGC document on renewal, 2010: 52). The ANC also sought to unify its cadres that were found in the mass movement into well-organized and well-established grassroots structures in order for these cadres to effectively connect to the people on the ground (ANC NGC document on renewal, 2010: 52).

During the early 1990s, the ANC fashioned itself as an organization premised on mass mobilization in order to represent the masses in matters concerning the negotiations for a free and democratic South Africa, fair elections, and a peaceful transition of power (Phala, 2011:11). The ANC wanted to be an organization that not only had mass backing but also mass participation and an 'all-welcome' approach (ANC, 1997:2). It wanted to be a hegemonic movement that incorporated a wide range of ideological lenses, from Africanist, socialist to nationalist ideologies (ANC, 1997:2). The ANC positioned itself as a multi-strata movement which could include different classes, and which had an underlying commitment to democratically transform South Africa. By laying these foundations, the ANC wanted to justify its wide-ranging leadership over the vast majority of South Africans that were previously disadvantaged and dominated (ANC, 1997:2).

The Tripartite Alliance is an alliance that is made up of the Congress of South African Trade Unions, (COSATU), the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the ANC. This alliance was concluded in the early 1990s and is a governing alliance within the South African political landscape (ANC, 1997: 2). When the SACP and the ANC returned from exile in South Africa, they had a dwindling internal leadership front and limited administrative and bureaucratic scope (Lodge 1999, Severin and Aycard 2006). This was in contrast to civic organizations that were in South Africa at that time, like the United Democratic Front (UDF) and organizations that were under the banner of COSATU who had significant organizational and domestic capacities. The ANC therefore formed the Tripartite Alliance because they wanted to gain a broader member and voter base and to build an intricate network of alliances, that involved other exiles, political prisoners and 'inziles' (inziles were underground ANC political party members who fought apartheid inside the country and faced police brutality) (Lodge, 1999, Severin and Aycard 2006). This alliance was intended to foster solidarity with the allied masses and to draw on their democratic grassroots structures. Because of the ANC's 'broad church' narrative, the allied organizations were free to subscribe to whatever ideological thinking they wanted, provided that they integrated their supporters, community structures, energies, and

various positions under the common initiative of attaining democracy nationally (ANC, 1997:2).

Suttner (2007: 13) provides a robust discussion and critique of the ANC's branch structure during the 1990s. According to Suttner, what the ANC said officially about the structure and the role of the branches contrasted with what it did with regards to the branches. This is why Suttner (2017) states that with the ANC attaining legitimacy after being unbanned in the early 1990s, it started embarking on a large number of activities that involved the re-establishment of branch structures. According to Suttner (2007:13), the creation of local structures was abrupt and poorly planned and no suitable method to guarantee sustainability and promote political education was implemented. This is despite the fact that at that juncture there was official recognition of the importance of political education in all structural levels of the organization (Suttner, 2007: 13). Political education was not achieved equally in all branches because of the varying sizes of the branches. Furthermore, there was no clearly defined scope regarding the role of the branches. This is because at the time of the ANC's unbanning, electioneering was not seen as a crucial matter that needed urgent attention (Suttner, 2007: 13). The ANC continued with the way it structured political education during its time as a banned organization. Things that were not sufficiently dealt with before elections were left as is during the pre-election time. The ANC began to postulate ideals and paradigms that were inclined to strengthen a centralized, top-down approach (Suttner, 2007: 17).

Once the ANC did begin to give attention to elections, there was an accentuation of the ANC as an electoral apparatus that campaigns for votes (Suttner, 2007: 17). This led to the undermining of the local organization of the branch which was seen as less important than the ANC's high-ranking political leadership. The branch was displaced without any formal explanation (Suttner, 2007: 17). The role of the branch was ceded to those who were in charge of negotiating with the apartheid government such that the branch had little role in defining the political position of the ANC (Suttner, 2007: 17).

Numerous branches that were established in the cities during the early 1990s contained both members who were professionals and members who worked low-paying jobs or were unemployed (Suttner, 2007: 14). Political aptitude varied in the branches because translation from English to members' mother tongues was insufficient (Suttner, 2007: 14). This resulted in some members being excluded from engagement within the meetings of the branches they attend. Even when branches were instructed to debate issues, they struggled to do so due to a

lack of political awareness among many members (Suttner, 2007: 14). In the late 1990s, the members of the national executive of the organization were mandated by the organization to take part in their respective branches. They were expected to have talks regarding strategic matters concerning the organization but could not be properly understood as much of the engagement was in English and not everyone was proficient in English (Suttner, 2007: 14).

**ANC branches in the early 2000s**

In the 2000s, the ANC committed itself to re-establishing its mass character (Phala, 2011:12). It did this by reflecting on its history and by insisting that the ANC is more than just its top structures but has been a societal leader beyond these structures (Phala, 2011: 12). In attempting to renew the organization, the ANC stated that the renewal of the organization is dependent upon the involvement of its membership as it tries to tackle questions surrounding its longevity and hegemony. Membership from the community through branch structures was seen as integral in this renewal because of the internal democracy narrative. Furthermore, the ANC argued that these grassroots members ought to acquire political education in order to have a say in new approaches employed by the organization (Umrabulo, 2000: 30).

In the early 2000s, the ANC records highlighted that rural branches were branches of the highest calibre and different from the ones in the urban areas which were described as being riddled with manipulation and corruption (Lodge, 2004). These rural branches performed like this, despite not having defined municipal demarcations to circumscribe and order them whilst analysing their efficiency and ensuring that they comply to the ethos of the organization (Lodge, 2004: 2).

In 2001, the branches of the ANC were reconstructed so as to align with the new municipal demarcations created for the December 2000 municipal elections (Lodge, 2004: 4). Theoretically, the creation of these municipal zones was to establish 3000 ANC branches in totality. The creation of new branches resulted in low new ANC member numbers after the removal of 'ghost members' whose names were included in the membership lists by unscrupulous local leaders who bought and sold membership cards in order to buttress the positions of 'competing local leadership groups' (Lodge, 2004: 4). In 2002, the ANC downplayed its membership numbers in such a way that it stated that its membership was only at 89 000, a significantly lower number than the 300 000 it had in the start of the 2000s (Lodge, 2004: 4). In this instance, the ANC was alluding only to members of the organization, who had active membership cards and paid their membership fees, written down in the newly

reconstructed ANC branches lists (Lodge, 2004: 4). As Lodge (2004: 4-5) points out, membership figures fluctuate considerably, rising at election times and dwindling in-between.

Despite the fluctuating numbers of ANC branch members, the branch system is central to the election of the National Executive Committee and the top six of the organization. All branches that are authenticated by the party and are found to be reputable, are allowed to dispatch branch delegates that are in proportion to the members of the branch (Darracq, 2008b: 594). The branch delegates that attend National Conferences are given instructions by the branch leaders, to defend the branches' choices when it relates to leadership selection and framework discussions regarding the ANC policies (Secretary-General's Report, 2002, National Conference of Stellenbosch).

These delegates are positioned in systematic committees where they debate, endorse, revise, or refuse the political debate documents of the organization, which have been disseminated and discussed and filtered downwards in the party frameworks beginning with the branches Secretary-General's Report, 2002, National Conference of Stellenbosch). According to then ANC spokesperson Zizi Kodwa, the conference of the ANC is 'a conference of branches', not provinces or regions (Mde, 2017). ANC branches, through their branch delegates, have 90 percent of the voting power at ANC national conferences.

**ANC branches and the ANC's National Conferences**

As mentioned above, the conferences of the ANC, which are held every five years, are conferences of branches and not regions nor provinces. This assertion was demonstrated in the ANC's Polokwane, Mangaung and Nasrec Conferences. It is at these historical conferences that the power of the branches within the ANC came to the fore and was realized. These conferences demonstrate how important the branches are within the ANC and how these branches can effect change within the leadership of the organization.

*ANC branches and the 2007 Polokwane Conference*

As with other conferences, the Polokwane Conference entailed the election of the ANC's top six executives and its national leadership that will govern the organization for the next five years. What is important to note about this particular conference is that the ANC branches organized themselves and replaced the old Thabo Mbeki leadership with a Jacob Zuma leadership (Darracq, 2008: 43).

The Polokwane Conference highlighted the Zuma and Mbeki crisis. This crisis was premised on Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma vying for the top position within the ANC, namely the ANC presidency. This conference saw the Jacob Zuma faction and the Thabo Mbeki faction vie for power and control over the ANC. Mbeki was supported by the intellectuals and other powerful figures within the organization, but Zuma received overwhelming support from the branches, and this led to him emerging victorious in Polokwane and being elected president of the ANC (Darracq, 2008a: 430). Thus, the Polokwane conference shows how powerful branches can be in effecting change and replacing leadership (Darracq, 2008b: 589). This was commented on by some news outlets and some within the ANC, who stated that the ANC branches granted Zuma the ANC presidency (Dlamini 2010). This conference demonstrated how 'ordinary' branch members of the ANC had the power to effectively change the leadership of the ANC (Dlamini, 2010: 2).

After this landmark conference, this momentum continued and replicated itself at the 2012 Mangaung Conference. This was because the branches saw the results of the assertion of their power and wanted to assert their dominance once more as the 'basic unit of the organization' (ANC Constitution, 2019).

### *ANC branches and the 2012 Mangaung Conference*

While the Polokwane Conference has proven to be the most noteworthy conference in terms of the demonstration of the power of the branches, the Mangaung Conference also shed some light on the inner workings of branches and branch delegates in national conferences (Rossouw, 2012). The 2012 Mangaung Conference took place after five years from the Polokwane Conference. It is in this conference that Jacob Zuma looked to retain his office as the president of the ANC and continue into his second term. The Mangaung Conference saw the ANC branches taking centre stage again by being instrumental in making significant decisions within the party (Rossouw, 2012: 121). Branch leaders were able to support their preferred candidate for national leadership, be it Zuma or Kgalema Motlanthe, or Tokyo Sexwale for a select few (Rossouw, 2012: 121). The Mangaung Conference saw the branches position Zuma to be the president of the ANC for the second term (Butler, 2017: 29). Butler (2017: 29) believes that Zuma won this support by buying off public-sector unions, with significant pay increases in the public sector and promised more in the upcoming term and this greatly appealed to the branches, hence the branches ensured Zuma's second term into office (Butler, 2017: 29). The Mangaung Conference also demonstrated the different dynamics and the inner workings that

happen in the branches and how these translated into the voting patterns of branch delegates in the past National Conferences (Rossouw, 2012: 171). After the Mangaung Conference, the Nasrec Conference took place, and the ANC branches took centre stage again in the Dlamini-Zuma and the Ramaphosa presidential campaigns. Branches were supposed to play a crucial role in the deciding of the next ANC and South African president.

*ANC branches and the 2017 Nasrec Conference*

The Nasrec Conference was held in 2017, five years after the Mangaung Conference. This conference saw the Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma camp and the Cyril Ramaphosa camp vie for leadership positions in the ANC. At this conference, the ANC branches replaced the Zuma administration with the Ramaphosa administration. The branch delegates did this by endorsing Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and Cyril Ramaphosa as candidates for the ANC presidency. (Booysen, 2017) and then by electing Cyril Ramaphosa as president of the ANC (Booysen, 2018). The processes that led up to Ramaphosa becoming elected as party president were strongly contested. There was no clear indication before the time of who would ascend to the ANC presidency. Booysen opines that 'the outcome remained unpredictable up to the point of announcement of the results' (Booysen, 2019: 15). This is because although the overall number of branch nominations favoured Ramaphosa, many delegates present at the conference were from Kwa-Zulu Natal, the Zumaist stronghold which endorsed Dlamini-Zuma as party president (Booysen, 2019: 15). Despite the KZN branches being largely in favour of Dlamini-Zuma, the overall branch votes from branch delegates ensured Ramaphosa of the ANC presidency (Booysen, 2019: 15). The Nasrec Conference also demonstrated the power and the importance of branches in the African National Congress. It inculcated the assertion of branches 'being the basic unit of the organization' (ANC Constitution), the branches being effective agents of change and the ANC branches and the national leadership of the organization receiving the mandate to govern from the branches.

**Conclusion**

The ANC branches and the branch system shows the deeply entrenched mass character of the ANC. It highlights how the organization follows the mass party system by having mass membership and mass participation. It also shows how ordinary members of the ANC find expression in their locally defined structures of branches. Because of these locally defined structures, ordinary members of the ANC are able to effect change and express their grievances

through these structures, although this mainly only happens at national conferences every five years.

Throughout the history of the branches that is discussed in this chapter, the overarching theme is mass participation and mass membership of ANC members who want to effectively change and restructure the ANC using the branches as vehicles. This chapter has shown that ANC branches are extremely powerful when it comes to legitimizing the mass character of the ANC.

The branches are where the ANC gets their voter base, and the masses engage in campaigning and canvassing for the ANC. These members of the branches are integral in the functioning of the ANC as through canvassing and campaigning for the ANC, they ensure the electoral majority of the ANC and elect leadership that they think would safeguard this electoral majority and spearhead branch interests.

The next chapter will discuss the particularities that make up mass parties and how the ANC fits in these particularities in order to be considered a mass party organization. It will examine the key themes that make-up a mass party and ask key questions in relation to the ANC being a mass party. Subsequent chapters will closely explore the workings of ANC branches on the ground to determine to what extent the branches really do function in ways that advance the interests of their constituencies.

# CHAPTER FOUR: THE ANC'S MASS CHARACTER

## Introduction

The main goal of this study is to better understand the functioning of ANC branches. By addressing this goal, I hope to provide clarity as to whether manipulation happens in the ANC branches and how such manipulation affects the outcome of the ANC's decision-making structures. In addition to this, my study seeks to get a better understanding of how grassroots ANC branch members understand their role in ANC branches. The study also explores whether and how power within the democratic process is used to manipulate the delegation administration system and influence branch members. In order to realize the main goal of this thesis and its aims, this chapter and the next will use literature about mass party politics to explore the functioning of the ANC branches. It will go about this by assessing if the character of the ANC is truly mass based through looking at the role played by branches in ANC politics.

This section identifies questions that arise from the literature on the central tenets of mass parties. Based on the literature reviewed in the previous chapter, I ask a number of questions in relation to the function of the ANC as a mass party. Is the ANC a true mass party or is the ANC an organization that is outside the scope of the mass party definition, whilst still encompassing some elements of mass parties? This section relates the literature on mass parties to the ANC asking questions surrounding the ANC's workings as a self-proclaimed mass party and a 'movement of the people'.

Despite the ANC displaying the characteristics of a mass party as will be shown in this chapter, there are certain criteria that the ANC does not satisfy in relation to being a mass party. Duverger's conceptualisation of the mass party comes from a different time and a different continent. Therefore, it is important to investigate whether his approach is prevalent for all mass parties and, in particular, the South African mass party of today. Furthermore, it is necessary to explore whether the ANC's branch structure is characterised by a bottom-up participatory democratic process, as is supposed to be the case in mass parties, or whether it has been susceptible to domination by the elites of the organization. Duverger (1964:23), also states the local level is crucial in the maintaining of a mass party. When relating this to the ANC, we can ask whether the local level structure of the ANC can be regarded as showing the mass party character of the organization? Does the branch in practice function as expected in a mass party? What is the role of the branches in the ANC?

Matlosa and Shale (2008:7) posit that in mass parties, membership recruitment is a fundamental factor. When it comes to recruitment, the mass party sets up processes within the broader party structure to make sure all structures are represented. If this is the case within mass parties, then we must ask how democratic then is the ANC? Does the branch have agency to affect the decisions made by high-ranking elites in the organization? In relation to this question, Matlosa and Shale (2008:7), state that mass parties often end up downplaying the existence and the needs of the individual party member, to safeguard the party interests. In this chapter, I will explore whether this proves true for the ANC. Are local party members finding expression within the structures of the organization?

Scarrow (1996: 135) states that the only time when the masses have a legitimate voice and legitimate power in mass parties is during election season. This is because the masses only act as voters to install the high-ranking officials of the party and to campaign for them during election season. Is this true of the ANC? Do branch members only participate during election season when they mobilize for the party, or when they need to change the old for the new party leadership?

Hopkin (2004: 20) alludes to the fact that there are certain members within the branches of mass parties who have more access when it comes to policy creation because of the funding that they funnel in the branches in mass parties. The question therefore arises as to whether there are members within the ANC branches who have unequal access to policymaking? Are there members of the branch who (because of this unequal influence within the members of the branch) are 'bribed' to keep intact the interests of the ruling elites of the organization? Is this true for the ANC and how does this affect ANC branches?

Does the leadership of the organization use the branch as a mechanism to further advance their own gains or do they use the branch as a medium to cater for the interests of the people? How do branch leaders go about handling these tasks: do they advance their own interest narratives in the branches or do they cater for the masses needs? What role do the leaders undertake at the branch level?

The masses' role is considered by some thinkers to be solely that of electing leaders of the organization. But can we conceptualize the masses as tools used by leaders to elect them only and serve only this purpose? What is the significance of the branch and what do branch members hope to gain by taking part in the branch?

This chapter and the next one aim to answer questions like these in order to investigate how the ANC's activities unfold at branch level. By answering these questions, I hope to offer some insight on the position of the ANC branches on carrying out these activities of mass political parties. Whilst the ANC stresses the significance of the branch as the basic unit for all political activity in the organization, one would assume that the branch has to implement these aforementioned activities and functions of mass political parties. These are some of the considerations that this thesis will attempt to investigate in the analysis and discussion chapter in relation to ANC branches.

**Is the ANC a mass party?**

The African National Congress can potentially be defined as a mass political party. One reason why it might be so defined is due to its branch structure that spearheads its campaigning during elections. Branches are involved in recruiting members to campaign door-to-door, holding local meetings with the public, and participating in national rally meetings in stadiums (Darracq, 2008b:598).

The ANC's mass character is not new, but one which has been attached to the movement's histories and traditions, although it began as a party of elites (Darracq, 2008b: 591). The ANC's founding principle when it was established in 1912 was the attainment of citizenship through petitioning and delegation as primary instruments of opposition. As discussed in Chapter 2, the ANC in this period was made up of black intellectuals who were 'loose grouping of moderate Black notables' (Darracq, 2008b: 591). During the 1940s, spearheaded by the 'Young Lions' of the recently inaugurated ANC Youth League in 1943, the ANC espoused a militant Programme of Action in which it dedicated itself to mass demonstrations and protests (Darracq, 2008b: 591).

The ANC was banned between 1960 and 1990 meaning that it could not function as a mass party, but it continued to build itself as a mass movement. Although the ANC reconstructed itself swiftly after its banning, its *modus operandi* had to change. Under the specified restrictions of being an outlawed organization with many of its leaders in exile, the ANC reconfigured itself into a movement with a more top-down and discreet approach (Darracq, 2008b: 591). During the years in which it was banned, the ANC consisted of a small number of activists who were alert and learned freedom fighters. The ANC's understanding of the fight against apartheid and mobilization of the masses changed (Darracq, 2008b: 591). Mass mobilization and recruitment was replaced by 'militarism and armed propaganda' (Darracq,

2008b: 591). In the 1980s, the ANC-aligned United Democratic Front (UDF), which encompassed a range of civic organizations, rebuilt some of the mass character of the struggle against apartheid. The UDF used mass mobilization as a mechanism of mass protest and engagement at the lower level was maintained with a character of 'people's power, self-government, and participatory democracy' (Seekings, 2000). The ANC joined in these operations and brought ANC activists back into South Africa. The reinvigorated mass action in South Africa allowed the ANC to revive the notion of 'people's war' which would lead to a local level insurgency that is spearheaded by the ANC militants to bring about democratic change (ANC Revolutionary Council, 1978). Once the ANC was unbanned in 1990, it began rebuilding its intra-party structures. The Internal Leadership Core (ILC), which was tasked with the reworking of the organization, installed officials in every province to oversee the operation of constructing branches under the official supervision of the Department of National Organizing (Rantete, 1998: 12). ANC militants who were in exile were tasked to return to South Africa and establish local branches in their respective areas (Rantete, 1998: 13-15). During this time there was an attempt to build the mass character of the ANC.

**The post-1994 ANC: the mass party character deepens**

The post-1994 ANC meets many of the criteria that are usually associated with a mass party. Post-apartheid, the ANC was quick to reconstruct its mass following. By the late 1990s, the ANC had already recruited 289 320 members in 936 branches (Darracq, 2008b: 593). As discussed earlier with reference to research by Lodge (2004), the ANC's membership numbers fluctuated considerably in the post-apartheid era. However, by the beginning of 2007, the ANC claimed to have 621 237 registered card-holding members of the organization, with approximately 2700 branches according to the audit of the office of the Secretary-General (Darracq, 2008b: 593). And in 2012 there were 1 220 057 registered cardholders with 3687 branches that conformed to party standards and ethos, which were represented by their delegates in Mangaung (Sapa, 2012). By 2017, the number of branches had increased steeply to 4326, but the total number of card-carrying members had decreased to only 989 736. This drop is largely attributed to the ANC 'cleaning up' of membership lists (for example, removing numbers who were not paid up or members who had died). Another explanation for the decline in numbers is that there were some members of the organization who left during that time due to unhappiness with the ANC leadership which they felt did not care for their interests (Whittles, 2017). Nevertheless, the ANC does fit the characteristics of a mass party in that it

spearheads recruitment initiatives, and in that grassroots branches are engaged in non-electoral initiatives which range from branch meetings to recruitment activities and community-specific programmes (Darracq, 2008b: 593).

In relation to decision-making procedures, the ANC could possibly be characterized as a mass membership organization, due to its claims to encourage participation and democracy practised within the party. The mass element has been present in the ANC's self-image since the 1940s. In its leading founding charters and papers, the ANC frequently asserts that it is a movement of mass member involvement with a 'mass participatory character' (ANC discussion document, 1997). It asserts that there is an internal mass-centred functioning, in which the executive of the organization is supposed to be the dispenser of the will of its members (ANC Secretary-General's Report, 2002). There is an increased level of participation of the local frameworks when it relates to the election of candidates, with members from the branch personally electing their preferred ANC candidate for ward councillor throughout the course of elections of local government (Darracq, 2008b: 594-5). Consequently, when it relates to these internal processes, the ANC adheres to the disposition of an organization with a mass character (Darracq, 2008b: 594). Furthermore, a tradition of the branches being considered to be the centre of the organization is greatly inculcated in the organization (Darracq, 2008b: 593).

According to official documentation, 'as a mass and democratic organization, the policies of the ANC are determined by its membership, and its leadership is accountable to the membership in terms of procedures laid down in the constitution' (Secretary-General's Report, 2002). As a result of this, the local structures are accorded great official importance. The branch is the most significant component of the ANC, as it is the principal entity where all members of the movement can be afforded equal participation in the political life of the organization (ANC Secretary-General's Report, 2002).

Within the internal dynamics of the ANC, the mass character of the party is tied to an understanding of power and governance within the organizational structures of the party, with what Rantele terms as the 'liberation paradigm' (Rantele, 1998: xvii). The ANC asserts that it governs the state whilst also attempting to fundamentally change the hierarchies of the South African society, which reflect stark inequalities and discriminations passed down by the apartheid era (ANC discussion document, 1997). In order to attain this ideal, the ANC governing and administering the organs of the state is insufficient. The ANC needs people at the local level to be rallied in their respective communities, in order to work together with the

state in an attempt to transform the deeply unequal cleavages of the society (Darracq, 2008b: 593). Therefore, the ANC presents itself as aa movement that is 'mass-centred', which is entrusted with the rallying of all sections of communities and members of the society to take part in the act of foundational societal change through self-liberation (ANC Organizational Report, 2005).

The ANC's mass character is also recognizable in relation to its political tradition. ANC discourse emphasises equality between members. Such equality is continually reiterated by members of the organization and by the ANC's customs. For example, the idea of equality is reflected in the common use of the word 'cadre' or 'comrade' (Darracq, 2008b: 602). ANC members place great value on the idea that the will of the collective must prevail, where the leaders of the organization are supposed to act on the authority of the members that elected and put them into power (Darracq, 2008b: 602).

**The dynamics of the organization of the ANC: education, recruitment, and service**

As discussed in the previous section, the organization of the ANC has many of the features of a mass party. This means that the term 'movement' is crucial in explaining the ANC as it embodies a particular understanding about the ANC's operation and its tasks. What distinguishes the ANC as a movement of mass character, is its ongoing obligation of maintaining a mass-based approach. This is coupled with the definition of the word 'movement', as it encompasses the mass members of the organization and their efforts to advance the conditions of South Africans through 'popular activism and governance' (ANC discussion document, 1997).

Mass mobilization brings about a sense of legitimacy to a party. This remains true even if there are also non-active members. A strong membership allows a party to assert that it has deep connections to 'everyday citizens' (Scarrow, 1996: 82). Extensive membership of the ANC proved beneficial for the ANC, because of its liberation movement past. Consequently, the ANC positions itself as an organization of the people, an 'all welcome church' of the people (Discussion document for the ANC Policy Conference, 2007). Like most of its mass party counterparts, the ANC provides political schooling to its members to educate them on its liberation struggle, the ethos and traditions of the organization and the customs of the organization (Darracq, 2008b: 599). The ANC at the branch setting is regarded as being an instrument of integration. In local level conversations, the mass gatherings are welcomed by the branch members as they provide access to a meal, which branch members who live in abject

poverty desperately need (Darracq, 2008b: 600). In these contemporary times of mass-media politics, although external funders of the organization have a big impact in the affairs of the party, a large base of active supporters remains important (Butler, 2005: 729). This is the instrumental reason that the ANC stresses the importance of the tripartite alliance and depends upon it for its mass character and for a considerable 'inter-election presence to generate a legitimate programme' (Butler, 2005: 729)

However, while the ANC presents itself as a mass party and meets many of the criteria related to mass parties, most ordinary members of the party are not actively involved in the party beyond the election of party leaders. Despite the ANC asserting in its constitution that the branch is the principal unit of the movement, practically, this does not necessarily mean that the branches are in charge of the organization (Malabela, 2011:33). The ANC is not governed by the branches. It is governed by Luthuli House, which is comprised of the ANC's highest decision-making authority who are in charge of the decision-making within the organization and over its members. Branches, as underwritten in the ANC constitution are mandated to select 90 percent of the delegates that elect the national leadership in the organization's voting congresses (ANC Constitution, 2017). This signifies that the masses of the organization primarily have the capability of electing and voting in leaders who will lead them, because they understand that they cannot all lead as a whole (Malabela, 2011:33).  The mass party structure of the ANC becomes visible at the National Conferences that are held by the organization every five years at which office bearers are elected. It is in these conferences that determine the trajectory of the organization and it is at these national conferences where the top six of the National Executive Committee.

**From mass party to cartel party**

At the start of this chapter, questions were raised about the ANC and its mass party structure. The ANC asserts that it is a mass political party with a mass character (Darracq, 2008b: 591). However, recent literature argues that the ANC has moved from a mass political party to a catch-all party and finally into what Katz and Mair (1995, 2003) call a cartel party. Katz and Mair (1995, 2003) argue that old mass parties become catch-all parties and then gradually become cartel parties as they get absorbed into the state. When using this classification, the ANC can be considered to be a cartel party. This is because the ANC is a ruling party which came out of a mass movement and which has seen the blurring of lines between the party and the state.

The blurring of lines between the party and the state can be seen through ANC members running for positions within the ANC structures in order for them to get government posts (Malabela, 2011: 87). Members of the ANC conceptualize the state as a component of the ANC (Malabela, 2011: 87). The blurring of lines between the state and the party has led to the ANC becoming a cartel party. This is because the ANC, as according to the classification of cartel parties by Katz and Mair (1995: 17), has been absorbed by the state and therefore there is little differentiation between the state and the party. Furthermore, the ANC could be said to have evolved into a cartel party from a mass party because the resources of the state have been colonized by party officials who occupy public positions within the state, thus there is a limitation of party activity in the local level, in this case the ANC branches (Southall, 2010: 330). The colonization of public resources by the party officials of the ANC makes the ANC's local structures less able to carry out some of their tasks, such as holding accountable those party leaders who work for government and assuring that the tasks given to them by the party are conducted in an appropriate manner (Katz and Mair, 1994: 2). This is in part because the branches lack the financial means to ensure that party leaders are accountable for their actions. This is because the financial resources of the party are concentrated in the hands of party leaders (Katz and Mair, 1994: 2). The ANC has further transformed from a mass party into a cartel party because it has seemingly declined as a party that provides a platform for 'channels for popular demands, thereby losing their legitimacy as representative organizations' (Katz and Mair, 1994:2). According to some commentators, the ANC is losing its legitimacy as the party of the people of South Africa and it is embarking on a trajectory of political decline (Onopajo and Isike, 2017: 1).

Political commentators have observed that there is a steady growth of corporatism when it relates to political parties. This pushes us to ask who influences the upper leadership in political parties? Are the businesses that funnel money into the party more prominent in influencing the party or are ordinary members of the ANC powerful enough to influence leadership? According to commentators like Reddy (2010: 185), ordinary members of the ANC have been disillusioned with the ANC as well as the leaders in charge of the ANC. This is why ordinary ANC members become passive. Businesses on the other hand thrive on political parties like the ANC by giving the organization donations in exchange for preferential treatment when it relates to state resources such as tax kickbacks and tenders. An example of this is the Ballatore Brands company, which was Gupta-linked which donated a considerable amount of donations

to the ANC in the ensuing months leading up to the Transnet and the Free State kickbacks scandal (Cowan, 2020).

Sikwebu (2007) wrote before the 2007 Polokwane Conference about the cartelization of the ANC using the Congress of the South African Trade Unions (COSATU), as a tool. Sikwebu expressed uncertainty about the outcome of the presidency race but insisted that whatever the outcome would be, it would not be viable long-term (Sikwebu, 2007: 42). He posits that when it comes to develop and modify politics to empower voters and democratic institutions, the COSATU has failed to implement this kind of politics. Instead, COSATU has passed resolutions and policies that reinforces the ANC's repute as a cartel party, whose primary objective after 1994 has been to head voter expectations and defer its policy-making power to regulatory bodies detached from its voter base (Sikwebu, 2007: 42-44).

The ANC, through its investment venture arm called the Chancellor House, the ANC joined ventures with foreign companies to bid for government contracts. The ANC owns a 25% stake in the foreign-based company called Hitachi Power Africa, which won a multi-billion tender from Eskom. The Hitachi Power Group has ANC deployees from the national government as board members (Choudhry, 2009: 84).

ANC senior members have benefitted in the Black Economic Empowerment transactions across all sectors. Senior ANC members like  Patrice Motsepe, Saki Macozoma, Tokyo Sexwale, Cyril Ramaphosa and Mazi Khumalo who were enriched by the BEE transactions to a varying degree (Choudhry, 2009: 84). This was caused by the government creating a BEE bidding war in the mining industry for mining licences (Iheduru, 2008: 333). BEE served the ANC interests by being a legislation that is politicized, procured, and regulated. The BEE was used as a political resource to create partisan dominance (Choudhry, 2009: 84). The BEE has only benefited a small portion of a politically connected black elite who used their ANC member status to cash in on the BEE initiative (Choudhry, 2009: 84). The BEE initiative can be thought of as a payment scheme to members of an ANC political cartel through equities in private sectors for their loyalty (Choudhry, 2009: 85). The ANC through the BEE, have exercised or threatened to exercise their state power of privatization, licensing, and procurement, to discourage detraction within ANC members for opposition parties or detractors creating an alternative party to compete with the ANC for state power (Choudhry, 2009: 85).

Minister of Defence, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula abused state resources by misusing the South African Air Force National (SAAF) aircraft (Moffat, 2020). Government regulations in rule 7 state that official government aircrafts cannot be used for political engagements. Nqakula was found to be in breach of this rule as she used the official government aircraft to provide a lift for Ace Magashule and Lindiwe Sisulu who had political engagements with the Zanu-PF party of Zimbabwe (Moffat, 2020).

**Conclusion**

The ANC's shift from being a mass-party into being a cartel party affects the functioning of the branches of the ANC. These effects are seen in the branch structures of the ANC with reference to members vying for positions within the party in order to get government posts. In addition to this, when ANC members attain government posts within the ANC, there are reports suggesting that they plunder state resources. As state resources are in the hands of these party officials, branches cannot effectively hold them accountable in their use of state resources and in their efficient conducting of the tasks assigned to them by the ANC. With the ANC being a cartel party, businesses now thrive on corporatism in relation to giving the ANC donations in exchange for preferential treatment when it relates to kickbacks and state tenders.

I will now turn to the discussion of ANC branches and how they operate within the ANC. Is branch politics an integral part of the ANC or is branch politics used as a source of manipulation within the ANC?

# CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF ANC BRANCHES

## Introduction

The previous chapter showed how the ANC has moved from being a mass party into a cartel party. This chapter will analyse the role played by branches in the functioning of the ANC. It will do this through exploring whether party leaders are able to manipulate the branches and buy influence and whether branches have agency to affect the decisions that are passed down by the high-ranking officials of the organization? In addition to these questions, there will be an analysis of the role the branches play in ANC's politics. Do branches help deepen the ANC's ability to be a mass party? In addition to this, how much power do the branches have over decisions made in the ANC? Are these branches only influential during election time? These are the questions that will guide this chapter in attempting to answer how these ANC branches work.

## Are party leaders able to manipulate the branches and buy influence?

In an organizational report released in 2007, then ANC Secretary-General Kgalema Motlanthe highlights several challenges that plague the ANC branches (Motlanthe, 2007). He states that ANC branches are riddled with problems that encompass few members running the branches and carrying the brunt of branch activities, whist the majority remain uninvolved. He also points to a disjuncture between ANC members within different ANC structures and the branches and argued that there is no clear and direct political consciousness when it relates to members. According to Motlanthe, there is a lack of sufficient support, be it administrative or economic, to aid the branches in running their day-to-day campaigns and continuous activities (Motlanthe, 2007). In his report, Motlanthe (2007) highlights inadequate access to resources as a major hurdle, referring to rural ANC branches which have a large membership but struggle to conduct regular meetings. Factionalism and a lack of unity are further problems plaguing ANC branches. There is also an apathetic approach from leaders within the National Executive Committee and the Provincial Executive Committee in relation to establishing and facilitating branches that are in good standing and working to promote the mass work of the organization (Motlanthe, 2007). Motlanthe notes that these are the problems that plague the ANC branches and prevent the branch from being a well-functioning 'basic unit of the organization' (Motlanthe, 2007).

Motlanthe made these critical comments at the Polokwane Conference which Jacob Dlamini (2010: 187) describes as a 'watershed conference', because of how ANC branches used their power and influence to reshape party leadership and elect its own NEC. He poses the question 'How can branches be so dysfunctional and still be central to the biggest events in recent ANC history?' (Dlamini, 2010: 188). In attending to this question, we could rephrase it to ask how ANC branches are so significant and central to the ANC, yet so flawed?

As discussed in Chapter Three, the branch is governed by fifteen executive branch members that are elected by branch members. The branch executive consists of a chairman, secretary, treasurer, and other members (ANC Constitution, 2017). The branch executives who have the most power are the branch chairperson and the secretary (Dlamini, 2010). This is because of the local level structures of the ward-based system, therefore branch executives that are in these wards are gatekeepers of local government posts (Darracq, 2008a: 432). In a Gauteng-based study, Anciano (2014: 52) found that the branch chairs are the ones who typically control the branch dynamics. They do this by handling branch projects which in some cases include various illegal and corrupt financial gains (Anciano, 2014: 52). Anciano (2014:52) reports that senior branch positions prove lucrative for those that occupy them, because money is exchanged between the senior branch members and the chief whips of the ANC for leadership selections.

These kinds of activities by those in branch executives have weakened the character of the ANC and has made struggle veterans with strong moral fibre to be less involved in the organization or to walk away from the organization completely (Darracq, 2008a: 433). According to Darracq (2008a:433), branch executive members are far removed from the needs of the ordinary members of the branch. They also lack insight on how to handle new members and do not know the different members' 'concerns and practices' (Darracq, 2008a: 433).

Malabela (2011) provides a robust discussion and critique of the ANC's branch structure in contemporary ANC-led politics. Malabela (2011:36) interviews members of the ANC's Chochocho branch in Manzini and notes that branch members did not want to regularly attend branch meetings because they see branch meetings as catering for a certain portion of members within the branch. One interviewee, Dumisane, opines that the secretary is in charge in the branch, because the secretary of the branch is in charge of calling meetings and contacting certain branch members that they want to partake in the meeting in order to reach their desired ends (Dumisane interviewed by Malabela, 2011: 36). He also argues that Branch Executive Committee members use branches for their own benefit in order to safeguard their positions or

leaders who want to climb to leadership positions of the upper structures of the party (Malabela, 2011: 36).

Dumisane further contends that because of the unbridled power of ANC branches and the 90 percent voting power they hold in National Party Conferences, power-hungry individuals partake in branch politics to advance their interests through the manipulation of branch members (Malabela, 2011: 36). The manipulation of branches in Manzini has been made possible by unscrupulous leaders. According to Malabala's respondent, 'They manipulate branches because they want positions ... because the branches are significant and if you want any leadership position in the ANC, they will tell you that "start at the branch first". Because you can't say that you want to go to PEC (Provincial Executive Committee) who will put you there? ofaka ngubani? (who will put you there?)' (Dumisane, interviewed by Malabela, 2011:37). What is of interest in Dumisane's assertions about branch politics is the importance placed on branches, as leaders of upper structures within the party come to the branches to canvass for votes for themselves or for other individuals within the party that they think will best serve their interests (Malabela, 2011: 37). Thus, many scholars have posited that the Zuma victory in Polokwane was based on those cadres who were unhappy with Thabo Mbeki's centralism, and who were able to use branch structures to mobilise votes for Zuma (Dlamini, 2010: 187). Of note here, is the fact that there is tension between these reported activities and the internal democracy narrative within the ANC. There is a difference to what happens within the branches on the ground and the official discourse the ANC puts forward regarding how branches ought to function.

According to Piper and Anciano (2015: 73), there is 'representational capture' by ANC branch elites. These elites are elected as branch delegates despite lacking branch support. They are tasked with the branches' voting mandate, but instead further their own voting mandate and agenda. According to Malabela (2011: 55), the ANC iMvuselelo campaign, which was ostensibly aimed at mass mobilization, was used as a vehicle to get branches to install Zuma as president of the ANC. However, Dlamini (2010) shows that it was not just Zuma's supporters who manipulated branch politics. He discusses one ANC branch member who allegedly went to the Polokwane conference without being elected by the branch to become a delegate. This member notes that he was given R500 rand to vote for Mbeki, with a R1000 or more as the conference continued (Dlamini, 2010: 199). The branch member accepted the money yet voted for Zuma. Overall, Dlamini's study of the Fanyana ANC Branch suggests that there is little

evidence that there was a bottom-up process starting at branch level to push for Zuma to become president (Dlamini, 2010: 199).

In his study of branches in Manzini Chochocho, Malabela (2015:145) notes that it was common practice for would-be leaders to give branch members and some senior BEC members money in order to gain favour in the branch and instruct members of the branch and senior BEC members on what to do in the branch. The Branch Executive Committee in Manzini accepted these monetary gifts and followed the instructions given to them by these would-be leaders concerning the branches. The BEC would purchase alcohol with a portion of this money in order to capture the minds and hearts of branch members to vote for a particular leader or a particular camp/faction (Malabela, 2015:145).

This kind of manipulation results in membership of the BEC being an opportunity to manipulate the processes and results of the BGMs because they have branch members who are on their side to vote for their desired ends. This is what Kgalema Motlanthe (2007: 2.24), highlights when he says that '"gate-keeping", "ghost members", "commercialisation of membership", "rent-a-member" and other forms of fraudulent and manipulative practices that seek to influence the outcomes of elective process remain much too widespread' (Kgalema Motlanthe, Organization Report, 2007: 8.22). In this instance, it can be deduced that the branch with the branch executives can be thought of as playing an important role of gatekeepers controlling who has power in the ANC. Thenjiwe Mthintso, a prominent figure of the ANC in the early 2000s, alludes to this when she states that individuals within the organization exert control within the branches and do not want to step-down as gatekeepers (Lodge, 2004: 7).

Darracq's (2008c) study of the Western Cape ANC provides another example of how upper structures of the ANC buy influence and manipulate branch structures. In the build-up to the provincial conference in 2005, what transpired was that there were members within the ANC branches in the Western Cape who supported the then Secretary-General of the Western Cape ANC, Mcebisi Skwatsha (Darracq, 2008c: 782). These members undermined other members of the ANC Western Cape branches who were seen to be in support of the then Premier of the Western Cape, Ebrahim Rasool, who was Skwatsha's rival. Supporters of Skwatsha subverted the quorum of the branches which supported Ebrahim Rasool so that these branches would not be able to select delegates to the provincial conference (Darracq, 2008c: 782).

ANC branches are supposed to be spaces in which future leaders are groomed to lead the party and prepared to effectively participate in the higher structures of the organization (Malabela, 2011: 37). According to Mbuso, a member of the Manzini Chochocho branch interviewed by Malabela, 2011), for a member of the ANC to become a leader in the organization, they need to start at the grassroots level, which is the branch. Mbuso makes an example that although Jacob Zuma was the leader of the ANC, he still belonged to a branch constituency (Mbuso interviewed by Malabela, 2011: 37). Mbuso's statement highlights the importance of branches when it relates to the shaping of leaders of the organization and conditioning leaders who will lead the organization in the future. The ANC constitution also states that every member of the ANC who is a leader within the organization needs to be registered in a branch (ANC Constitution, 2017: 4.1). Thus, in this context, branches can be understood as serving a purpose of creating spaces where ANC leaders are equipped with skills and competencies in order for them to become effective leaders in the structures of the party, be it regional, provincial, or national structures of the organization (Malabela, 2011: 37).

However, Malabela's study shows that these leaders manipulate branch dynamics in order to occupy seats at the branch level, which in turn will bolster them in vying for more higher positions in the organization (Malabela, 2011: 37). Branches are used as a tool by leaders in order to facilitate higher positions for themselves in the upper structures of the organization, and this in turn subverts the democratic underpinning that is considered to be the basic tenet of the branches and the organization. This is because leaders within the branches will dominate and influence and subvert democratic ideals of the branches in order to ensure that branch processes cater to their needs and ambitions (Malabela, 2011: 37). Individuals who want to attain leadership positions in the national structures of the ANC descend on the branches in order to garner support and get more votes by using the BEC as a tool. They do this by using the BEC to effectively coerce and manipulate Branch General Meeting (BGM) results (Malabela, 2011: 37). Manipulation at the branch level happens because many members do not attend general branch meetings, and this gives branch leaders a chance and a platform to coerce and manipulate general branch meetings through membership lists which are of importance in relation to the establishment of branches and creating a space where BGMs occur (Malabela, 2011: 38). The branch leaders do this because they understand that branches carry 90 percent voting power in national conferences, hence the importance of manipulating the internal democracy of branches (Malabela, 2011: 38).

Party leaders within the organization manipulate the branch dynamics through being 'successful political entrepreneurs' (Beresford, 2015: 243). These successful political entrepreneurs take the issues that communities want fixing and present them as their own issues in order to manipulate branch members and advance their interests within the party (Beresford, 2015: 243). This manipulation of branch structures is furthered by party leaders through the buying of influence within these structures.

The ANC branch is supposed to be the most significant unit within the organization. This basic unit of the organization is plagued by what the ANC terms 'foreign tendencies' (Report on the 54th National Conference, 2017). These foreign tendencies have included bulk buying of membership within the branches and rent-a-member practices, where leaders or would-be leaders pay for members' membership cards in exchange for their votes in elective conferences.

Branch commodification is also another term that is termed as a 'foreign tendency' within the ANC. It involves money being funnelled into the branches by leaders and would-be-leaders in order for them to influence BGMs and nomination procedures of delegates. These leaders do this because they know that the branch as a basic unit makes up 90 percent of delegates eligible to vote in the elective conferences, and these branches can vote for these leaders and place them in the higher structures and positions within the ANC, this is why these leaders manipulate the BECs. This manipulation of ANC branches leads to factional slates within the branches which arise because of leadership squabbles.

In a 2012 Task Team Report, the ANC recognised that there was rampant bulk-buying of membership by a handful of individuals who ensured that their leaders or would-be leaders would be nominated and effectively elected by the members of the branch (ANC Task Team Report, 2012: 13). This handful of branch members effectively blocked other individuals who wanted to join the branch structures so as to protect their leaders or would-be-leaders' interests (ANC Task Team Report, 2012: 13). This was seen in the Free-State province where the ANC PEC leaders overturned properly conducted nominations because these nominations did not align with them (ANC Task Team Report, 2012: 6). In the North West Province, ANC branches have deeply entrenched factionalism because of gatekeeping and bulk membership buying (ANC Task Team Report, 2012: 8). In the Eastern Cape because of factionalism, there have been 'parallel structures' that operate beside the branch in order to influence internal democracy within the branches and to manipulate branch processes (ANC Task Team Report 2012: 4).

In essence, branches are plagued with numerous problems that make few people within the branches carry out the day-to-day functioning of the branches, whilst many other branch members become uninvolved and aloof to branch tasks and branch life. This is because many branches do not have access to resources to help them become well-functioning branches. This lack of resources creates factionalism and disunity within the branches. This is largely due to the apathetic approach that senior leaders within the ANC take when it relates to the branches. Leadership within the branches then falls to branch executives who have the most power and assume the role of gatekeepers in the ward-based system in relation local government posts.

Leaders of the branch or would-be-leaders in the national leadership of the ANC come to the branches to effectively coerce the BEC into manipulating the election results of the bi-annual branch meetings. This is because money is being funnelled into the branches by these wouldbe-leaders in order to coerce branch leadership and branch delegates to buy votes. Vote-buying in the ANC branches lead to branch commodification in which party leaders or would-be leaders mobilize branch delegates within the branches to vote for them in the ANC elective conferences for senior leadership positions. Branch commodification leads to factionalism within the branches as they sow divisions within the branches on which party leaders or wouldbe-party-leaders get elected. Because of this branch commodification, leaders within the ANC are not elected on merit and capabilities but are elected through manipulation and vote-buying.

**What role do the branches play in the ANC's politics? Do branches help deepen the ANC's ability to be a mass party?**

In the previous section, questions were asked about whether party leaders are able to manipulate branches and buy influence. This question was answered in the affirmative. So then, what then is the role of the branches in ANC politics? In addition to this question, we can also ask whether these branches really deepen the ANC's ability to be a mass party?

The then Secretary-General of the ANC in 2010, Gwede Mantashe (2010: 2.28), stated that the ANC branches are nerve-centres of the ANC, where every member of the ANC (from leadership to the ordinary branch member) must find expression. The branches are supposedly vanguards of South African communities in that the ANC is supposed to be a place where ordinary members are equipped with political education (Mantashe, 2010: 2.28). According to the ANC, branches are where ordinary members of the organization participate in effecting change and using their democratic right to shape their experiences and advocate for social

change in their communities (Mantashe, 2010: 2.28). Branches are described as the anchor of the organization in which all internal decisions are tabled and agreed upon (Motlanthe, 2007: 2.13).

Whilst this is the role the branch ostensibly plays within the organization; the ANC has acknowledged that there are deep-seated issues that transpire within its branches. If the branches do not practice internal democracy, or if branch members are improperly influenced, then can the ANC really pride itself on vibrant organizational involvement within its branches, by its members (Mantashe, 2010: 2.32)? Mantashe (2010) opines that branches carry the essence of the organization, as branches breathe life within the structures of the ANC through its members. The ANC branches hold an integral position within the organization, as they are used as campaigning vehicles within the local structures of the ANC (Mantashe, 2010:2.34). This brings questions to the fore about the branches' actual role within the organization: is it a really a space where branch members use their democratic rights of self-expression and policy creation?

In what has now been termed the 'historic conference' in Polokwane, Kgalema Motlanthe (2007) stated in his organizational report that only a handful of members participate in the operation of the branch, whilst the majority of the members of the branches remain aloof and apathetic. This is what Michels (1958) alludes to when he states that in mass parties, members of branches who are not committed to the advancement of the democracy project may allow a small portion of members to dominate and manipulate the democracy project of the party. It seems that this may be the case in ANC branches.

Instead of deepening the mass character of the ANC, the reality of the branches shows a deep-seated problem of factionalism that is plaguing the ANC branches. In his profile of the Fanyana Banda Branch, Dlamini (2010: 191), interviewed Keith Majozi, who coined the term 'members of members'. He stated that the central problem in the Fanyana Branch is not that it is inquorate, but the underlying problem is that members are loyal to particular branch members rather than to the ethos and practices of the ANC – they are 'members of members' (Dlamini, 2010: 191). Authors such as Sarakinsky and Fakir (2015: 61) have argued that the emergence of Congress of the People party (COPE) post-Polokwane was necessitated by disgruntled branch members of the ANC who could not align themselves with a Zuma-led ANC. As a result of these factional battles, the branches of the ANC move away from deepening the mass character of the organization. The ANC's Office of the Secretary-General (2005: 45) acknowledges this

phenomenon of factionalism in the branches stating that ANC branches are deeply divided because of internal squabbles relating to positions of leadership, the appointment of ward councillors, and the awarding of public contracts. In addition to this, the internal squabbles also spill over to the recruitment of branch members, and the ways in which leaders and would-be leaders fulfil their interests in the branch (ANC, 2005: 45). A member of the Fanyana branch interviewed by Dlamini (2010: 191) describes the ways would-be-leaders vie for positions, pointing to power struggles and infighting and insisting (Dlamini, 2010: 191). The 'members of members' phenomena can also be found in the upper structures of the ANC, which include National, Provincial, Regional structures which have a direct bearing in the branch. The branch delegates from each ANC branch votes for executives to represent them at the regional and provincial structures (ANC, 2005). In order for these executives to be elected, branches must have held a conference beforehand to determine the delegates chosen through having quorum (50 percent plus one) (ANC, 2005). If this quorum is not met, the respective delegates are sent to Observer Conferences, where they are not permitted to vote. The significance of this is that leaders of the regions and provinces may seek to undermine branches that do not align with them so that they are not able to send delegates to the national conferences (ANC, 2005). In cases where the Regional Executive Committee opposes a particular branch, the REC may collude with some branch members to ensure that the branch is not quorate and therefore cannot elect delegates to send regional conferences (ANC, 2005). In his analysis of the ANC's Task Team Report, (which reported on the functionality and standing of the ANC branches), Butler (2015: 23) alluded to this problem of camps stating that 'local power-brokers' keep membership forms refusing to hand them over to the appropriate offices. By holding on to the forms, the 'owners' of these forms make it impossible to hold quorate meetings (Butler, 2015: 23).

Olver (2018) states that there are factions battles which are prevalent in the Nelson Mandela Bay's 600 ANC branches. These battles are in play because of the ANC's mundane and outdated system of electing leaders. This system does not allow leaders to actively contest positions within the party and this results in regional elective conferences being factional. This factionalism is based on ongoing informal caucuses within the branches that put forward their preferred candidates in contested posts. The leadership framework functions on a 'winner takes all basis' leading to factions that seize power completely whilst the others are out completely (Olver, 2018: 9).

The power struggles within these branches are intense, causing different caucuses within these branches to develop into transient factions. These factions exert much influence in the political life of the ANC. This causes a 'silent retreat from the mass line to palace politics of factionalism and perpetual in-fighting' (ANC, 2017:16). This is further alluded to by Gwede Mantashe (2017) in his report presented to the 2017 National Policy Conference when he states that the internal squabbles and factions within the ANC have been ingrained in the party's structures. Activists within the ANC are of the notion that for them to progress in party structures and party lines, they need to find expression in factional slates within the party (Olver, 2018: 9).

According to Booysen (2018: 26), a number of branches within the ANC that were in the Dlamini-Zuma faction/camp were guilty of gatekeeping and undemocratic practices. This was because these branches prevented pro-Ramaphosa members from participating in the workings of the branch (Booysen, 2018:26). Because of this, the Dlamini-Zuma camp within the branches had control over which delegates to send to the ANC's Nasrec Conference (Booysen, 2018:26). These squabbles and wars have continued post-Nasrec because many of the ANC delegates and members were disgruntled about the victory of the Ramaphosa camp. Many branches and camps started restructuring themselves in order to regain control within the ANC and get their members deployed to high positions within the ANC (Booysen, 2018:26). As shown in this section, the role that is played by the branches in ANC politics on the ground is entirely different from what the official documentation of the ANC claims. Because of this, another question arises, how much power do the branches have over the decisions of the organizations? Are branches really influential or are they only influential during the election season?

**How much power do the branches have over decisions made in the ANC? Are they only influential at election time in the National Conferences?**

The ANC branches supposedly have power over the decisions made in the ANC, but in reality, the decisions made by leaders in the ANC have power over the branches. This is in despite of the ANC asserting in its constitution that the branch is the principal unit of the movement (ANC Constitution, 2017). As stated in the previous chapter, the ANC is not governed by the branches. It is governed by Luthuli House, which is comprised of the ANC's highest decision-making authority who are in charge of the decision-making within the organization and over its members (ANC Constitution, 2019). Some commentators argue that the branches are only influential when election time comes. Febe Potgieter-Gqubule (2010) gives an example of a

2002 Stellenbosch Conference where branch members and even branches themselves were regarded as only 'voting cattle' by leaders engaged in leadership battles. The Stellenbosch Conference revealed the conditions surrounding lethargic branches and defective cadre development initiatives in ANC branches (Potgieter-Gqubule, 2010). Leaders within the ANC branches have a proclivity to encourage vibrant branches and extensive recruitment programmes solely for the intention of elective conferences, to the neglect of normal consistent activities that seek to increase branch activity and mobilise community structures for branch effectiveness (Potgieter-Gqubule, 2010).

The branches' influence during election time has resulted in dirty lobbying within the ANC. Lobbying is permitted within the ANC and its structures. This is alluded to by Febe PotgieterGqubule (2010) who notes that leadership contestation and lobbying practices have a long history within the ANC as they allow for members to influence each other (Potgieter-Gqubule, 2010). Even though this is the case, the lobbying practices employed by the ANC branches subvert the democratic practices within these branches and compromises the autonomy of voters within the branch (Butler, 2015: 29). In this lobbying period in ANC branches, factions within the branches force leaders on unknowing branch members who are forced to vote along the lines of their factions (Twala, 2014: 594). Both Butler (2015: 29) and Butler and Southall (2015: 10) allude to this dirty lobbying by stating that it is money-centred, and it occupies a key part in cities and provinces where there are ANC branches. This dirty lobbying has refuted the contention of branch power and made it unfeasible. Theorists like Michels (1958) if writing about the contemporary ANC would have argued that party masses captured by elite become 'voting cattle'. This is because these members have no say about the daily life and affairs of the branch. A counterargument would be that leaders within the ANC have an enshrined constitutional right to lobby and leverage other members to vote for them, because lobbying is an essential characteristic of the democratic exercise. However, this argument surely does not hold when the lobbying in question involves the funnelling of money. The funnelling of money in branches as a lobbying tactic was also prevalent in the Joe Slovo branch in order for branch members to vote for a particular constituency in the BGMs (ANC Joe Slovo Branch, 2018).

Participants within the Chochocho branch have noted that the lobbying process subverts democratic ideals within the branch because certain individuals in the branch are handed lists and instructed to vote for which candidate whilst the candidate that funded their membership

card is present within the BGM in order for them to ensure that the members that they funded vote for them or for the people they approved in the candidate lists (Malabela, 2015: 146). These funders are the very same people within the branch who have argued for the system of the secret ballot and not for a show of hands that is currently in use under the guise of promoting democracy (Malabela, 2015: 146). Despite this, the mere fact that money was used as a lobbying tactic within the BGM, through the financing of membership cards, defeats the internal democracy initiative in the branch (Malabela, 2015: 146). To curb dirty-lobbying, screening committees are deployed in the branches. These screening committees are supposed to be impartial and fair in the screening of branches. In reality, these screening committees were found by the Task Team Report to be grossly manipulated in their evaluation of candidates running for positions and in some instances not evaluating candidates at all (ANC 2012: 5). This is because these screening committees are part of an intricate patronage networks within the ANC that hinders its effective functioning as a democratic mass party.

Netshitenzhe (2012) in his study of *Competing Identities of a National Liberation Movement and the Challenges of Incumbency* states that corruption and patronage has found its way into the ANC structures. This is seen through the party leadership not being able to enforce good practices on how leaders or would-be-leaders lobby for votes. It is also seen through how the masses of the ANC lobby and canvass votes for their preferred leaders. The leaders or wouldbe-leaders of the ANC with their accompanying mass members canvass for numbers within the ANC structures through buying votes of conference delegates. This then results in a toxic relationship between the leaders of the party and the members of the party because some members within the party require money or other incentives in order to sway their votes to vote for a specific leader(s) (Netshitenzhe, 2012). What Netshitenzhe (2012) articulates in his study is highlighted by the ANC's Diagnostic Report of 2017 which attests that leaders and wouldbe-leaders of the ANC uses money to buy election votes and this act erodes the effectiveness of all ANC structures (including branches), Money within the ANC has eclipsed proper channels of lobbying and canvassing in relation to leaders of the ANC being elected within the party structures (Mantashe, 2017).

**Is branch participation by branch members solely for advancing the mass character of the ANC? Or is it incentive driven?**

As shown in the previous section, members of the ANC branches aid the organization to achieve electoral majority through the polls by engaging in door-to-door canvassing (Bruce,

2014: 58). This has proven to be the most effective campaigning tool that is utilised by the ANC. But why is this the case?

Tordoff (1993: 107) explains patronage as one of the many avenues that political parties utilise in order to reward voter loyalty. This is done by giving certain party members certain incentives because of their support in getting would-be-leaders elected to prominent party positions or voting them into power or facilitating them getting government posts. Tordoff (1993: 107), further argues that patronage within political parties has been a significant feature in their history. In some instances, these patronage functions remain in contemporary multi-party states, where these political parties 'promise future patronage in return for electoral support' (Tordoff, 1993: 107). Because ANC branches are the basic unit of the organization, we may assume that this is where patronage networks are created and utilised. But is this really the case in the branches?

To understand the functioning of patronage networks it is necessary to look carefully at the policy of cadre deployment. This policy was translated into action by the ANC when it became the official government of South Africa. Although this initiative was introduced as a transformative endeavour by the ANC, it has caused quite a number of problems. These problems plague the ANC at different levels of leadership, but mostly at the branch and local level governance where key positions within government are held by those members loyal to the ANC, leaving behind competent members of the public who are fit for these positions (Southall, 2009: 6). Southall (2009) further contends that when nationalist parties assume governance as ruling parties, they often use the state apparatus to award loyal members by giving them special benefits (Southall, 2009: 6). These party elites are the ones that determine which benefit accrues to which party member and at what specific time these benefits are distributed. Central to these developments of benefits are positions, procurements with extensive privileges to those loyal to the party and to those that are loyal to party elites (Southall, 2009: 14). This malignant expansion of patronage networks within the ANC, as argued by Southall, sees ordinary people join ANC branch structures in search of personal benefit.

In relation to such processes of cadre deployment, Piper and Anciano (2015: 85) report that some branch members in Eldorado complained that there are people put in place for different positions, while branch members are called on to do little more than legitimize the process by observing procedures. Their respondents report that 'they already know who they are going to

put in there … we must go on with the procedure while they already know who is going to be in' (Piper and Anciano, 2015: 85). A BEC member from the ANC branch in Lenasia echoes these sentiments by stating that there is a close-knit group within the branch that a person needs to be in if they would like to achieve their desired ends. He continues to state that in order to climb the political ladder within the party structures, a branch member needs to be in good terms with the ruling leadership or incoming leadership (Piper and Anciano, 2015: 81).

Another ANC Sandton branch member lamented on the deployment policy by expressing shock that a minister within the organization is a member of their branch, because this minister has never been present in the branch at all and was never nominated by the branch as a representative. Despite this, this minister is in a position of power within the organization (Piper and Anciano, 2015: 81). Piper and Anciano's (2015) findings suggest that leaders who are fashioned within the branch structures are overlooked in favour of candidates who are more powerful within party structures, but who may not appeal to the local structures within the organization. These candidates may be illegitimate in the eyes of the local structures.

In his study of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality (NMBM), Olver (2018), provides a robust discussion on politics and patronage in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality. He highlights that there is a very broad ANC political class within the municipality encompassing 600 ANC branches, RECs, the ANC Leagues, and party leaders of the SACP. This political class far outweighs the number of posts that are available to this political class. This presents a mounting problem as most people in the NMBM political class are classified as struggling and relatively poor making battles for resources and positions rife (Olver, 2018: 9).

The scarcity of resources within the municipality facilitates the creation of factions which are founded on loyalty. The loyalty that a faction attains is based on the number of resources it has and can give out to their members (Olver, 2018: 9). Olver (2018: 9) contends that the funding for ANC initiatives is actually more from factions than the party itself. This patronage is given out to faction members for them to 'mobilize'. This patronage is presented as 'resources' (Olver, 2018: 9). Most activists in the ANC join a particular faction because of resources that it has, and the activists continued loyalty is based on the price the faction is prepared to pay in order to keep those member(s) in their faction (Olver, 2018: 9).

It is clear from these examples that members of the branches and participate in the life of the organization, not to advance its mass character but to access incentives and privileges offered by the ANC.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the foregoing discussions suggests that many branch members of the ANC branches do not join the ANC branch structures because they want to advance its mass character, but rather because they want to gain incentives. Incentives can be in the form of money, government posts or other incentives that keep branch members in their respective factions. This patronage which is given as incentives assures different factions within the ANC branch member(s) votes and their loyalty. Thus, in turn, branch members do not vote to advance the life of the ANC but vote to advance factional lines with their preferred leader(s).

# CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

*'The NEC elected in Mangaung does what it is told and there are few exceptions. It was a product of gross manipulation of membership to branch systems'* - Trevor Manuel (cited in Tandwa, 2017).

The above statement was articulated by Trevor Manuel about the ANC NEC elected in Mangaung. The statement could be said to still hold true in the contemporary ANC and has captured the current state of the ANC branches. This is because the ANC branches have become a vehicle of contestations of party positions where rampant manipulation is prevalent and there is a lack of internal democracy. The ANC asserts that the ANC branch is the most fundamental unit of the organisation because that is where their members find expression, but research on the branches have proven otherwise. This is because the ANC branches have been plagued by constituencies in the branch that aim to subvert the democratic understanding within the branches. This situation is exacerbated by individuals within the branch who aspire to have leadership positions within the branch. These would-be-leaders carry with them resources and money, and in the branches, this means that they are going to be given positions within the party as they have the means to use their resources to their advantage. This is a result of branches having 90 percent power with regards to voting in ANC Conferences. Thus, for would-be-leaders who want political positions in the ANC, the branches are vehicles to garner support.

## Findings of the Research

In conclusion, branch politics are an integral albeit flawed system within mass parties. ANC branches have operated as local structures and as a mass party component of the ANC. Does this then mean that the ANC is a true mass party? The answer to this is in the negative as this research has found that although the ANC has many characteristics that make up a mass party, it is not a true one. As shown in Chapter Four, the ANC party structure has evolved into a cartel party. The reason for this is that the lines that separate party and state are blurred, and this encourages the ANC as a party to operate as the state vice versa (Katz and Mair, 1994, 1995). This leads to a high-level of corporatism within the ANC where the likes of the CR17 campaign thrived.

As shown in Chapter Five, corporatism has led to the ANC branches being used as a manipulation tool with leaders buying influence. These leaders funnel money into the branch through branch executives and ordinary members in order to get their desired positions. Vote buying is used in order to encourage dirty lobbying. Dirty lobbying leads to branch members being loyal to leaders and would-be-leaders instead of being loyal to the ethos and life of the ANC. Branch members effectively become 'member of members' in this regard. This then leads to the branches becoming important during elective conferences. They are important because leaders and would-be-leaders within the ANC attach a price to a branch delegates' vote. These leaders do this in order to buttress their power of move up the leadership ladder within the ANC. This then leads to the question: Do ANC branch members join the ANC branch structures to advance its mass character or is their joining conditional on receiving incentives? This study finds that at least some branch members do not join the ANC to advance its mass character but join because of the incentives and benefits associated with being a branch member. Such members join the ANC and participate in its activities in order to partake in the patronage that different factions within the ANC undertake to cement their power or fight for control within the ANC. This suggests that at least some manipulation occurs within ANC branches and that this is likely to affect the outcome of the ANC's decision-making structures in ways which undermine democracy.

This research is significant for the study of branch politics within mass-political parties in Africa, more specifically the African National Congress. The ANC purports itself in being a mass-based organization, taking the mandate to rulership from its grassroots. This research has proved that this is not the case in some branches of the ANC. This research is important in advancing branch politics scholarship within the ANC, and how the ANC party elites use branch politics as a mechanism of manipulation to buttress their positions in the party to plunder state resources.

**Directions for Future Research**

Future research on ANC branch politics needs to explore the interplay between ANC branches and South African municipalities. This research needs to explore how branch members perceive the different municipalities and if branch members feel entitled to municipal government posts just because they are ANC branch members. Future research needs to also pay special attention to the KwaZulu-Natal ANC branches. There is little scholarship on these branches despite the KZN branches providing the biggest delegation at the ANC National

Elective Conferences. In particular, there is a need for research in relation to rural ANC branches and the interplay between rural and urban ANC branches. It would be helpful to analyse the dynamics of the delegation blocs for a particular leader. Are these blocs comprised of urban against rural blocs or are these blocs mixed between urban and rural. Such research could reveal which voice is louder within the ANC Conferences, the urban or the rural branches voice?

**Strengthening of Branch Politics: An Avenue for an Effective ANC**

This study shows that there needs to be a strengthening of branch politics within the ANC. The mandate of the ANC should be carried by the branches as they are the basic unit of the organization. Branches and their members should work to enhance the life of the organization which in turn will use the state apparatus to uplift the lives of ordinary South Africans.

Branch Executives should shy away from nefarious practices that render manipulation and dirty lobbying possible (Mantashe, 2017). This in turn will lead to the decrease in the corruption that has been running rampant within the ANC. Strengthening of branch politics is an important first step in returning the ANC to its mass character and holding the ANC accountable to itself and ordinary South Africans.

Senior leaders of the ANC, if found to have used their power unfairly in relation to coercing branch members or branch executives to solidify their positions within the ANC, should be stripped their seniority status within the organization, their membership to the ANC revoked and their branch status rescinded. This act will ensure that senior leaders of the ANC actually do their assigned duties. In addition to this, if these senior members perform their duties poorly, they can be replaced by someone more competent and skilled, rather than being able to solidify their power for many years through their branches without actually doing their assigned work.

Ordinary branch members of the ANC should be educated on the impact of corruption and manipulation within the branches. Branch members should be encouraged to take part in the life of the ANC in order to enhance the organization  and not participate because of government posts and other incentives. This will make branches more effective and the overall organization as well. Furthermore, branch members of ANC branches should actually start playing a more active role within the party, through the party's policy formulations and the disciplining of its leaders.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

African National Congress, (1919). Constitution of the African National Congress.

African National Congress, (1978). *Strategy and tactics of our revolutionary struggle*, ANC Revolutionary Council, unsgd draft document, University of the Witwatersrand, Karis: A2675, Part III, Folder 29.

African National Congress, (1997). 'The character of the ANC', Discussion Document, ANC Mafikeng National Conference.

African National Congress, (2000). 'Tasks of the NDR and the Mobilisation of the Motive Forces', ANC discussion document, *Umrabulo*, Section C. http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/ngcouncils/docs2000/discuss1.html (Accessed on 14 March 2020).

African National Congress, (2002). 'Secretary-General's Report', Stellenbosch National Conference.

African National Congress, (2005) The organisational design of the ANC: A case for internal renewal, National General Council.

African National Congress, (2007). 'Towards the Centenary of the ANC – A Strategic Agenda for Organisational Renewal – Discussion Document on the Organisational Review', discussion document for the ANC Policy Conference.

African National Congress, (2012). 'The investigating task team on list and other disputes'. Unpublished document.

African National Congress, (2017). Constitution of the African National Congress.

African National Congress, (2017). 54th National Conference, Report and Resolutions. www.anc.org.za/54th-national-conference-reports (Accessed on 14 October 2020).

African National Congress, (2018). Joe Slovo Branch. https://www.anc-joe-slovo-branch-2018 (Accessed on 07 January 2021).

African National Congress, (2019). Constitution of the African National Congress.

Allern, E. H. & Pedersen, K. (2007). The impact of party organizational changes on democracy, *West European Politics*, 30(1), 68-92.

Anciano, F. (2014). Non-racialism and the African National Congress: Views from the branch, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 32(1), 35-55.

Bartolini, S. & Mair, P. (2001). 'Challenges to Contemporary Political Parties', In Larry Diamond and Richard Gunther (eds), *Political Parties and Democracy*, 327-43, Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Basedau, M., Erdmann, G. & Mehler, A. (eds). (2007). *Votes, Money and Violence*, Scottsville: Kwazulu-Natal Press.

Beresford, A. (2015). Power, Patronage, and gatekeeper politics in South Africa, *African Affairs*, 113(455), 226-248.

Bienen, H. (1971). The background to contemporary studies of militaries and modernization, In H. Bienen (ed), *The military and modernization*, Chicago: Aldine-Atherton.

Booysen, S. (ed.) (2012). *Local elections in South Africa: Parties, People, Politics.* Bloemfontein: SUN Press.

Booysen, S. (2017). *The African National Congress and the regeneration of political power*, Wits University Press.

Booysen, S. (2018). Hegemonic struggles of the African National Congress: From cacophony of morbid symptoms to strained renewal, *African Spectrum*, 53(2), 5-35.

Booysen, S. (2019). The African National Congress and its transfer of power from Zuma to Ramaphosa: the intraparty-multiparty nexus, *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, 98(1), 1-26.

Butler, A. (2005). How democratic is the African National Congress?, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 31(4), 719-736.

Butler, A. (2009). The ANC's National Election Campaign of 2009: Siyanqoba! In Southall, R & Daniel, *J. Zunami: The 2009 South African Elections*. Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd: Auckland Park, 65-84.

Butler, A. (2015). The politics of numbers: National Membership growth and subnational power competition in the African National Congress, *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, 87(1), 13-31.

Butler, A. & Southall, R. (2015). Introduction: Understanding the ANC at sub-national level, *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, 87(1), 1-12.

Butler, A. (2017). *Contemporary South Africa*, Macmillan International Higher Education, London: Palgrave Publishers.

Buntman, F. (2003). *Robben Island and Prisoner Resistance to Apartheid*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Burnell, P. & Randall, V. (2004). 'Case Study One: Political Parties, Their Social Ties and Role in Political Change', In P Burnell & V Randall (eds), *Politics in the Developing World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Carbone, G.M. (2005). Continuidade na renovação? Ten years of multiparty politics in Mozambique: roots, evolution and stabilisation of the Frelimo-Renamo party system, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 43(3), 417-442.

Carbone, G.M. (2007). Political parties and party systems in Africa: themes and research perspectives, *World Political Science Review*, 3(3), 1-29.

Cowan, K. (2020). Gupta-linked front donated R10m to ANC weeks before Transnet, Free State, kickbacks flowed through it, *News24*, 26 September 2020.https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/investigations/gupta-linked-frontdonated-r10m-to-anc-weeks-before-transnet-free-state-kickbacks-flowed-through-it20200926 (Accessed on 12 February 2021).

Choudhry, S. (2009). 'He Had A Mandate'; The South African Constitutional Court and The African National Congress in A Dominant Party Democracy, *Constitutional Court Review*, 2(3), 1-86.

Darracq, V. (2008a). Being a 'Movement of the People' and a Governing Party: Study of the African National Congress Mass Character, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 34(2), 430449.

Darracq, V. (2008b). 'The African National Congress (ANC) Organization at the Grassroots'. *African Affairs*, 107(429), 589-609.

Darracq, V. (2008c). Dans Le Parti, Dans Le Quartier: Les Branches Locales De L'african National Congress (ANC), *Revue Tiers Monde*, 196(4), 779-796.

Dlamini, J. (2009) 2009 Ruth First Lecture. Available here: https://journalism.co.za/2009-ruthfirst-lecture-jacob-dlamini/. Accessed May 2020.

Dlamini, J. (2010). 'The Root of the Matter: Scenes from an ANC Branch', *African Studies*, 69(1), 187-203.

Davies, R., O'Meara, D. & Dlamini, S. (1988). *The Struggle for South Africa: a reference* guide, 2, new ed, London: Zed.

Duverger, M. (1954*). Political Parties*. London: Methuen.

Emerson, R. (1967). 'Parties and national integration in Africa', in LaPalombara and Weiner (eds), *Political Parties and Political Development*, 267-302.

Ellis, S. (1991). The ANC in Exile, *African Affairs*, 90, 439-447.

Gabel, M. J. & Huber, J. D. (2000). Putting parties in their place: Inferring party left-right ideological positions from party manifestos data, *American Journal of Political Science*, 44(1), 94-103.

Gabel, M. J. & Anderson, C. J. (2002). The structure of citizen attitudes and the European political space, *Comparative Political Studies*, 35(8), 893-913.

Goati, V. (2001). Političke partjie i izbori u demokratskom poretku, CeSID, Beograd.

Hamilton, L. (2011). 'Freedom and representation in South Africa'. Professorial Inaugural Lecture, University of Johannesburg.

Heidar, K. (2006). 'Party Membership and Party Organizations', In Richard S. Katz and William J. Crotty (eds), *Handbook of Party Politics*, London: Sage.

Hopkin, J. (2003). The Emergence and Convergence of the Cartel Party: Parties, State and Economy in Southern Europe, *Working Paper*, 1-39, London: LSE Research Online.

Hopkin, J. (2004). The Problem with Party Finance: *Theoretical Perspectives on the Funding of Political Parties* [online], 1-43, London: LSE Research Online.

Hopkin, J. (2006). Conceptualizing political clientelism: Political exchange and democratic theory, APSA annual meeting, *Philadelphia*, 31(46), 1-18.

Iheduru, ). (2008). 'Why 'Anglo licks the ANC's boots': Globalisation and state-capital relations in South Africa', *African Affairs*, 107, 333-349.

Kasfir, N. (1976). *The shrinking pollical arena. Participation and ethnicity in African politics with a case study of Uganda*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Katz, R.S. (2001). The problem of candidate selection and models of party democracy, *Party politics*, 7(3), 277-296.

Katz, R.S. & Mair, P. (1994). *How Parties Organize: Change and Adaptation in Party Organizations in Western Democracies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Katz, R.S. & Mair, P. (1995). Changing models of party organization and party democracy: the emergence of a cartel party, *Party politics*, 1(1), 5-28.

Katz, R.S. & Mair, P. (2002). The ascendancy of the party in public office: party organizational change in twentieth-century democracies, *Political parties*, 24, 113-36.

Kirchheimer, O. (1966). 'The Transformation of the Western European Party System', in J. La Palombra and M. Weiner (eds), *Political Parties and Political Development*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 177-200.

Kura, S. B. (2007). Contemporary African Political Parties: Institutionalisation for the Institutionalisation for the Sustainability of Democracy, *Journal of African Elections*, 6(1), 41-89.

Lodge, T. (1999). *South African Politics since 1994*. Cape Town: David Philip Publishers.

Lodge, T. (2004). The ANC and the development of party politics in modern South Africa, *Journal of Modern African Studies* 42(2), 189-219.

Mair, Peter (1997) *Party System Change. Approaches and Interpretations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Malabela, M. (2011). *The African National Congress and Local Democracy: the role of the ANC branch in Manzini-Mbombela*, Unpublished Paper, University of the Witwatersrand.

Malabela, M. (2015). Members of members: the ANC's Manzini branch in Mpumalanga, *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, 87(1), 135-150.

Mantashe, G. (2010). *ANC Secretary-General's Report*. ANC National General Council

Mantashe, G. (2017). '*A Diagnostic Organizational Report'*, ANC 5th National Policy Conference, Johannesburg: African National Congress.

Matakovic, H. & Mraović I. C. (2015). Development of Political Parties and Party Funding: Models and Characteristics, *CES Working Papers,* 7(1), 111-125.

Matlosa, K. & Shale, V. (2008). Political parties programme handbook, *Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA)*.

Mainwaring, S. & Scully, T. (eds), (1995). *Building democratic institutions: party systems in Latin America*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Maiyo, J. (2008). *Political Parties and Intra-party Democracy in East Africa: From Representative to Participatory Democracy*, Unpublished Paper, Leiden University.

Meli, F. (1988). *South Africa Belongs to Us: A History of the ANC*, Zimbabwe Publishing House: Harare, 1-258.

Meny, Y. (1993). *Government and Politics in Western Europe*, 2, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mde, V. (2017). How the ANC electoral conference should work, *Mail & Guardian,* 8 November 2018. https://mg.co.za/article/2017-11-08-how-the-anc-electoral-conferenceshould-work (Accessed on 7 May 2020).

Michels, R. (1958). *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*. The Free Press: Glencoe, Illinois.

Michels, R. (1962). *Political Parties*: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy, New York: Free Press.

Moffat, C. (2020). Citizens tired of being played for a fool, *Mail & Guardian,* 8 October 2020. https://mg.co.za/opinion/2020-10-08-citizens-tired-of-being-played-for-a-fool/

Mohamed-Salih, M.A (ed). (2003). *African Political Parties: Evolution, Institutionalization and Governance*, Plato Press: London, 1-33.

Morgenthau R.S. (1964). *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Arica*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 336-341.

Motlanthe, K. (2007). *ANC Secretary-General's Report*. ANC National General Council.

Mulé, R. (1998). 'Financial uncertainties of party formation and consolidation in Britain, Germany and Italy: the early years in theoretical perspective', in: Burnell, P. and Ware, A. (eds.) *Funding Democratization*, Manchester University Press: Manchester, 47-72.

Netshitenzhe, J. (2012). 'Competing Identities of a National Liberation Movement and the Challenges of Incumbency', *ANC Today*, 12(23).

Onapajo, H. & Isike, C. (2017). The Decline of a Dominant African Political Party: The Case and Future of South Africa's African National Congress (ANC), *Politeia*, 36(2), 1-20.

Olver, C. (2018). Patronage and politics in a South African city: a case study on Nelson Mandela Bay, *Area Development and Policy*, 3, 1-18.

Organisational Report by ANC, 2007, 52nd National Conference, Polokwane, South African History Online. https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/organisational-report-anc-17-december2007-52nd-national-conference-polokwane. (Accessed on 23 April 2020).

Piper, L. & Anciano, F. (2015). Party over outsiders, centre over branch: How the ANC dominance works at the community level in South Africa, *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, 87(1), 72-94. (Accessed in August 2020).

Phala, R. (2011). *A Different Kind of ANC!*, South African History Online. https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/different-kind-anc-kgolane-rudolph-phala (Accessed on 26 August 2020).

Poplak, R. (2021). Ace Magashule, South Africa's next president?, *Daily Maverick*, 13 February 2021. https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-02-13-ace-magashule-southafricas-next-president/ (Accessed on 19 February 2021).

Potgieter-Gqubule, F. (2010). Through the eye of the needle revisited. A perspective for discussion, *Umrabulo*, 32, 1st Quarter.

Randall, V. (ed.) (1998). *Political Parties in the Third World*. Sage Publication: London.

Rantete, J. (1998). *The African National Congress and the Negotiated Settlement in South Africa*, Q. L. van Schaik: Pretoria, 6-17.

Reddy, T. (2010). ANC decline, social mobilization, and political society: Understanding South Africa's evolving political culture, *Politikon*, 37(2-3), 185-206.

Rwengabo, S. (2016). Nation Building in Africa: Lessons from Tanzania and South Sudan, *Mandela Institute for Development Studies (MINDS) Youth Dialogue*, Discussion Paper, 1-37.

Rossouw, M. (2012). *Mangaung: kings and kingmakers*, Cape Town: Kwela Books.

Salih, M.M.E. (ed), (2003). *African Political Parties*, London: Pluto Press.

Sartori, G. (2005). Party types, organisation and functions, *West European Politics*, 28(1), 5-32.

Sapa, (2012). Rise in ANC members in KZN a major boost for Zuma, *Mail and Guardian*, 30 September 2012. https://www.google.co.za/amp/s/mg.co.za/article/2012-09-30-rise-in-ancmembers-in-kzn-a-major-boost-for-zuma%3famp (Accessed on 18 September 2020).

Scarrow, S. (1996). *Parties and Their Members: Organizing for victory in Britain and Germany*, Oxford University Press: Oxford. 1-296.

Scarrow, S. (2000). 'Parties without members? Party organization in a changing electoral environment' in R. Dalton and M. Wattenberg (eds), *Parties without Partisans*: Political change in advanced industrial democracies, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 79-101.

Severin, M. & Aycard, P. (2006). Who is governing the 'new' South Africa: elites, networks and governing styles (1985-2003), In A.W. Kabwe-Segatti, N.Pejout & P. Guillaume, (eds), *Ten years of democratic South Africa: Transition accomplished*, Johannesburg: IFAS, 13-38

Seekings, J. (2000). *The UDF: A history of the United Democratic Front in South Africa, 19831991*, Oxford: James Currey.

Smith, B.C. (2009). Political Parties and Party Systems. In his *Understanding Third World politics: Theories of Political Change and Development*, Indiana University Press: Bloomington, Indiana, 108-129.

Southall, R. (2009). Understanding the 'Zuma tsunami', *Review of African Political Economy*, 36(121), 317-333.

Southall, R. (2010). Public Participation: The Political Challenge in Southern Africa, *Journal of African Elections*, 9(1), 1-15.

Sikwebu, D. (2007), 'COSATU and the ANC National Conference: can Limpopo be another Morogoro?', *South African Labour Bulletin*, 31, (4), pp. 42–45.

Suttner, R. (2003). Culture(s) of the African National Congress of South Africa: Imprint of Exile Experiences, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 21(2), 302-320.

Suttner, R. (2007). African National Congress (ANC): Attainment of power, post liberation phases and current crisis, *Historia*, 52(2), 1-46.

Suttner, R. (2008). *The ANC Underground*, New York and London: Lynn Rienner.

Suttner, R. (2012). The African National Congress centenary: a long and difficult journey, *International Affairs*, 88(4), 719-738.

Tandwa, L. (2017). ANC NEC a product of branch manipulation, Trevor Manuel, *News24*, 10 November 2017. https://www.google.co.za/amp/s/www.news24.com/amp/news24/southafrica/news/anc-nec-aproduct-of-branch-manipulation-trevor-manuel-20171110. (Accessed on February 20, 2021).

Tordoff, W. (1993). Political Parties; and the Military. In his *Government and Politics in Africa*, London: MacMillan, 91-120.

Twala, C. (2014). 'The Leadership Contest and the Results of the 53rd African National Congress's (ANC's) National Elective Conference in Mangaung (Bloemfontein), 16-20 December 2012 Democracy Unfolding?' *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(3), 591598.

Van Biezen, I. (2003). *Political Parties in New Democracies: Party Organization in Southern and East-Central Europe*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Van Biezen, I. & Kopecky, P. (2007). The State and the Parties: Public Funding, Public Regulation and Rent-Seeking in Contemporary Democracies, *Party Politics*, 13(2), 235-254.

Vhumbunu, C. H. & Akinduro, O. (eds), (2020). *Follow the Money*: A Research Report on Party and Campaign Finance in South Africa's 2019 Elections, EISA.

Wallerstein, I. (1966). 'The decline of the Party in Single-Party African States', in Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner (eds), *Political Parties and Political Development*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 201-214.

Walshe, P. (1970). *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa: The African National Congress, 1912-1952*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ware, A. (2002). 'Introduction – Parties under Electoral Competition', in A. Ware (ed.), *Political Parties: Electoral Change and Structural Response* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1987), 1–23, and S. Wolinetz, 'Beyond the Catch-all Party: Approaches to the Study of Parties and Party Organization in Contemporary Democracies', in R. Gunther, J. Montero and J. Linz (eds), Political Parties – Old Concepts and New Challenges, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 137–65.

Weber, M. (1946). *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, In H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds), New York: Oxford University Press.

Whittles, G. (2017). ANC membership: Anarchy on the rise, *Mail and Guardian,* 18 December 2017. https://mg.co.za/article/2017-12-18-anc-membership-anarchy-on-the-rise/ (Accessed on May 7, 2020).