



NEW AGENDA

SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY



COP26

Glasgow to welcome South Africa - the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases per unit of electricity generated

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To fix our rivers we must fix our municipalities

Tribute to Kenneth Kaunda by Cde James Ngculu

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To fix our climate we must fix the public service

In the run-up to COP26, this issue of *New Agenda* leads with a feature on climate change; we all know global warming will have a dire impact on our planet in the not very far off future, and already we are concerned that its effects will make it more difficult for South Africa to deal with poverty.

Global warming multiplies existing problems, whatever these may be. It has direct effects – more intense droughts, wildfires, floods, habitat loss, weakened ecosystems. And it has indirect effects as countries battle internally to implement commitments to cut emissions of harmful greenhouse gases.

Business, unions and civil society organisations along with citizens will bear the main burdens of implementation and suffer the effects where mitigation efforts are ineffective. However, the government role is central – resolving disagreements, giving direction, correcting unjust imbalances, responding to disasters.

For this we need a public service that does more than spend salaries. The theme for this edition of *New Agenda* is carried by four articles that look at how to build a more capable and effective public service. There is a strong link between our articles on the public service and our cover feature on climate and ecosystem challenges. To tackle the latter we will require changes in the former.

An institution like the public service is based on people and on principles. For it to be effective we need capable people, who – on the one hand – take political direction and assist government to realise their political promises and – on the other hand – implement policy strictly within the framework of law, the Constitution and court judgments.

These themes are illustrated in the conversation between Alan Hirsch and Rob Adam, which discusses lessons from state-sponsored high-tech infrastructure projects. From their experience as high-level senior public servants the authors know that to succeed such projects need complementarity and trust between ministers and high-ranking civil servants in the departments.

Mzukiso Qobo and Busani Ngcaweni discuss the professionalisation of the public service. Professionalism means officials who are ethical, capable and properly qualified. They are not appointed through nepotism or cronyism. They recognise and respect the distinction between politics and administration. The authors argue for a model where top civil servants are appointed on the basis of ‘a meritocratic selection process rather than the prevailing cadre deployment system that makes them beholden to politicians or political factions’.

Firoz Khan and Willan Adonis argue for a public administration curriculum for our universities that is grounded in responding to the needs of the poor, hungry and homeless. They are highly critical of neoliberalism and the colonial foundations of public policy schools, which reinforce ‘exclusion, erasure and denialism’.

Ian Palmer and Brendon van Niekerk present an assessment of the long-term failure of government to manage wastewater (sewerage). The article highlights the need for technical capacity in municipalities and for politicians to take heed of technical advice.

All the contributions suggest that rebuilding our state institutions must be

the first step if government is to succeed with its plan to develop infrastructure – and implement the proposals South Africa will be taking to COP26.

Finally, it is necessary to mention the violence in Gauteng and KZN that followed the imprisonment of former President Zuma. It was fuelled from many sources, including the impacts of the tough Covid-19 lockdowns and the internecine battles within the ruling party. South Africa is still trying to make sense of what happened. *New Agenda* encourages this debate and calls for readers to submit their views for discussion. We offer three quotes as a start to what will probably be an ongoing issue for future editions:

‘The riots were nothing less than a violent attempt by a pro-corruption faction within the ruling African National Congress (ANC) to overthrow the democratic order.’

The Economist, 24 July

‘The hot air we have been subjected to – about insurrection, counterrevolution and plotting – is a symptom of our disorientation ... But we do not have evidence of “an insurrection”, still less of any “ultimate objective”, such as the attempted overthrow of democracy or removal of the president. Imitation and opportunism drove the widespread looting ...’

Anthony Butler, *Business Day*, 2 August

‘Don’t let us forget that the causes of human actions are usually immeasurably more complex and varied than our subsequent explanations of them.’ Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*



SA's reliance on coal remains major hurdle to 'just transition'

By Martin Nicol

Dr Nicol is the guest editor of the Institute for African Alternative's flagship magazine, *New Agenda*, and the senior researcher on IFAA's Checks and Balances Project. With a background in trade unionism and political activism, he retired from the research unit of the South African Parliament in 2019.

South Africa will go to COP26 in November with new targets for reducing its emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. But it is going to be very difficult to achieve these goals – even as they are criticised by environmental groups for being inadequate. A 'just transition' to a zero-carbon world is the broadly accepted aim: but as MARTIN NICOL makes clear, its elusiveness is right up there with unemployment, poverty, corruption, inequality and gender-based violence.

South Africa is one of the world's biggest per capita greenhouse gas emitters.¹ Greenhouse gases are released by all sorts of human activity, but particularly when beneficiating coal – turning it into liquid fuel or gas (as at Sasol) or converting it into electrical energy (as at Eskom).

Increased greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere accelerate climate change – the process in which world temperatures rise and lead a domino effect as glaciers and icecaps melt faster, and climate disasters such as droughts, heat waves, floods, cyclones, hurricanes, typhoons and tornadoes become more frequent and more intense.²

In 2015, South Africa joined many other nations in signing 'the Paris Agreement', which was premised on the notion that if all countries work together to cut greenhouse gas emissions, they can reduce the risks and impacts of climate change. The air and the oceans are shared by everyone, so all countries need to be involved. The Paris Agreement required all countries to make commitments on how they would monitor and manage their greenhouse gas emissions. The long-term temperature goal is to keep the increase in global average temperature to below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C.

However, these commitments made in Paris, according to climate scientists, were not large or swift enough to reach either of these targets. In 2021, the signatories are meeting in Glasgow,

Scotland in November to make new emission commitments – delayed a year because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The hope is that these new measures will be better tailored to make the Paris temperature goals viable.

Countries are taking a range of steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Some countries (including South Africa) favour a 'carbon tax' to increase the cost of emitting greenhouse gases and to encourage businesses to emit less by increasing efficiency or shifting to new technologies – like solar or wind power. South Africa has also taken direct action to regulate emissions from electricity generation and from Sasol – although the government has been notably lax in enforcing legislated emission standards. Consumers are encouraged to reduce our 'carbon footprint' by reducing unnecessary air and car journeys and recycling.

South Africa has been fully involved in world research and discussions on the climate for many years. The country 'punches above its weight' in contributing to scientific investigations on climate change. In 2021, Parliament is scheduled to pass a 'climate change act' to bring all South Africa's climate interventions under one umbrella. ➤

“

[While] a sharp reduction in coal-fired electricity generation would be the most efficient way for the world to cut carbon emissions ... South Africa ... relies on coal overwhelmingly for its electrical power.

Unfortunately, South Africa also punches far above its weight as one of the world's biggest per capita greenhouse gas emitters. The main reason for this is our heavy reliance on coal and oil for our energy needs, and on industries that are particularly energy intensive, such as mining, smelting, cement and petro-chemicals. The entire modern economic history of South Africa has been built on energy from fossil fuels.

WE DESIGNED OUR ECONOMY AROUND COAL BECAUSE WE HAVE LOTS OF IT

South Africa has huge reserves of coal – enough for over 100 years – and its energy decisions in the past have been based on using this resource. It is cheap (for the user) and easily available.³ Coal underpins thousands of jobs. Mines support communities all over the country – particularly in Mpumalanga.

South Africa has some of the biggest coal-fired power stations in the world. Eskom became a world leader in inventing ways to burn low-grade coal



in power stations. Eskom even financed the coal mines – which are privately owned. The low-grade coal went to Eskom – and the mines exported better quality coal, earning huge profits for their owners.

It is only in the last decade that renewable energy technologies – using solar and wind power – have become cheaper than coal (Roser, 2020). But coal-fired power stations last for 40 years or more, and it takes that long to recover their capital costs. Switching takes time and costs money.

It is not surprising that unions whose members are employed in the fossil fuel sector have been quiet or expressed scepticism about the urgency of action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Government's commitment to a 'just transition' and to support for 'green jobs' is hard to see. After 1994, when the gold industry declined, shedding more than half its workers and 200,000 jobs by 2004, government did not lift a finger to assist the stricken workers and abandoned communities.

The 90,000 miners and 60,000 or so other workers directly employed in the

coal value chain today (Montmasson-Clair & Hermanus, 2021) can be excused for opposing the carbon tax and trying to hold on to fossil fuel industries for as long as they can. But the writing is on the wall. The major mining companies are aggressively divesting from coal mining. Eskom is planning to decommission coal-fired power stations at a new, faster rate. The Integrated Resource Plan (Department of Energy, 2019) sees electrical energy from coal falling by over two-thirds between 2030 and 2050.⁴

Unions would be better advised to insist on training for their members in new jobs in the sustainable energy sector – and to assist government to define the parameters of a just transition.

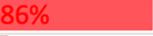
We now face a situation where experts agree that 'The major driver of global warming is the emissions of CO₂ from the burning of fossil fuels' (Nordhaus 2013). A total of 96% of South Africa's primary energy needs are met by burning fossil fuels, compared with 85% for the world as a whole:

**Primary energy: Consumption by fuel***

	South Africa 2019			Total World 2019		
	Exajoules	% shares		Exajoules	% shares	
Oil	1.18	22%		193.03	33%	
Natural gas	0.15	3%		141.45	24%	
Coal	3.81	71%		157.86	27%	
Nuclear	0.13	2%		24.92	4%	
Hydroelectricity	0.01	0.2%		37.66	6%	
Renewables	0.12	2%		28.98	5%	
Total	5.40	100%	SA % of energy consumption 0.92%	583.90	100%	

* Primary energy comprises commercially traded fuels, including modern renewables used to generate electricity (BP, 2020).

Electricity generation by fuel 2019

Terawatt-hours	South-Africa	% shares		Total World	% shares	
Oil	1.2	0.5%		825.3	3.1%	
Natural gas	1.9	1%		6,297.9	23%	
Coal	217.3	86%		9,824.1	36%	
Nuclear energy	14.2	6%		2,796.0	10%	
Hydroelectricity	0.8	0.3%		4,222.2	16%	
Renewables	12.6	5%		2,805.5	10%	
Other	4.6	2%		233.6	1%	
Total	252.6	100%		27,004.7	100%	

Studies suggest that a sharp reduction in coal-fired electricity generation would be the most efficient way for the world to cut carbon emissions (Krugman, 2013). This is bad news for South Africa which relies on coal overwhelmingly for its electrical power.

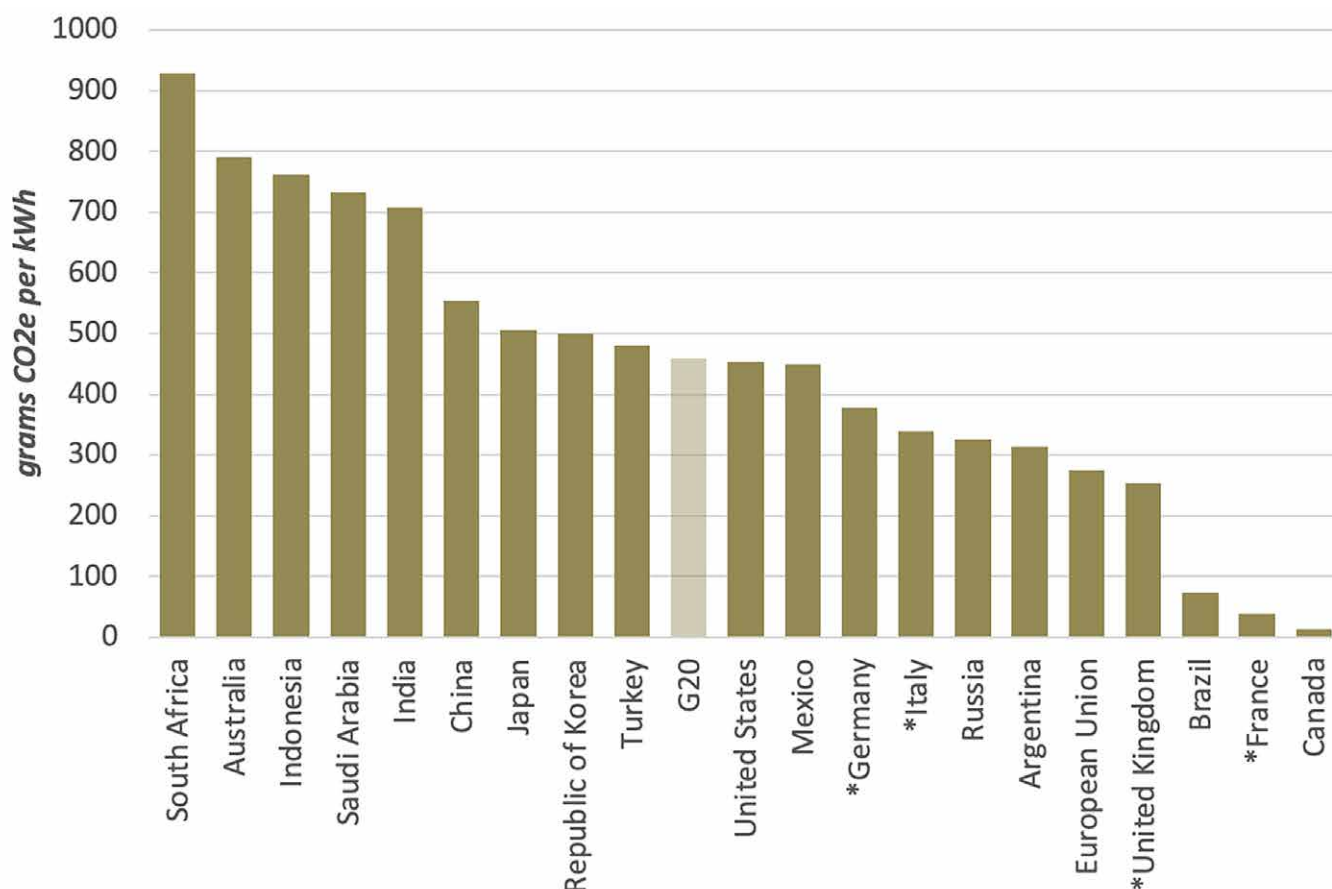
‘Other’ includes sources not specified elsewhere eg pumped hydro, non-renewable waste and statistical discrepancies (which can be positive or negative) (BP, 2020).

UNDERSTANDING HOW MUCH GREENHOUSE GAS WE EMIT

South Africa is not the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases – by a very long way. That privilege rests with the USA and China. But South Africa is an outlier when it comes to the amount of greenhouse gases emitted per unit of electricity produced. This is measured in kilowatt hours (kWh) and Eskom’s

power stations in 2018 emitted 923 grams of CO₂ for every kWh generated. This is down from over a kilogram in 2009 (Carbon Footprint, 2020: 3; SACRM, 2011). Comparable figures were half a kilogram in the USA and China – both of which use a mix of primary energy – and much less than 100g per kWh in Brazil and France, which rely mainly on hydro and nuclear power respectively. ➤➤

EMISSION INTENSITY GRAMS OF CARBON DIOXIDE EQUIVALENT PER KILOWATT HOUR



* Data is for 2019, not 2018.

Source: Climate Transparency (2019:29); Carbon Footprint (2020)

If you top up your City of Cape Town electricity meter with R600, that buys you 250 kWh. Eskom generates this power by emitting 232kg of CO₂. That is the weight of 12 twenty-litre water containers! And you probably need to buy this amount of electricity many times each year.

South Africa emits 10 to 11 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per person per year. This compares with a global average of about 6.5 tons per person per year – although the range is wide, from over 20 tons in the US, Russia and Australia to one or two in India and China.⁵

One of the most efficient ways for the world to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is to stop using coal

to generate electricity. But this is one thing South Africa has got used to doing. Heading towards Glasgow, South Africa will re-set its commitments for reducing carbon emissions. It has to do this, and to set tougher goals, in terms of the Paris Agreement, but this is like an alcoholic signing another pledge to drink less.

In 2016, South Africa said by 2025 and 2030 its emissions would be in the range of 398-614 megatons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MtCO₂e) per year (Climate Action Tracker, 2021). It is hard to visualize this. A megaton is 1,000,000 tons, the weight of more than 750 Toyota Corollas.

In 2015, South Africa's CO₂ emissions were 550 MtCO₂e for the whole year – in

2020 it was probably a little less, because of Covid.

Carbon dioxide is a gas. It is transparent and odourless. How on earth do you weigh it? When CO₂ is cooled below minus 78.5°C, it freezes solid. Solid CO₂ – called 'dry ice' – is used in the catering industry to chill food. You can see it in the tubs on ice cream sellers' bicycles. It is also used in entertainment, to create a swirling spooky fog. If you throw dry ice in a river, it 'explodes' darting around, releasing CO₂ until it dissolves. According to Wikipedia, a cubic meter of dry ice weighs 1,562kg.

So, if you could freeze South Africa's greenhouse gas emissions in 2015 into solid dry ice, it would take up a volume



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The entire modern economic history of South Africa has been built on energy from fossil fuels.



of 352 million cubic meters. If you divided this into one cubic metre blocks and laid these next to one another in a row, they would stretch over the horizon and around the world almost nine times although the dry ice would certainly have disappeared into thin air each time you came to the original starting point!

Alternatively, you could pile the cubic blocks of dry ice into four-sided pyramids the size of the Great Pyramid of Cheops in Egypt, 138m in height, built on a base 230m by 230m. South Africa's CO₂ emissions for 2015, properly frozen, would yield 144 of these pyramids. Quite a wonder of the world! These illustrations show that South Africa produces a lot of greenhouse gases. But the amounts and their impacts are hard to comprehend.

Another thought experiment beckons: What if each South African took charge of the 10 tons or so CO₂ e emitted 'on their behalf' during a year (by all households and all industry)? This is 27kg per day, which would be

a block of dry ice the dimensions of a CD case (14 by 12.5cm), but in a short tower 1m high. You could probably fit this, super cold and foggy, under your kitchen sink. Imagine this multiplied by 365 for each day of the year and the population of some 59 million.

Now consider that in addition to electricity, transport releases CO₂. If you drive a car that uses seven litres of petrol per 100km – perhaps a Toyota Corolla – and you drive, say, 100km, the CO₂ emissions will weigh about 16.8kg.

BURNING FOSSIL FUELS EMITS MORE THAN THEIR OWN WEIGHT OF CO₂

The arresting fact here is that seven litres of petrol weigh about 5kg. Yet the CO₂ e emitted weighs over three times more – 16.8kg in this example. This is because petrol is made up of hydrogen (the lightest element) bonded with carbon (atomic weight 12). When the fuel is burned in the engine, the result is (mainly) water (H₂O) and carbon dioxide (CO₂). The oxygen (atomic weight 16), from the atmosphere, is many times heavier than hydrogen. Wikipedia summarises: '1kg of fuel reacts with 3.51kg of oxygen to produce 3.09kg of carbon dioxide and 1.42kg of water.'⁶

The same principle applies with coal: The carbon content of coal varies, but in 2009, Eskom consumed 122.7 Mt of coal and emitted 225.5 Mt CO₂ e.⁷ Other fossil fuels – like natural gas and even oil and jet fuel – emit less CO₂ e than coal when consumed, because of their particular chemical composition (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2016).

DECIDING HOW MUCH TO CUT OUR GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

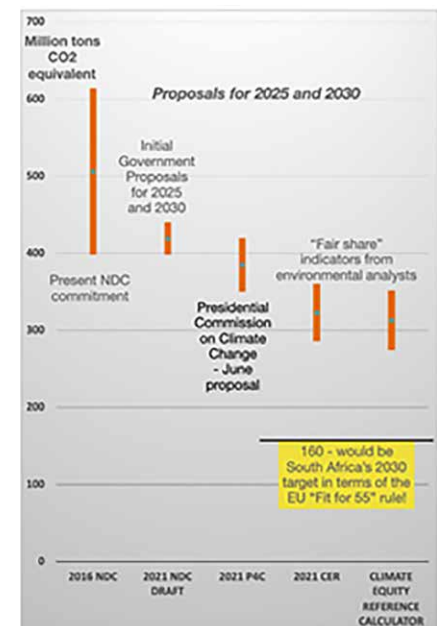
In April 2021, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries & Environment (DEFF) issued its draft of South Africa's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) for COP26 for comment. The NDC is a self-imposed emissions reduction target set by countries under

the Paris Agreement on climate change. DEFF proposed a target range of 398-440 MtCO₂ e by 2030 (DEFF, 2021b). Countries must revise their previous targets in the lead-up to COP26, due to be held in the UK in November 2021 (see *The Economist*, 2021a).

Following the June 2021 report of the Presidential Climate Change Coordinating Commission (P4C) government has committed to slightly lower NDC bounds, between 350-420 megatons (Loser, 2021; Paton 2021b).

Environmental groups have said this is still too high. The Centre for Environmental Rights (CER) stated that South Africa's fair share of emissions reduction (to meet the global objective of limiting global warming to 1.5°C) was in the range of 286-360 MtCO₂ e by 2030 (*Business Day*, 2021; Paton, 2021a and b). The climate equity reference calculator suggested a still lower range of 274-352 MtCO₂ e (Loser, 2021).

SOUTH AFRICA'S NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTION (NDC) TARGET RANGES FOR GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS PER YEAR



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South Africa's main excuse for staying with coal – its 'cheapness' – has been overtaken by more affordable technology that converts solar power and wind energy into electricity.

President Cyril Ramaphosa says

As a developing economy, we have taken some ambitious and progressive national actions to contribute our best effort to the global cause of addressing climate change under the auspices of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). African countries are among the leaders in ambition, despite their development challenges and carrying the least responsibility for causing climate change ... It is important that the right of developing economies to policy space and sufficient time to achieve a just transition be respected. We should be careful not to advocate one-size-fits-all approaches to disinvestment from fossil fuels or impose non-tariff barriers or discriminatory taxes that would unfairly harm developing economies (Ramaphosa, 2021).

CARBON TARIFF PRESSURE FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU)

The EU, a region which has been able to reduce its reliance on coal quite substantially, is now discussing the imposition of tariffs on goods such as steel and aluminium that are exported by countries where firms may face no carbon price, or one that is lower than Europe's (*The Economist*, 2021b).

The future threat – widely spoken of – is for rich countries to impose 'climate duties' on a much wider range of items to protect their producers – and disadvantage those in developing economies. South Africa, with its world-beating reliance on coal for electrical energy is particularly vulnerable to being hit by such tariffs. They will increase the prices of South African goods in foreign markets and reduce demand for them.

The EU's proposed 'Fit for 55' climate target is for carbon emissions in 2030 to be 55% below their 1990 level. For South Africa, this would mean total emissions of below 160 Mt CO₂e per year.⁸

SOLAR AND WIND ARE CHEAPER – SO WHY NOT MOVE FROM TROUBLESOME COAL?

South Africa's initial, slow responses to threats related to climate change were to try and improve the efficiency of coal-fired power stations, peddling the myth of 'clean coal' and promoting research on 'carbon sequestration' (where carbon dioxide is buried in deep mines). Environmental laws introduced stiff penalties and regulations on the principle 'the polluter must pay'. But the major polluters, Eskom, Sasol and metal producers, either got exemptions or failed to obey the new rules.

In the 1990s and 2000s, coal was still cheaper than the new renewable technologies for solar and wind generation – so long as externalities were not factored in. Other governments chose to subsidise

renewables to encourage companies, farms and households to move off the carbon energy treadmill. South Africa eventually decided to introduce a carbon tax – a good start – but with wide exemptions and reviewable lead times, so tax will not be paid on carbon emissions until after 2022.

But the technologies have changed and costs of solar and wind generation plants have plummeted. In 2020, Max Roser of the scientific online journal, *Our World in Data*, summarised the remarkable declines in the prices of renewable technologies over the last decade. (Single figures are just indicative. Many variables are used to calculate the present cost of a power station over its working life.)

'Electricity from utility-scale solar photovoltaics cost \$359 per MWh in 2009' (Roser, 2020). Within a single decade the price declined by 89% to \$40 per MWh in 2019. The price of onshore wind electricity cost \$135 per MWh in 2009. The price declined by 60% to \$41 per MWh in 2019. Meanwhile, 'the global price of electricity from new coal (levelized costs of energy LCOE) declined from \$111 to \$109. While solar got 89% cheaper and wind 70%, the price of electricity from coal declined by merely 2%' (Roser, 2020).

South Africa's main excuse for staying with coal – its 'cheapness' – has been overtaken by more affordable technology that converts solar power and wind energy into electricity. A hot, sunny country with many windy areas, South Africa has access to an abundance of non-coal options for generating electricity. The way is now open to reduce reliance on fossil fuels for electricity.

Electricity supply from solar and wind will always be intermittent, so there will continue to be a role for coal power generation in the future – and (even more costly) nuclear power. Imperatives here will lessen as batteries and other power storage technologies improve.



SOUTH AFRICA'S SLOW STEPS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

1997: South Africa joined the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change** (UNFCCC) or the Kyoto Protocol and established a National Climate Change Committee (DEFF, 2021a).

2005: The Kyoto Protocol, the UNFCCC's first accord, came into force. South Africa participated, but was not bound to any targets by the Kyoto Protocol. Nor was China. USA and Canada soon withdrew, citing unfairness.

2010: South Africa pledged to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 34% by 2020 and 42% below the business as usual (BAU) emission trajectory by 2025 (DEFF, 2021a).

2011: The National Climate Change Response Policy (NCCRP) was approved by the Cabinet, and the national greenhouse gas emissions trajectory range Peak, Plateau and Decline (PPD) was defined.

2013: The concept of '**Nationally Determined Contributions**' (NDCs) was first introduced at COP19 in Warsaw. In 2014 it was agreed all countries, except the poorest, were obliged to make plans to reduce their emissions, though the mechanisms (such as increased use of renewable energy or carbon sequestration) and the speed with which they did so could vary (*The Economist*, 2021).

2015: South Africa submitted its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) for COP21, making clear that it was 'currently heavily dependent on coal ... as well as being reliant on a significant proportion of its liquid fuels being generated from coal' (UNFCCC, 2015).

2015: The Paris Agreement, negotiated at COP21, committed the world to a common goal: keeping the world's average temperature to 'well below' 2°C above pre-industrial levels and 'pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C' (*The Economist*, 2021).

2016: The Paris Agreement was ratified by South Africa, the National Framework for Climate Services (NFCS) was finalised, while the Climate Change Bill was drafted (DEFF, 2021a). South Africa said by 2025 and 2030 its emissions would be in the range 398-614 MtCO₂e (Climate Action Tracker, 2021).

2017: President Trump removes USA from the Paris Agreement.

Oct 2018: The Presidential Jobs Summit agreed that a statutory body be formed to coordinate the just transition towards a low-carbon, inclusive, climate change resilient economy and society in South Africa (Presidency, 2020). This body will exist in terms of the Climate Change Bill, which is to be tabled in Parliament in 2021. A draft bill was published for comment in 2018 (PMG, 2021; DEFF, 2021a).

Sept 2019: President Ramaphosa promised South

Africa's participation in ensuring a just transition at the United Nations Secretary-General's Climate Summit. He stated that 'Meeting these commitments will be very challenging for South Africa'.

Oct 2019: The 'development of a just transition plan' was a key decision reflected in the new Integrated Resource Plan, 2019 (Department of Energy, 2019).

2020: The National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (NCCAS) was approved by Cabinet (DEFF, 2021b).

9 Sep 2020: The **Presidential Commission was established** to co-ordinate the country's transition to a low-carbon economy and build consensus among social partners for a 'just transition'. It is chaired by President Ramaphosa with former cabinet minister Valli Moosa as deputy (Paton, 2021a). Instruments of the commission for informing policy and directing action include: the National Employment Vulnerability Assessment (NEVA) and Sector Job Resilience Plans (SJRP), both of which involve key stakeholders.

Dec 2020: President Ramaphosa appointed the initial 22 members of the inaugural Presidential Climate Change Coordinating Commission (P4C), which is chaired by the President. The terms of reference specifies its tasks, including advising on South Africa's climate change response (Presidency, 2020). Its first meeting was in February 2021 (DEFF, 2021a).

2021: President Biden returns USA to the Paris Agreement.

30 Apr 2021: A draft of South Africa's NDC for COP26 was issued for comment by DEFF. This proposed a target range of 398-440 megatons of carbon dioxide equivalent by 2030 (DEFF, 2021b).

May 2021: The International Energy Agency, an intergovernmental forecaster, called for an immediate halt to all new oil and gas exploration projects and an unprecedented switch to renewable energy. This was part of a new 'roadmap' detailing the policies and innovations that countries would have to pursue for the world to reach 'net zero' carbon dioxide emissions by 2050. This is a stark challenge to South Africa, which is rolling out a range of oil and gas exploration projects at present (*The Economist Espresso*, 19 May 2021).

Sep 2021: South Africa submitted an updated NDC which reduced the 2030 target range to between 350 and 420 megatons. This followed the recommendations of the majority of the P4C. The Executive Director of the Commission is Dr Crispian Olver (RSA 2021; Paton, 2021a and b).

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ENDNOTES

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Climate incrementalism threatens to derail COP26 negotiations

By Thandile Chinyavanhu

THANDILE CHINYAVANHU is an environmental and social activist. She is a climate and energy campaigner for Greenpeace Africa. She writes about public health, energy access, climate mitigation and the gendered impact of climate change. She aspires to amplify the message of the climate emergency and influence state actors to prioritise climate and social justice in economic redress and development.

Greenpeace Africa urges the government to take more ambitious targets to COP26 and warns the proposed nationally determined contributions (NDCs) may give the impression that it is not approaching this negotiation with meaningful and genuine intentions to advance climate action and is acting in bad faith.

The reality of our changing climate can no longer be ignored: Germany, China and the United Kingdom have reported unprecedented rainfall; temperatures in North Africa and Turkey have surged to 50°C; and Cyclones Eloise and Ana pillaged Sub-Saharan Africa and Fiji, respectively. As the repercussions

of a 1.2°C world become apparent, the globe has come to a collective realisation that climate change is no longer imminent but violently unfurling before our eyes. As our global leaders prepare to converge at the upcoming Climate Change Conference (COP26) to deliberate their commitments to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, the critical question is: will they set their political agendas aside, recognise the urgency of the climate crisis, and propose decisive action to avert a climate calamity?

A key point of departure for COP26 remains the nationally determined contributions (NDCs) of the 195 signatories of the Paris Agreement. Over the past year, the European Union, the United States and China have received criticism for their updated NDCs, which are relatively weak considering their financial and institutional capacity to commit to higher goals. Similarly, South Africa's proposed NDCs are unambitious and misaligned to what is required by science, the Paris Agreement or what

is considered to be our 'fair share' range. The absence of meaningful commitments from all parties would render the negotiation process futile. A failure from South Africa to put forward more ambitious targets may give the impression that it is not approaching this negotiation with meaningful and genuine intentions to advance climate action and is acting in bad faith.

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE) released the proposed NDCs in March 2021 for public consultation. Scientists and civil society agreed that while the proposed updates are an improvement from the 2015 commitments, they fell significantly short of what is required by science to achieve the target of mitigating an overshoot of the 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Instead, the proposed NDCs are more in line with a 2.6°C world.

The NDCs, which were accepted in September 2021, proposed reducing the upper boundary of emissions from 614Mt CO₂ eq to 440Mt of CO₂ eq by 2030, amounting to a 28% reduction ➤



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The Greenpeace Africa analysis revealed that with the proposed Nationally Determined Contributions, South Africa will not achieve net zero by 2050.

in emissions. A series of mitigation measures have been identified as critical pillars for implementing the updated NDCs, among them the recently implemented Carbon Tax, the 2019 Integrated Resource Plan (IRP), the Green Transport Strategy and enhanced energy efficiency programmes. Climate Action Tracker’s analysis of the updated NDCs revealed that the adjustments made would shift South Africa from its current rating of ‘Highly insufficient’ to ‘Insufficient’, which remains woefully inadequate.

Greenpeace Africa was among the civil society organisations that made a submission to the DFFE, requesting that they recognise the urgency of the climate crisis and consider the implementation of more robust commitments in line with the Paris Agreement South Africa signed up to, for the significant benefit of South African society, which is increasingly

experiencing the impact of extreme weather events, as detailed in the Greenpeace Africa report ‘Weathering the Storm: Extreme Weather Events in Africa’ released in 2020.

In our submission to DFFE, Greenpeace Africa insisted that the department adopt more ambitious targets, and provided scientific analysis to support our recommendations. Our analysis revealed that with the proposed NDCs, South Africa will not achieve net zero by 2050 as per the South African Low Emission 3 Development Strategy and recommended that DFFE adjust the proposed mitigation targets from the upper boundary of 440Mt CO₂ to 288 Mt CO₂ by 2030, to attain a zero-carbon economy by 2050. This target is aligned with the Paris Agreement and what is required by science. Further, an ambitious target such as this would put South Africa’s commitments in line with our peers and position us



as leaders in climate action on the continent. Greenpeace Africa was particularly concerned that of the nearly R37.5 billion in international investment required by 2030 for the South African government to support climate adaptation, stipulated in the report, the DFFE has failed to express what South Africa will commit in its capacity to mitigation and adaptation costs.

Greenpeace Africa implored the DFFE to recognise the potential of renewable energy to slash emissions. Our analysis revealed that once implemented, the IRP has the potential to reduce the country's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 84.6 Mt CO₂ eq annually. Among the mitigation measures proposed by the DFFE, the IRP is the most significant contributor to emission reduction; this is attributed to its renewable energy components. It is pivotal that South Africa drastically increases its uptake of renewable energy to further exploit emission reductions. South Africa has not even begun to exhaust its renewable energy potential, and DFFE needs to help in championing its deployment.

The body established to advise the presidency on a just transition towards a low-carbon, inclusive, climate-change-resilient economy and society, known as the Presidential Climate Change Co-ordinating Commission (P4C), submitted a response to the updated NDCs in June, which were accepted

by the President in September 2021. The commission is made up of key stakeholders across business, civil society, academia and labour. It was evident from the report that it was a challenge to balance these interests. What emerged was a document that resembled DFFE's proposed emission reduction range. Understandably, this is a weaker recommendation than what civil society organisations had put forward in their submissions on the updated NDC. It was indeed a challenging feat to put opposing interest groups to work together on a recommendation for the NDCs, and what has emerged is representative of that resistance.

Much was left to be desired as three commissioners expressed a desire to commit to demanding more ambitious targets than those put forward by the commission. The recommendation still falls short of what is required by science (including proposals made in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC] reports). While civil society has successfully advocated for a reduction in the lower boundary from 398 Mt CO₂ to 350 Mt CO₂, the margin has not changed much for the upper boundary, which has shifted from 440Mt CO₂ to 420Mt CO₂ eq. This recommendation would still allow for the fossil fuel industry to thrive unabated, locking South Africa into a

high-emissions trajectory.

Greenpeace Africa anticipated that the DFFE would apply the P4C recommendation as South Africa's final NDC commitment in October 2021, ahead of COP26. This recommendation accommodates carbon majors to operate under a business as usual scenario while appeasing civil society's demand to lower the emissions boundary. For these negotiations to be successful, all actors must prioritise trust and reciprocity for improved coordination. It is essential that South Africa demonstrates that it is acting in good faith and demands the same from our co-signatories. In the absence of this trust, negotiations will reach an impasse, and we are likely to see bad faith actors lean on tactics such as dragging out the negotiation process, expending energy on unrelated issues and dwelling on constraints that they claim limit their ability to comply with the demands of the deal.

The government continues to delay climate action that could potentially mitigate irreversible climate change caused by anthropogenic activities. This is demonstrated by our government's continued support of carbon majors such as Sasol, which has admitted that its Secunda plant is the largest single-source coal combustion driven emitter in the world. In addition to this, the frequency of fossil fuels bills is indicative of South Africa's continued ➤

addiction to fossil fuels.

The Gas Amendment Bill was released on 29 April 2021, and the Upstream Petroleum Development Bill was released on 1 July 2021. These Bills have been in the pipeline for an extensive period. If passed, they will allow for South Africa to accelerate petroleum exploration and production, which could potentially undermine efforts to mitigate climate change. While the social licence of coal is waning in South Africa, shifting to another heavy emission resource ie gas, which the fossil fuel industry falsely promotes as a renewable energy source, is not a solution and will undoubtedly lock us into a high-emissions trajectory.

CLIMATE CHANGE BILL

South Africa cannot in good conscience approach the negotiation table without a ratified climate change Bill, a crucial piece of legislation to enable the mechanisms necessary to achieve deep emission reductions. The proposed climate change Bill would make provision for the framework of a coordinated response to climate change from all spheres of government and enforce the national GHG emissions trajectory through carbon budget programmes and sectoral emission targets (SET). The ratification of this Bill is a definite step to addressing the climate crisis in South Africa through codification in legislation. This is a clear route to the declaration of addressing the climate emergency in real terms. Furthermore, this Bill could demonstrate South Africa's commitment to mitigating climate change. Failure to do so will not be a good show of South Africa's commitment or willingness to use its capacity to tackle climate change.

A CASE AGAINST CLIMATE INCREMENTALISM

The allegory that a frog placed in a pot of boiling water will instantly jump out, but if placed in tepid water that

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It is pivotal that South Africa drastically increases its uptake of renewable energy to further exploit emission reductions.

is gradually heated, the frog remains until its eventual death rings true in the case of how decision-makers approach climate action. Self-preservation is a logical pattern of thought and behaviour. However, the undue influence of the fossil fuel industry has corrupted our decision-makers through decades of climate change denial and millions spent in lobbying dollars. Decision-makers are misled into believing they can withstand the heat. Journalist Kate Aronoff argues in her book *Overheated: How Capitalism Broke the Climate and How We Fight Back* that the globe has shifted from outright climate change denial to a more sophisticated form of climate change denial, and that is actively delaying climate action while commitment is dwindling in comparison with the scale of the crisis, or our historical responsibility.

This is achieved by advocating for an incremental approach to climate action. Incrementalism can be a plausible approach to a variety of policy decisions. However, the government, and particularly South Africa, need to recognise that climate incrementalism is no longer a luxury we have. There is a lot at stake for South Africans as the impacts of climate change intensify. The World Health Organisation anticipates that between 2030 and 2050, climate

change will claim an additional 250,000 lives annually from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress. The Global South will be least prepared to respond. South Africa's ailing healthcare system and dilapidated infrastructure will not be able to withstand the inevitable extreme weather events. Unfortunately, South Africa's structural inequalities render us more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, similar to how patients with co-morbidities experience the coronavirus tenfold. South Africa will be forced to deal with a two-pronged disaster; on one end maladministration and the other our burning planet. Without a robust and effective administration, we will not have the resilience to adequately deal with climate calamity.

The sixth assessment report (AR6) by IPCC, which distilled over 14,000 individual climate studies to guide decision-makers on climate policy, was released in August 2021. The report revealed the climate crisis to be much worse than previously anticipated. The report incontrovertibly linked climate change to anthropogenic activity, further stating that the last decade has been the hottest within a period of 125,000 years, with the globe experiencing 1.1°C of warming.

The implications for southern Africa are dire, and we have already begun to see some of these take effect. South-eastern Africa will experience an increased frequency and intensity of precipitation and cyclones. In contrast, south-western Africa will experience a decrease in precipitation, more arid conditions and ecological drought, which is a concerning thought considering this region is home to the most botanically diverse flora in the world. The fynbos indigenous to South Africa, a source of national pride, could potentially be threatened by the changing climate.

Despite the grim portrait of the IPCC report, it is vital to keep in mind that the report is not a death knell



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... it is vital to keep in mind that the [IPCC] report is not a death knell for humanity, rather it is the bell that warns of a looming freight train coming down the tracks.

for humanity, rather it is the bell that warns of a looming freight train coming down the tracks. Now is not the time for climate fatalism, now is the time for climate action. If decision-makers can initiate an immediate end to GGEs, the global temperatures will stabilise within the decade. This report should signal the beginning of the end for the fossil fuel industry. However, the industry has continued to thrive over the past few years in the face of mounting evidence against its practices. Despite having access to information from the best minds in climate change, government officials have continuously failed to put forward science-aligned commitments.

South Africa continues to use our status as a coal-dependent economy with historical inequalities as a crutch for delaying strong climate ambitions when, in reality, this decision is not to serve the working class and poor but rather to benefit the minority economic elites that hold an overwhelming majority of South Africa's wealth. This approach allows for carbon majors to exhaust their resources and wring out fiscal returns before the social licence of fossil fuels has been wholly eroded. The tragedy is that the low-income mining communities that the government uses as a reason for delaying action will not

have an equitable share of what is left of the fossil fuel industries' returns. These communities will be left to shoulder the burden of climate shocks alone.

These negotiations have been ongoing for decades and cannot be delayed by bad faith actors any longer. South Africa's failure to act timeously has resulted in massive economic and social disasters in the past; one of these is the government's failure to heed the warning of South Africa's looming energy crisis. In 1998, then Minister of Minerals and Energy Penuell Maduna warned in the White Paper on the Energy Policy of South Africa that Eskom's generation capacity at the time would be fully utilised by 2007, stating 'although 2007 seems a long way off, long capacity expansion lead times required plans to be put in place in the mid-term so the needs of South Africa's growing economy can be met'. Former President Thabo Mbeki's response at the time was 'Not now, Later'.

We continue to reel from the repercussions of this decision more than a decade later. Again in 1990, warnings that the City of Cape Town's water resources would be depleted within 17 years were ignored, culminating in the devastating 'Day Zero' witnessed in 2017. South Africa has a history of ignoring or delaying taking action on expert advice and is doing the same with the climate crisis -- only now failure to meet mitigation targets will prove to be the difference between life and mass extinction. Let this warning ring loud and clear; our best odds of survival are linked to mitigating global warming to 1.5°C. At our current emission rate this carbon budget will be exhausted within the next five years, and no country has an excuse for delaying action.

South Africa's socio-economic position is underpinned by injustice and inequality; these issues stand to be further exacerbated by climate change. The government must recognise the social imperative that the Paris Agreement holds and embrace the

potential of a green economy not only in creating jobs but also in achieving improved public health outcomes. As extreme weather events increase in frequency and intensity, South Africans will be left in the lurch due to the government's failure to take decisive action to mitigate climate change.

For many South Africans, climate change is a foregone conclusion. They are reminded of this reality with every passing season yielding less than the year before, their livelihoods hanging in the balance. As food security diminishes, they are forced to make trade-offs between food on the table or heat for those increasingly cold winter nights, only to watch their possessions being swept away by flash floods, locking them into a cycle of poverty. Minister Barbara Creecy must recognise the woeful inadequacy of the updated NDCs and prioritise social justice ahead of profits. President Cyril Ramaphosa must engage in these negotiations in good faith and demonstrate a true intention to advance climate action for the significant benefit of South Africans. He must demand the same of our co-signatories. This process could truly be a definite step to mitigating climate change if all actors can approach negotiations, not with self-interest but with honesty, reciprocity and a collective understanding of the gravity of this moment.

The fate of South Africa's underprivileged communities hangs in the balance as the government dawdles on climate action. These communities face the daily discomfort of living in the shadows of polluting coal, and the climate impacts hit them in more ways than one, given their overall lack of access to resources to provide them resiliency. For the South African government to truly live up to its commitments of protecting its people and the environment on which they depend, bold action on climate change and good faith in the negotiations is by no means a desirable luxury, it is an absolute necessity. **NA**

A woman with curly hair and glasses is smiling while looking at her smartphone. The background is a soft-focus indoor setting with warm lighting.

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‘Make sure you pour the concrete and get something on the ground’

— and other critical success factors in high-tech infrastructure projects

ROB ADAM is a distinguished theoretical nuclear physicist. He is also a veteran of the liberation struggle, who spent 10 year in prison for ANC activities. After 1994, he became a leading civil servant and manager of key developmental and scientific projects. He is now the managing director of the South African Radio Astronomy Observatory, which includes the African Square Kilometre Array (SKA) radio-telescope. Professor ALAN HIRSCH, also a long-term senior civil servant, is the founding director of the Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance based at the University of Cape Town.¹

The authors are in conversation about an article by Adam, published in Social Dynamics (Adam, 2020), on the critical success factors needed in high-technology infrastructure projects. This exchange took the form of a webinar for the masters students of the School of Public Governance.

The conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

Alan Hirsch: I think one of the things that made you successful as a senior government official was the way that you managed communication. Effective communication with key

political stakeholders starts with cabinet. But beyond cabinet, effective communication with other key stakeholders is vital: the science community, the academic community, the research councils, the private sector and other government departments. What is your advice on this?

Rob Adam: You have to try that much harder. Science and technology in South Africa is a Cinderella portfolio which is not seen as the bread and butter of government. South Korea has a deputy prime minister responsible for science and technology with a remit over several portfolios. They are special in that sense. They've used science and technology to build their country. Usually the key departments are commerce/trade and industry, defence, foreign affairs, home affairs. Science is seen as a 'nice to have' which may be amalgamated with trade and industry or

education or whatever.

During those early years, when we were building a new country, ministers would come to me and the senior officials saying, 'why are you bothering with research and other stuff that's in the future? For [more than] four decades we've been thinking about the future. Now we are in it, you want money for something else, in another future. The money should go to building roads and schools and sanitation, so leave that stuff.'

My challenge was to counteract that. You want science to penetrate people's lives and do helpful and useful things for them. But what knocks people's socks off are the SKAs and the big projects like that. It takes their breath away and makes them proud to be South African.

Over the past 15 years or so we've created a community, which now makes us the strongest BRICS country in terms



of science impact in astronomy. We are better than China and Russia and India and Brazil.

AH: Why did you choose to review the success and failure of three big science projects [the Pebble Bed Modular Reactor, the Radioisotopes Reactor Conversion Project and the Square Kilometre Array radio-telescope]. What interested you about them?

RA: It was because I was intimately involved in all three of them. It wasn't an academic view from outside. It was an insider's view and I was trying to think back on my experiences and insights into what went right and what went wrong in these three projects.

I was the principal civil servant who pushed my peers to persuade ministers for cabinet to agree that we should bid for the SKA. I then took a detour into the nuclear industry and the private sector and I've now come back essentially to implement the project that I started with at a policy level.

The SKA is a radio-telescope consisting of an array of huge antennae-like TV dishes, each 15 metres across, that can be steered in any direction to collect and amplify faint signals from stars, galaxies and clouds in distant space. A huge amount of electronic data is collected and analysed by scientists in South Africa and all over the world.²

The Pebble Bed Modular Reactor (PMBR) never got built, although more than R10bn was invested in it by South Africa's taxpayers. A PMBR is a type of small nuclear reactor for generating heat and electricity. It is 'modular', meaning that you can use one or more units, flexibly, depending on your power needs. Our PBMR was designed to provide safe, carbon-free power – and to use South Africa's beneficiated natural resources, such as uranium. It would provide electricity for rural areas that had no coal deposits or water resources for power generation. The technology had been developed in Germany, up to the prototype stage, when Eskom bought the intellectual property rights to it. Eskom intended to sell these 'next generation' power units all over Africa, to modernize development – *Editor*.



With the PBMR, the Pebble Bed Modular Reactor, I had been kind of on the edges of it for some time but eventually ended up on the Board. At first there was a great deal of naivety, where Eskom said all it really wanted was for government to give permission for the project to go ahead, because Eskom could fund it. It was really just a regulatory issue for them.

[On the Radioisotopes Reactor Conversion Project (RCP)] we know apartheid South Africa had a nuclear weapons capability. In fact, it made seven nuclear devices in the 1980s. Before the transition to democracy in 1994, then-president FW de Klerk admitted that South Africa did have nuclear weapons, but was going to decommission them.

Over decades the ANC had strongly opposed South Africa's weapons programme. Even though the ANC knew it was there, the South African government had denied it. Just before 1994 it was very difficult for the ANC to say, 'well, no, we don't want you to do this [decommissioning]'.

It's good to decommission weapons. Even though it was [decided under] De Klerk, the ANC acquiesced in this. But many on the rest of the African continent were saying, 'This is only happening because they know there is a black government coming to power soon.'

South Africa went ahead with the decommissioning, and the highly enriched uranium was given to the Atomic Energy Corporation as its custodian. At the decommissioning, weapons were dismantled and disarmed. The uranium was melted down and safely secured at [South Africa's main nuclear research centre] Pelindaba.

Once you've created that kind of capability – with all of the infrastructure, the nuclear hot cells, the knowledge, the ability to manipulate radioactive substances, unless you are just going to abandon it, you have to redirect it. Very creatively, the scientists at the Atomic Energy Corporation were

able to develop their own process for making medical radioisotopes, for use in the diagnosis of cancer and other diseases and also for their treatment, using that very same weapons-grade uranium. It was a classic swords to ploughshares story.

Here was South Africa, the only country in history to have walked away from its nuclear weapons capability, now reinvesting the knowledge garnered during the development of that capability in something which could help humanity.

Of course there's another side to this. We were still sitting on a lot of weapons-grade uranium. After [the al-Qaeda terror attack on the US on 11 September 2001] the US went around the world, wanting to corral all of the weapons-grade uranium that it could and consign that to one of the five designated nuclear weapon states, namely the US, Russia, China, France or the UK.

This created a need for an industrial process which could do the same thing for radioisotopes that the high end, highly enriched uranium industrial process did. They sent this challenge around the world to different scientific bodies that were linked with the US Academy of Sciences. There were copious

workshops and meetings, all paid for by the US Department of Energy.

I was then Chief Executive of NECSA, the Nuclear Energy Cooperation of South Africa, and I had to sign requests for staff to travel, almost on a monthly basis, to these meetings, which were hosted by the US Department of Energy. I said to the delegation, 'you're going to all these workshops and meetings, but can we actually do this thing that they are wanting us to do?' They wanted us to convert our processes away from weapons-grade uranium to low-enriched uranium which is less than 20% enriched. They said 'yes, sir, we can. There are a few challenges to solve, but we can do it.' So I said 'Well stop going to the meetings. Let's do it. Let's be first.'

And that is what we did. We became the first country to have an industrial process for making medical radioisotopes using only low-enriched uranium. And we were then able to get the US Department of Energy to help us to get further into the American market. The Canadians had most of that at the time.

We as South Africa, under the auspices of our Department of Energy, were able to boast about this on an international stage. We had done what no one, no other country, had done.



Dr Rob Adam speaks at the Zoom webinar.



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You want science to penetrate people's lives and do helpful and useful things for them. But what knocks people's socks off are the SKAs and the big projects like that.

AH: The first lesson was 'get something done'. What went right, what went wrong?

RA: For any of these long-term projects, usually the length of the project is longer than an election term of any government, or the tenure of a particular minister, who would be the champion of the project. So it's important that something actually happens so that your principal, the champion, is able to get the credit for something. They can go back to their cabinet colleagues and say, 'okay, the money that we all voted for this, this is what happened, this is where we are, this is what's going to happen next.' But if nothing happens, after a while they lose credibility.

This is also linked to prototyping. You start small. You do make mistakes. But at least you pour concrete. And while you're pouring concrete and running different experiments, while you are getting the smaller system — the prototype — to work, you learn a whole bunch of stuff.

With the pebble bed, their view was that their prototype was the one that had been in Germany that ran for 21 years [at Jülich Research Centre]. But

the problem was that even though they had the prototype in Germany, it wasn't their prototype, it was the Germans'. And what they planned to build wasn't a larger version of the German prototype. It was different, and so a whole lot of other technology challenges emerged. And they kept changing the design. They never poured concrete.

They had all sorts of plans — and the design changed. Then the clients got cold feet because it was taking too long and it was getting expensive, and so they never poured concrete at all. As a result, I believe the political stratum developed a disbelief in the thing. There was really only one minister who's was pushing for it at that point³ and when he resigned the project disappeared. What they got wrong was just to take too long to do something.

In the case of the reactor conversion project, there had been things happening on an ongoing basis. There were new radioisotopes developed. There was the old weapons-grade based process which was in a way the prototype for the low-enriched uranium process.

We first converted the reactor. Then we took the spent fuel, which originally came from the US, because the reactor was part of the Eisenhower Atoms for Peace Programme.⁴ We were able to send that spent fuel back to Savannah River.⁵ There was a lot going on, which could attract the approval of not just the South African government, but the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Similarly with the SKA — it has been minutely prototyped at different stages, with each stage being something that there could be a launch of. We started off with one antenna, then seven, then 64 and so on. At each point, one could say, well, this is what has happened, this is what we've done, this is the science, this is what we can do with it. This is what we've learned. This is what we won't do this way, next time, because these particular components work, the way we thought they would.

AH: The next point was, 'don't skimp on prototyping'.

RA: You don't want to start the big part of your real project without prototyping because you can waste a lot of money if you get the final 'big design' wrong. If you don't test, if you don't prototype, you end up carrying the big mistakes forward into the actual project. Then you have to change the design as you go along. Instead of ironing out the problems with the prototype, you have to iron out the problems when building the real piece of infrastructure. When you change your design midstream that, of course (certainly with nuclear) involves regulators coming in. And they say, 'now we have to assess the whole safety case all over again'.

What happened with the Pebble Bed is that there were some challenges in the direct cycle process — where you had helium cooling the reactor and then helium driving the turbine blades directly — versus the indirect process — where the helium heats steam which drives the turbine. This was the old prototype process [used] in Germany, but they changed this completely in the pebble bed design. Challenges then emerged which were regarded as insurmountable within a reasonable period of time. Changing the design means going back to the nuclear regulator. That delays you. It feeds into never pouring concrete.

AH: The next one you mentioned was 'have more than one strong champion'.

RA: If you're working under the auspices of a particular minister, that minister is your principal. However, usually there are other portfolios involved in getting approvals that can also enjoy positive spin-off effects from projects.

For example, in the reactor conversion project, the Department of Energy was the protagonist, but [the ➤

Department of] Foreign Affairs, now known as DIRCO, was a big beneficiary as well because of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the approval given to South Africa by that multilateral body. So there was very strong support from foreign affairs. Several different ministers would be involved in formal diplomatic processes, signing agreements, etc. There was a strong partnership between energy and foreign affairs, so that if the minister of energy was moved on, or resigned, you would have another minister who would have an intimate knowledge of the project and be able to support you.

Similarly, with the SKA. There were a number of ministers [that gave support], apart from the Minister of Science and Technology. Because of the other international players and the other countries involved, there was Foreign Affairs. Because of the huge bandwidth and data transport issues, there was the Minister of Communications. And then, of course, provincial and local government [gave their support]. Because of the huge extent of the telescope, part of it being in the Western Cape for the data processing and part in the Northern Cape, you had strong support from those provinces and their provincial governments as well. As a result, there was a robustness which carried the SKA through different administrations. There was no minister who came in who hadn't heard about it before. It wasn't seen as a narrow project for one department. There was a level of continuity which was made possible by the many champions across government that the project had.

In the case of pebble bed, it [had] really one champion and it was a very expensive project. And that particular minister would have to go to get money in competition with his cabinet colleagues. He would have to go to the head of state to overrule everybody and support the project. Of course, that made the project unpopular. It was seen

to be sucking away too many resources. And so, when that minister resigned, everyone looked at one another and said, 'well, okay now what?'

The then Minister of Finance explained that his decision [to cut all funding for the project] had been based on [lack of] consensus. 'I could not see any consensus on this project, and so I withdrew the funding.' That project foundered on a number of challenges but this, I think, was the final *coup de grâce* for the project.

AH: The next question involves 'understanding the market'. This was a particular issue for the pebble bed which depended on scale for its viability, and scale could only be achieved if they were clients outside of South Africa as well as in South Africa. In fact there were no committed clients and, as I recall, the potential clients backed off. As you said, no concrete was poured and there were more and more delays in the project. I think people were looking for validation of the project from the market which didn't seem to be there.

RA: That's exactly right. It's like nuclear technology, the arms industry, where unless you buy your own product, nobody else does either. At one stage there was a strong Eskom buy-in. There was a letter of intent from Eskom to buy 24 PBMR units. That was later withdrawn and in the end replaced by an offer to buy whatever was constructed on Eskom's Koeberg site outside Cape Town for a nominal sum. Effectively there was no client and the fiscus, rather than the users of electricity, had to pay for the project.

Internationally as well, the main game in town was the big 'Generation III' nuclear reactors, rather than 'Generation IV', which is what pebble bed is. The big vendors like Westinghouse, Areva and Rosatom, the Russians, Koreans, Chinese, were much more concerned with marketing their own big Gen III plants than they

were with Gen IV. Pebble bed was a technology a bit ahead of its time. At that stage there was a lot of enthusiasm in other countries because South Africa was taking the financial risk, but there wasn't really a market.

With the reactor conversion project, the main market was the big US radiopharmaceuticals market. [You had] to understand the drivers in that market in the context of 9/11 and understand that the US Department of Energy and the US National Nuclear Security Administration would keep partners in it. You had a kind of a three-cornered market where the Nuclear Security Agency and the US Department of Energy would give the nod, but then you also had to penetrate the actual commercial market as well. We got to understand that very well over the years through our relatively unsuccessful earlier attempts to penetrate [that market].

The Canadians were responsible for supporting the US market. We were lucky because at a particular point in time their reactor ran into significant problems (which were later fixed). We were able to take advantage of that window and get into the market. Once we brought the low-enriched uranium product onto the market, we were able to consolidate that position.

In terms of the SKA it's a different market. It's not a commercial market. The market is science and it's a question of understanding what the questions in physics and astronomy are and mapping those onto the capabilities of the instrument. It's always been very much a science-driven vision, even though obviously there's a lot of solid engineering underpinning it as well.

AH: The next point you made was 'have the right culture'.

RA: In any big, high-tech project you've got different strands. A lot of your engineers, in particular, tend to come from the defence industry because the defence industry by its nature is



high-tech as well – so you’ve got this strand with a military mindset. And those people are great on mission assurance. They will get the thing done, at all costs. The engineers, on the other hand, like to work to a specification. Otherwise, nothing gets built.

The third strand is the scientists, who get out of bed every day with a new idea, which they are hell bent on convincing the engineers to implement. So the engineers are then potentially persuaded to change the design.

As the leader of a high-tech project you have to balance all of those three strands quite carefully. If there’s a big development in the science, you stand the risk of building the wrong thing. So you have to listen to the scientists to an extent. But if you listen to them too much, rather than to the engineers (which was the case with the pebble bed), you don’t pour concrete.

So getting the culture right means finding the delicate balance between getting the job done at all costs (military), doing the job right (engineering), and doing the right job (science). You have to get those absolutely correct.

In the case of the PBMR they bit off more than they could chew. They kept not wanting to sign a shareholder agreement between themselves and Westinghouse and IDC and the other players. There was a sense that this was South African IP [intellectual property] and they didn’t want to let go of it. But the problem is that once you take all the responsibility and all the kudos, you take all the risks as well. And when the pawpaw hits the fan, everyone stands back and watches, as opposed to rolling up their sleeves and helping.

By contrast, in the other two projects there was a strong reliance on international expertise and learning partnerships that have taken us through the different prototyping phases. We

took advice from whoever wanted to give it to us. We embedded it into what we needed to do. We also decided not to build the SKA on our own. We are part of an international partnership, where we contribute roughly 14% of the funding, but the other 86% comes from the rest of the world. We’ve operated on that formula from the beginning. We understood that we can’t do the whole thing, but we can join a larger partnership which can achieve more.

AH: Since you wrote and published the paper [in *Social Dynamics*], have you had thoughts about other things that you would want to have drawn on as lessons from your experience?

RA: Yes, one in particular, the National Ventilator Project.⁶ This is a project which sits under the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition. Around the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, in April 2020, Minister [Ebrahim] Patel (who’s the minister of that portfolio), was seized with the notion that we needed to have capability in South Africa to make ventilators.

He has been a fan of the SKA project for a long time. He came to me, together with Bernie Fanaroff who’s my predecessor, and said ‘Rob can you project manage to create very quickly a project to make ventilators, lots of them, for South Africa. Because we know that we’re going to be in trouble in a couple of months’ time’.

So I said yes, and people said to me, ‘but you guys are astronomers. You built a telescope. Now you want to make ventilators?’ And I said to them ‘my insight into this thing is that the team, the engineering team, that we’ve put together can aim itself at almost any engineering problem.’

Obviously, we recruited doctors onto the team to tell us what was required, and we bolted other elements onto the

team so we were able, in a couple of months, to go from knowing absolutely nothing about ventilators to building 20,000 of them.

And the lesson there was if you’ve got a strong balanced team, with systems engineers, mechanical engineers, different specialists, then your competitive advantage lies in maintaining the team rather than changing it for each project. You need to get the best people and build around those people, rather than change the people when you get a different challenge.

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- Notes and Cloud Recording – from GPP5011F Lecture 17: ‘Technology, Policy, and Politics,’ Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance, University of Cape Town, master’s seminar, 21 May 2021, led by Alan Hirsch and Rob Adam.

ENDNOTES

1. The mission of the Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance, based at the University of Cape Town (UCT), is to promote and inspire strategic public leadership in Africa. As a multi-disciplinary centre, the School and its offerings are designed to make public service at the highest levels of leadership an inspiration for the most talented of the community’s rising generation. For more information, see <http://www.mandelaschool.uct.ac.za/>
2. See <https://www.sarao.ac.za>
3. This was Alec Erwin, Minister of Trade and Industry, 1996 to 2004, and Minister of Public Enterprises until September 2008 when President Thabo Mbeki stepped down.
4. A 20MW pool research reactor at Pelindaba, named SAFARI, was donated to South Africa by the US in 1965 as part of the ‘foreign research reactor’ programme. It used high-enriched uranium as fuel.
5. Savannah River Site (SRS) is a US Department of Energy facility for used nuclear fuel in South Carolina.
6. In mid-2020, the South African Radio Astronomy Observatory (SARAO) was mandated by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC) to manage the process for the National Ventilator Project. See <https://www.sarao.ac.za/request-for-information-in-support-of-the-national-ventilator-project/> **NA**

To fix our rivers we must fix our municipalities

By Ian Palmer and Brendon van Niekerk

IAN PALMER, a civil engineer and economist, is Adjunct Professor at the African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town and founder of the PDG consultancy. BRENDON VAN NIEKERK, a civil engineer and urban planner, is a senior consultant and leads the Urban Systems Practice Area at PDG.

The authors argue that there are two imperatives for improving the wastewater situation – building the capacity of municipalities so that they can employ more engineering professionals, and increasing partnerships with private service providers. Only a small part of the substantial national expenditure earmarked for improving capacity in municipalities has a direct impact on building critical technical capacity.

Municipalities are on the front line in protecting our rivers. They are responsible for managing the wastewater produced in their areas from sewerage systems, agriculture, mines and factories. Two-thirds of

municipalities in South Africa do a poor job on this count. And this is causing a serious decline in water quality in rivers and dams.

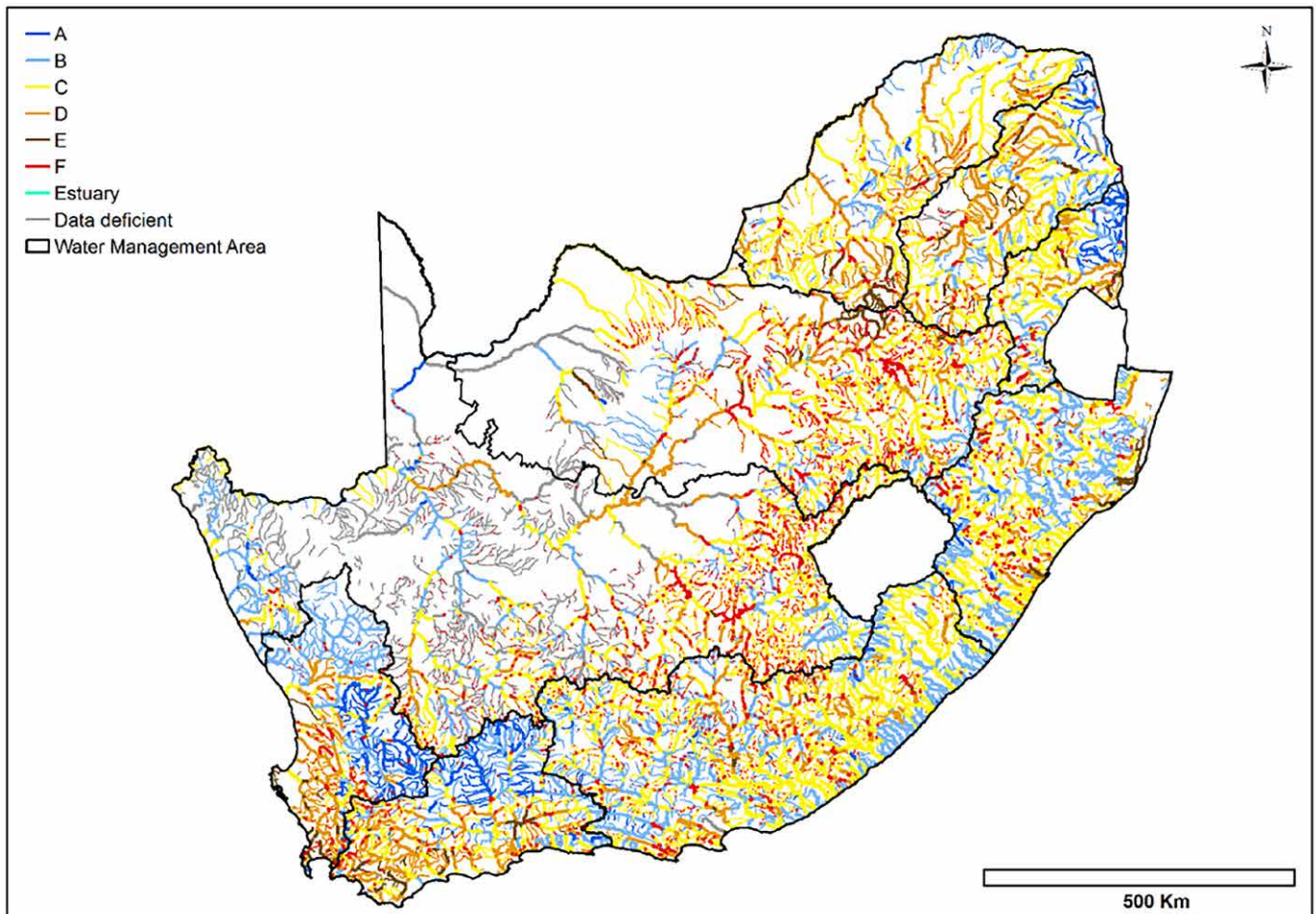
The wastewater flowing into South Africa's rivers is a major cause of the decline in the water quality of our rivers, threatening the sustainability of our water resources and hence our livelihoods. It is not surprising that this is associated with a decline in the performance of municipalities over the past decade, with municipalities unable to recruit and retain sufficient capable engineering professionals to manage wastewater infrastructure. This article provides an overview of the state of our rivers and municipalities, leading to recommendations on what can be done.

STATE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S RIVERS

The *State of Rivers Report 2017-2018* by the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS, 2019) found that, when assessed by the prevalence and variety of macroinvertebrates in the water, only 16% of the sites samples from the country's rivers fall into the

'healthy' category. Another 50% of the rivers are 'modified', which means the river is in an average condition but cannot return to a pristine state without human intervention and assistance. The rivers that were in the 'unsustainable' category were largely found in urban areas, and this was as a result of pollution that typically arose from a 'lack of proper management and maintenance of wastewater treatment works and insufficient capacities of these works for the population served' (DWS, 2019: 3). The data on the state of South African rivers is also a concern, with the DWS stating that recent cost-cutting measures implemented in the department necessitate[s] the reduction in the number of sites monitored' and that the data on inland rivers and inland wetland systems is incomplete and insufficient.

The South African National Biodiversity Institute's (SANBI's) 2018 assessment of South Africa's inland aquatic realm found that 67% of rivers are degraded, with tributaries in a generally better condition than main rivers (see Figure 1).



Note: classification of rivers based on ecological quality: A=Natural, B=Near natural, C= Moderately modified, D= Severely modified, E&F=Critically modified.

Figure 1. State of South Africa's Rivers (Source: SANBI, 2018)

WASTEWATER SYSTEMS

Pollutants in water bodies are varied and come from a range of sources associated with human activity. In simple terms they can be divided as follows:

- Suspended solids, which may be small particles but also includes gross solids of larger size such as bottles, nappies, plastic bags and other packaging. Aside from the aesthetic impact of these solids, they include organics which serve as an energy source for bacteria growing in rivers and dams which reduce oxygen in the water which affects aquatic life.
- Dissolved solids, which include a wide range of inorganics which contribute to increased salinity in water bodies. Included here are nutrients, specifically nitrates and phosphates which are associated with eutrophication (primarily algal growth in dams). Nitrates and phosphates are a specific concern as they are not removed through standard biological treatment processes. Heavy metals such as lead, cadmium, nickel, mercury, chromium, cobalt and zinc are also a concern as they are toxic to humans.
- Pathogenic bacteria, which are harmful to humans. Typically, the concentration of *Escherichia coli* (E. coli) is used as a measure of bacterial pollution although, in general, E.coli are themselves not harmful to humans. There are other measures which specifically pick up pathogenic bacterial pollution but require more complex testing. While this article focuses on pollution from human settlements, it ➤

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Failure typically occurs due to the breakdown of mechanical or electrical equipment which is associated with poor maintenance or the inability to replace equipment ...

is notable that pollution is caused by other human activity, with agriculture and mining being most significant, particularly with regard to salinity and nutrients. The relative impact from other sources depends on the extent of human activity in these catchments, with pollution from human settlements obviously being the biggest concern in those that are highly urbanised. For example, Gauteng is on the continental watershed and has a severe impact on multiple rivers which flow through the province and then into long watercourses, which include dams supplying downstream users.

There are three primary sources of pollutants from human settlements: failed sewerage systems, wastewater treatment works effluent, and stormwater runoff. Only the first two will be considered in this article.

Failed sewerage systems

Wastewater (or sewage) flows from dwellings, institutions, commercial properties and industries into the sewerage system which comprises pipes and, sometimes, wastewater pumping stations. If this system is fully functional the wastewater is transported

to wastewater treatment works where it is treated using biological processes to remove the majority of pollutants, with the flow leaving the works referred to as 'effluent' (more on this below).

The failures in the sewerage system are, firstly, linked to blockages in the sewers which are typically associated with gross solids: large items put into the sewers illegally. Wastewater (sewage) then backs up in the sewers and flows out of the manholes into streets or walkways, both in formal and informal settlements, and then into ponds, streams or rivers. Secondly, the failure of wastewater pumping stations, leading to wastewater flowing into streets and pathways, is also a big concern, both to communities who are directly exposed to the odour or possibly direct contact with the flow, and to the environment when these flows reach a water body.

While the sumps at these pump stations can store wastewater for a short period they are at high risk if there are power supply failures lasting more than a few hours. Further, the mechanical and electrical equipment in these pump stations require a high level of maintenance and hence are a vulnerable spot in the sewerage system.

Wastewater treatment works effluent

The performance of wastewater treatment works is obviously a key factor as it is here that the majority of pollutants are removed from the wastewater flow to produce an effluent which should be of good enough quality not to unduly harm the water bodies below the discharge point. There are a range of wastewater treatment technologies, from simple pond systems which have no mechanical equipment to complex plants designed to remove nutrients. Treatment is primarily based on a biological process with most of the wastewater in South Africa treated using 'activated sludge' technology which incorporates reaction tanks that require mechanical equipment to

provide aeration to allow the bacteria in the tank to react with the organics in the wastewater.¹ All wastewater treatment plants produce sludge which needs to be disposed of safely. While this is a potential pollutant, it is not addressed further in this article.

The effluent for a treatment plant, where it flows into a water body, is a key point for monitoring the impact of human activity on the environment. There are basically two standards applied to these effluents: the 'general standard' limit which is something achievable by most modern activated sludge treatments works and the 'special standard' limit, which is aimed, inter alia, at reduced concentration of nutrients. The special standard is applied to works which discharge into vulnerable watercourses. This includes most works in Gauteng as effluents pass into sensitive river systems, as noted above.

Failure of a treatment works, whether this be total breakdown or reduced performance resulting on below-standard effluent, obviously leads to excess pollution in the river, whether this be through organics, inorganics (nutrients most importantly) or microbial pollutants. Failure typically occurs due to the breakdown of mechanical or electrical equipment which is associated with poor maintenance or the inability to replace equipment which has reached the end of its useful life. Poor performance of treatment works is widespread in South Africa as shown by data reported later in this article.

MUNICIPALITIES ON THE FRONT LINE, BUT LOSING THE BATTLE

Emfuleni Municipality and the Vaal River

The most widely known example of municipal mismanagement that has led to the pollution of a waterway is that of Emfuleni Local Municipality, in Gauteng, located on the Vaal River.



The Vaal River provides drinking water for approximately 19 million people and supplies numerous commercial enterprises. The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), after finding *prima facie* evidence of a human rights violation, conducted a comprehensive investigation in early 2021 and found that the main cause of the degradation of the Vaal was due to ‘inoperative and dilapidated wastewater treatment plants which have been unable to properly process ... sewage’ (SAHRC, 2011: 2) that originates in a municipality or flows into its wastewater systems for treatment from a neighbouring municipality. Reports of this damage to the environment and human health have been circulating for well over a decade.

The SAHRC concluded that the municipality is at fault for not fulfilling its mandate to provide water and sanitation services. The report also found that the entity responsible for overseeing that these services take place, the national Department of Water and Sanitation, and the entity responsible for ensuring that the environment is not significantly harmed or polluted, the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, have failed to hold the municipality to account for their actions.

The responsibility for the treatment of this sewage is that of the municipality. The Emfuleni Municipality was placed under administration² in November 2018 due to economic, financial, governance, institutional and service delivery failures (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2018), after Section 154 support, implemented in 2015, failed to make sufficient impact. The S139 intervention was extended in 2020 due to a lack of sufficient progress.

The SAHRC received submissions that the reasons for the poor state of the wastewater system in Emfuleni included a lack of technical ability in the municipality, theft and vandalism, and a lack of governance controls and

accountability measures. As of 2020, the municipal water entity owned by the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, the East Rand Water Care Company, has been appointed as an implementing agent to make sure that the wastewater infrastructure is operational and stops the pollution of the Vaal River from poor quality effluent from wastewater treatment works in Emfuleni. However, there is still much to be done; 60% of water samples collected in the week of 7 July 2021 indicate that there is still a ‘significant risk’ of gastrointestinal disorders due to E.coli levels found in the water (Rand Water, 2021).

Makana, Eastern Cape

Makana Municipality in the Eastern Cape, centred on the university and arts town of Grahamstown/Makhanda, is facing a water challenge on many fronts; a four-year drought, neglect of water and sanitation infrastructure, corruption (Adam, 2021) and maladministration. The municipality has undergone two Section 139 interventions (in 2014 and 2016) where the provincial government took over the administration of the municipality. A ruling by the High Court in 2020 found that the municipality was in breach of Section 152(1) of the Constitution in that it was failing to provide services in a sustainable manner and was not promoting a safe and healthy environment, along with a breach of Section 153, that the municipality was not meeting the basic needs of the community. The court also ordered that the Provincial Executive Council dissolve the council of the municipality due to the failure of the municipality to meet its constitutional obligations (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2020b). This ruling has been appealed.

Infrastructure renewal, maintenance and upgrade has been neglected for many years, which has resulted in some wastewater treatments works, such as the Belmont Valley Works, operating at almost 150% design capacity,

which results in poor quality effluent discharged into the Bloukrans River (Grocott’s Mail, 2016). The municipality also states that the raw water that is received is of poor quality due to upstream wastewater treatment works that discharge poor-quality effluent into the waterway from which the raw water supply is drawn, which further compounds the water quality issues, particularly in times of drought (MacLennan, 2019).

According to the municipality, interventions coordinated by the Municipal Infrastructure Support Agent (MISA) and Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs have yielded some positive results (Makana Local Municipality, 2020). However, the municipality no longer reports into the national database, with the most recent results for effluent water quality available in 2017.

Butterworth, Eastern Cape

Failures of wastewater treatment works can lead to large-scale environmental damage or negative impact on human health, but it is not only limited to large-scale events. The town of Butterworth in the Eastern Cape has a population of 46,000 people and is reliant on the Amathole District Municipality to supply water and treat the wastewater that is generated. Evidently, the Amathole District Municipality is failing in this regard, as there are reports of E.coli concentrations of 540 times the maximum allowable limit (Kretzmann et al., 2021a).

All Water Service Authorities (who have the legislated mandate to implement water and sanitation services in their jurisdiction) are required to report into the Integrated Regulatory Information System (IRIS). The Amathole District Municipality reports effluent quality data on its Butterworth wastewater treatment works into IRIS, however, over the period 2016-2020 only 59% of the required data points have been entered, and this proportion has ➤

declined from 65% in 2016 to 53% in 2020. The compliance scores for this period are an average of 70%. However, given the lack of compliance with the frequency of measurement the accuracy of this data is uncertain. Water services authorities who do not report into IRIS are in breach of the regulations which govern their actions, but there is little evidence that this is being actively monitored or enforced. The data that is entered into the system itself is also questionable, as there is evidence that this data is inaccurate (ibid).

PERFORMANCE OF MUNICIPALITIES

With municipalities on the front line protecting our rivers, it is important to understand why their performance has been in decline over the past decade.³ While there are regular articles in the news about failing municipalities, there is, unfortunately, far too little data to track performance of municipalities as a whole, although there are monitoring arrangements for water and sanitation which are covered below.

That said, the overall performance monitoring is improving in metros through a new national reporting system being implemented by National Treasury under the Municipal Finance Management Act, with 'Circular 88' reporting requirements, but currently this does not cover non-metro municipalities. In the case of metros there is only a year of data, so no trend can be tracked. However, the declining performance of metros – with the possible exception of Cape Town – has been well reported in the media.

Without being able to track performance of non-metro municipalities over time, we need to rely on 'snap-shots', with the 2018 'distressed' municipality study by the Department of Cooperative Governance and National Treasury being most useful, showing the following results:

Table 1: Results of 'distressed'¹ municipality assessment by NT and DCoG, 2018

Category	Total number	% distressed	Total population (million) ²	Population in distressed municipalities (million)	% people in distressed municipalities
B1 – Secondary cities	19	37%	8.3	3.5	43%
B2 – Large towns	27	33%	4.9	2.4	49%
B3 – Small towns	99	41%	7.8	3.6	47%
B4 – Rural ³	60	28%	12.5	4.0	32%
C1 – Districts not WSAs ⁴	23	9%	15.3	0.9	6%
C2 – Districts – WSAs	21	52%	18.2	9.4	52%

Note:

1. The extent of 'distress' is assessed through multiple criteria with a municipality that is ranked as 'distressed' being unable to provide effective services to citizens and businesses.
2. Population covers only non-metros with total of 33.5 million in 2018. Total population in districts equals total population in local municipalities.

The situation with C2 district municipalities which are responsible for water supply and sanitation is the biggest concern. However, as they serve mostly rural areas, they are responsible for relatively few waterborne sanitation systems, although the example of Butterworth quoted above shows how poor performance of a district leads to decline in river water quality.

Access to sanitation infrastructure

For the purposes of this article, sanitation infrastructure can be broadly separated into that required for sewered systems in urban areas and that required for 'on-site' systems (that are not connected to a wastewater system), mostly in rural areas. In considering the performance of municipalities it is necessary to separate performance regarding the

3. B4 local municipalities are shown to have a low level of distress but most of them are not responsible for water, sanitation and electricity.
4. WSA stands for Water Service Authority – where district municipalities have the responsibility for water and sanitation, the local (B) municipalities are not responsible for these services.

provision of this infrastructure from that related to the management of the infrastructure.

The trends regarding the provision of sanitation infrastructure are remarkably positive, using the StatsSA annual household survey results as a measure (StatSA, 2020). The survey includes a question related to the type of sanitation facility to which the household has access. 'Improved sanitation' includes flush toilets connected to a public sewerage system, or a septic tank, or a pit toilet with a ventilation pipe. Access to improved sanitation increased from 61.7% in 2006 to 82.1% in 2019.

While these findings are positive, they only refer to the extent to which infrastructure exists (a pipe to the house or ventilated pit, for example) and not to the functionality of the service, which is addressed below.



Functionality of sanitation services

The functionality of wastewater treatment works is the main concern of this article, rather than functionality of ‘on-site’ sanitation systems. These may be problematic from the point of view of users of the facility, but they are less of an issue for water quality in rivers. It has been noted above that the key indicator of performance of treatment works is the quality of the effluent in relation to standards set by DWS. Municipalities are required to report to DWS on effluent water quality, with results entered into the IRIS database. The decline in reporting (number of treatment works for which reports are submitted) and the extent to which the effluent quality complies with standards is shown in Figure 2.

Looking more broadly at the performance of the whole wastewater system, historically DWS has implemented a successful system for monitoring the overall performance of wastewater systems through their ‘Green Drop’ reports. But their publication was discontinued in 2014, with no reasons provided. The 2014 Green Drop progress report for the period 2008 to 2014 showed an increase in the number of plants at high risk. Of the 850-odd plants assessed, the number which were considered to be at the highest risk increased from 129 to 212 over this period.

There is a new commitment by the government to re-instate this reporting system. In the interim, we have to rely on individual indicators, using the DWS IRIS reporting dashboard. This is the source of information used by Kretzmann et al. (2021b), who state that 56% of the country’s 1,150 wastewater treatment plants are ‘in poor or in critical condition’. Of these, 265 are ‘in a state of decay’, says department spokesperson Sputnik Ratau, as reported by Kretzmann et al. ‘Getting them back to full operation is challenging, both because of the scale of

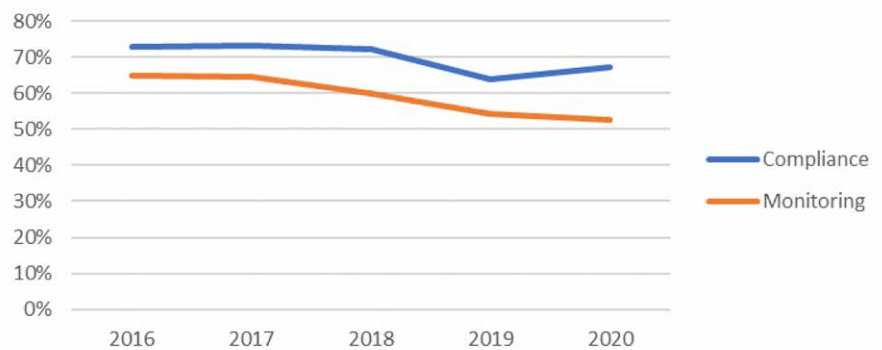


Figure 2: Trends with wastewater treatment works effluent quality

equipment which needs to be replaced and the extent to which management of the works needs to be improved.’

TECHNICAL CAPACITY

The performance of the departments within municipalities responsible for providing sanitation (including wastewater) services cannot be separated from the overall performance of the municipalities. It is well recognised that dysfunction often originates from poor governance. Incapable (or corrupt) councils can easily lead to weak leadership by municipal managers and reduce the ability to appoint properly qualified people into senior positions in departments responsible for large-scale infrastructure and associated services.⁴

Water and sanitation infrastructure is the realm of civil engineering. Yet municipalities employ far too few engineering professionals. Palmer et al. (2017) report on the survey carried out by Allyson Lawless for the South African Institute of Civil Engineers (SAICE): ‘In 2005 there were 1,875 civil engineering staff⁵ in local government of which 27% were engineers. This represents 0.33 engineering staff per 10,000 people in the country; 0.12 engineers per 10,000 people. These figures are extraordinarily low by international developed country standards where figures of two to four engineering professionals per 10,000 people are typical.’

Not only are the numbers low, but there is insufficient recognition of the key role engineers play in providing these services and, particularly, of the importance of having engineers in leadership positions where they have sufficient autonomy to manage these services without undue political and administrative interference. This decline in the professionalism of municipal engineering departments has been highlighted by Neil Macleod in a 2021 *Business Day* article where he notes that the municipalities themselves recognise that they are not equipped to deliver on their water supply and sanitation responsibilities, as demonstrated by the Municipal Services Strategic Assessment (MuSSA) carried out in 2018. About 78% of respondents stated that they were in an extremely vulnerable or highly vulnerable state. Macleod argues that this will only change when certified engineering professionals are placed at the head of technical services departments, with this position backed by the Water Institute of Southern Africa (Macleod, 2021).

A survey carried out by the SAICE (2019) also illustrates the extent to which engineers feel marginalised within municipalities: ‘... amongst 1,367 of its members, 932 (68%) of the surveyed engineering professionals indicated willingness to work in the public sector. There are specific issues however, that prevent engineering professionals from ➤

joining the public sector. These include an over-politicisation of infrastructure departments, the diminished decision-making roles of technocrats, the lack of systems, processes and structures for efficient administration, lack of training, development and career paths, and unwarranted interference of HR and finance divisions in the work of infrastructure engineering professionals.'

Trends with engineers in local government: are we improving?

The most recent and comprehensive data on engineering professionals in local government is provided through reporting by municipalities to National Treasury in terms of the Municipal Budget and Reporting Reform (MBRR) standard budget tables. Report SA24 includes data on all professionals and water and sanitation professionals,⁶ with data for the latter shown as Figure 3.

The indication from this data is that the number of engineering professionals is in decline in metros, with small gains in local municipalities and districts. This finding conforms with earlier surveys carried out by the SAICE and the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB), although the MDB does not have valid data for metros. All surveys show alarmingly low numbers in district municipalities which are responsible for water supply and sanitation (C2 districts). According to MDB 2018 data there are five C2 districts with no registered professional engineers and four with only one. Yet each C2 district is, on average, responsible for providing water and sanitation services to 850,000 people.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE THE TECHNICAL CAPACITY OF MUNICIPALITIES?

Capacity building has been high on the government agenda over the past decade. Yet the evidence on this presented here leads to the conclusion that the overall

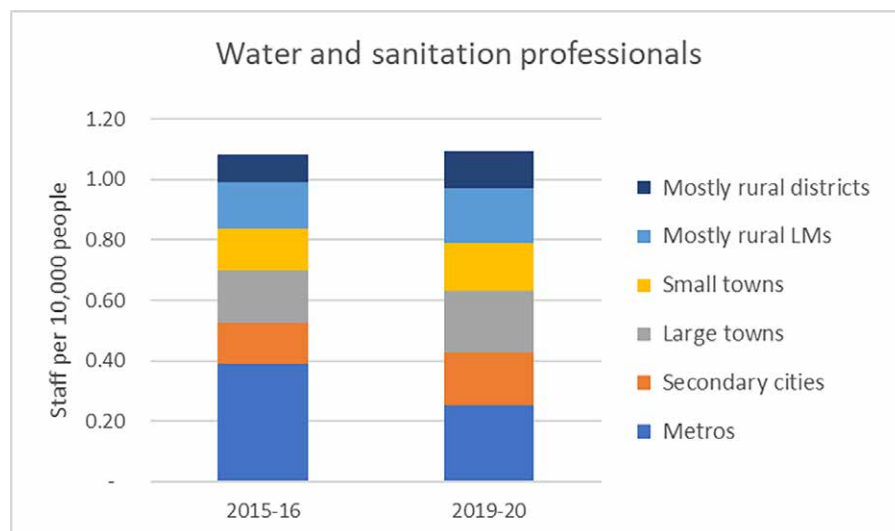


Figure 3: Trends for water services professionals per 10,000 people, by category

performance of municipalities in managing water and sanitation services is poor and is not getting better – although there will be successes in some individual municipalities or groups of municipalities. Overall, the indication has been that current capacity-building initiatives have been ineffective, whether these be internal to municipalities or instituted provincially or nationally.

There is as yet no nationally developed strategy to improve the technical capability of municipalities across all categories of municipalities with regard to goals, organisational responsibilities and financing proposals. Reliance has been placed on national departments and agencies to 'build capacity', specifically the DWS, MISA and the Government Technical Advisory Centre (GTAC) within National Treasury. But these organisations lack sufficient infrastructure management capacity themselves, whether this be to set up programmes, provide direct advice or set up partnerships with private sector providers.

Without a technical capacity-building strategy accepted by the government, reference is made to proposals put forward at a technical

capacity-building workshop held in February 2020 at the DBSA Vulindlela Academy. These proposals, which build on programmes already in place, or at least conceptualised, and focus on a blend of public and private sector activity, are used as the basis for recommendations made here.

Support the supporters

DWS, MISA, GTAC and the provinces all lack technical capacity, professional engineers most importantly, and they require technical assistance. This is best provided as a combined effort between national government and international development agencies. In the case of MISA, this assistance should be focused on measures to increase the ratio of graduate engineers to engineering technologists and improve their ability to assist municipalities to set up a range of partnerships with private service providers. In the case of GTAC, their public-private partnerships (PPPs) unit needs to be given much greater responsibility to support municipalities with PPPs and they need to expand the type of partnerships they support to include management contracts and operating contracts.



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Failures of wastewater treatment works can lead to large-scale environmental damage or negative impact on human health.

Focus on programmes

The proposed capacity-building intervention is focused on four programmes which either exist or need to be established.

1. **City Support Programme (CSP)**, targeted at the eight metros, started its second five-year phase in 2019. It is hosted by National Treasury and staffed by specialists on five-year contracts. Support is provided across a range of activities with moderate support for infrastructure provision. It is funded by National Treasury and supported by the World Bank. The CSP needs greater emphasis on infrastructure-intensive services and support to metros to set up partnerships.
2. **The Intermediate City Municipality Support Programme** is targeted at 39 intermediate cities⁷ which include the 19 secondary cities. It is at an early stage of implementation with a design completed, some city diagnostics and two cities supported at pilot phase. The design provides for a project management unit (PMU) to be



- located within the Department of Cooperative Governance with a staffing structure including an infrastructure manager. But the means for bringing in high-level engineering expertise is uncertain. The programme requires funding of about one billion rand over five years but remains largely unfunded. It is assumed that some of this can be considered as technical capacity building, but supplementary funding will be necessary to deal with the large shortage of technical expertise.
3. **Towns and Rural Local Municipalities Support Programme:** This programme does not exist, although the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) has hosted a small-scale small towns regeneration programme over recent years. There are 157 local municipalities in this group, some 100 of these potentially categorised as ‘small towns’, with the remainder being larger towns and rural municipalities. Supporting these municipalities is a great challenge best met by provinces and MISA. MISA

is best suited to run this programme nationally but will require funding and technical assistance to implement it.

4. **Rural Districts Support Programme:** There are 21 districts, referred to as C2s, which are responsible for water and sanitation and have a low level of technical capability. A business plan for **Regional Management Support Contracts (RMSC)** for these districts was set up by MISA in 2015 and supported conceptually by the Department of Cooperative Governance, with funding from National Treasury. At the time, the World Bank’s PPP unit was also engaged. The programme was not implemented in accordance with its business plan and has made limited progress since then in three districts, far short of the 21-district implementation envisaged for the five years commencing in 2016. Nevertheless, based on the business plan, it remains the primary option for substantially improving water and sanitation services in these districts. But a new programme management structure is required. ➤➤

Public-private partnerships

PPPs can be narrowly defined to include relatively well-known concession, build-operate-transfer (BOT) and lease contracts which require investment by the private partner in the case of the first two, and ongoing management of the infrastructure. But management contracts – where the private partner works together with management in the municipality to manage the service – and operating contracts – where the private partner operates the infrastructure for a fee – are the most important partnership options. In a situation with inadequate capacity in the public sector these partnerships will be important in the future, with the role of GTAC in supporting their implementation mentioned above.

Financing technical capacity-building interventions

National Treasury has suggested that R3 billion is already being spent on capacity building for municipalities. However, only a small part of this has a direct impact on building technical capacity. There are questions over the effectiveness with which this funding is spent to improve technical capacity, with two primary concerns: there is too little emphasis on operations and maintenance; and funding is not sufficiently aligned with a properly designed support programme. It is proposed here that funding needs to be realigned and targeted at the four programmes mentioned above, and international development partners need to play a more substantial role.

TO CONCLUDE

The sanitation (wastewater) service in South Africa is poorly managed by two-thirds of municipalities and this is causing a serious decline in water quality in rivers and dams. But there are ways of improving this through building the capacity of municipalities so that they can employ more engineering professionals and

increase partnerships with private service providers. The highest priority should be given to funding properly structured infrastructure provision support programmes and to setting requirements for professional engineers to head technical departments in larger municipalities.

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ENDNOTES

1. For more on wastewater treatment see Hansen, 2015.
2. An intervention in line with S139(1b) of the Constitution whereby an Administrator is appointed to oversee the operation of the municipality.
3. See Palmer, et al., 2017, for an overview of the capability of municipalities.
4. See SALGA, 2009, for more detail on governance of municipalities.
5. The term 'engineering staff' incorporates graduate engineers, technologists and technicians. 'Engineering professionals' include graduate engineers and technologists.
6. The term 'professionals' is not defined but is assumed to include graduate engineers and technologists.
7. The inclusion of all these municipalities as 'cities' is questionable. **NA**



Professionalising the South African civil service: in retrospect and the road ahead

‘Only an efficient and effective government can provide the framework in which peoples can fulfil their needs.’ (Lee Kuan Yew)¹

By Mzukiso Qobo and Busani Ngcaweni

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The authors argue that a developmental state requires an efficient and effective civil service, one that has autonomy and therefore cannot be influenced by politicians. In South Africa, therefore, building state capacity is imperative to deliver service and gives greater priority to the social and economic challenges faced by the majority.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking at the February 2021 State of the Nation Address, President Cyril Ramaphosa had this to say about the imperative of building an

ethical, capable, developmental and professional civil service:

The public service is at the coalface of government, and lack of professionalism doesn't just impact service delivery; it also dents public confidence. Advancing honesty, ethics and integrity in the public service is critical if we are to build a capable state ... We remain on course to build a capable and professional civil service that delivers on its mandate and is accountable to the South African people ... We are focusing on the appointment of properly qualified officials at a local level to ensure effective management and provision of services.

A month later (15 March 2021), in his Monday newsletter, the President took this further and wrote:

When I was elected to the position of President of South Africa, I said that building an efficient, capable and ethical state free from corruption was among my foremost priorities. Only a capable, efficient, ethical and development-oriented state can deliver on the commitment to improve the lives of the people of this country. This means that the public service must be staffed by men and women who are professional, skilled, selfless and honest. They must be committed to upholding the values of the Constitution, and must, as I said in my inaugural speech, ‘faithfully serve no other cause than that of the public’ ... Twenty- ➤

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The South African public service has been crying out for professionalisation for nearly three decades – President Cyril Ramaphosa

seven years into democracy, it can be said of the public service that while several pockets of excellence exist, we have serious challenges in many government departments with regards to skills, competence and professionalism. All too often, people have been hired into and promoted to key positions for which they are neither suitable nor qualified. This affects government performance, but also contributes to nepotism, political interference in the work of departments, lack of accountability, mismanagement and corruption.

Addressing the Zondo Commission on 28 April 2021, the President returned to this burning platform of building a capable, ethical and professional public service. He argued:

Professionalisation of the civil service would seek to address the problems that we have had ... we do have some people in our civil service who are ill-qualified, who are not that fit for the

purpose, who do not have those qualifications that are necessary. Now we want to professionalise the civil service and that will happen in a variety of ways and we are not talking about chucking people out. We are talking about capacitating those people, having them properly trained ... The South African public service has been crying out for professionalisation for nearly three decades.

We purposefully extensively cite the President in this introduction as a way of demonstrating that building state capacity has become an imperative for government as much as it has been for the citizens who directly endure the pain of bureaucratic inefficiencies. When the President laments the extent of poor ethics and unprofessionalism, it signals both a crisis and opportunity.

This article summarises how the crisis has manifested and explores the opportunities that arise from the draft professionalisation framework project coordinated by the National School of Government. Our thesis is that the proposed professionalisation framework is reformist due to the subjective realities of the country's

political economy of policymaking (constrained by the intra-party politics of the ruling African National Congress [ANC]). It touches on the margins of the challenges confronting the public service and leaves the fundamental challenges unattended. It is a formula for gradual reform. As the President argues above, public service deficiencies are fundamentally political, not just the poor skilling of bureaucrats. Necessarily, ground-breaking reforms must cleanse the toxicity in our body-politic, thus allowing the bureaucracy to be autonomous so that bureaucrats can reign whilst politicians rule (Mkandawire, 2001).

SETTING THE SCENE: POLITICAL WEAKNESSES THAT UNDERMINE BUREAUCRATIC EFFECTIVENESS

There are two fundamental political weaknesses we are referring to. The first regards the entrenched idea of state-party relationships, and its manifestation in cadre deployment. The second is an absent normative performance standard for politicians that demands a certain level of ethical conduct and competency. Implementing the proposed framework for the professionalisation of the public service will be difficult in the absence of a





political framework that introduces ethical and performance disciplines for members of the Executive.

Before we assess the political requirements for professionalisation of the public service, it is worth looking at the past 20 years to better understand the nature of initiatives that have been undertaken in reforming government. It is easy to take for granted the weight of the task at hand if we do not appreciate the various phases of policy and institutional reforms in the past. However, we also need to place the broader reform trajectory of the public service within the context of a significant shift from the apartheid-era public service, which had taken nearly 45 years, to a new dispensation marked by a shortage of skills and other resources.

The ideals espoused by the government for the country's public service and the strategic intent laid out in various legislative and policy frameworks have so far failed to take root. This let-down is not because the policies or legislative intent are weakly articulated but due to political factors discussed in this article. The idealism has been good, but the practice poor. If we seek to avoid the same pitfall with the current framework, we must confront the political obstacles head-on.

EARLY PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM EFFORTS

Policy perspectives of the ANC were set out in foundational documents such as *Ready to Govern* (1992) and the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) of 1994. These early documents offered a vision of a public service that would be characterised by well-developed human capital in the service of meeting the basic needs of the majority of South Africans.

Ready to Govern sought to define a future developmental state. It noted that the developmental state would '... have ultimate responsibility – in cooperation with the trade union movement, business and other organs

of civil society – for coordinating, planning and guiding the development of the economy towards a sustainable economic growth pattern ...' (ANC, 1992). This document stressed a consultative and participatory approach to governance, with civil society broadly and community-based initiatives as key agents working alongside the state in social service delivery.

The RDP document contained, in concentrated form, the aspirations of South Africa for socio-economic change. Its main thrust was to promote a 'people-driven approach' to governance and development, in line with the Freedom Charter's call, 'The people shall govern'. The institutional agency that would ensure these pillars find concrete expression in society was the public service.

Historical context: what did the public service look like in 1994?

In 1993, the foundations of the public service were constructed with the adoption of the interim Constitution. Reform measures to bring the public service more in line with the 1996 Constitution were set in motion. The public administration that existed before 1994 was 'characterised by outdated management practices, corruption, and mismanagement of resources' (Cameron & Tapscott, 2000: 81-86). A significant part of the goal of transforming the public service was to rid it of its racialised character, while at the same time establishing a new set of norms and values that would reflect the preferred social reality in South Africa, where human dignity would be affirmed.

The normative ideals of democracy, non-sexism and non-racialism were to be the lifeblood of the public service. As the 1995 White Paper on Public Service underlined: 'The Government of National Unity is committed to continually improving the lives of the people of South Africa by a transformed public service which is representative, coherent, transparent, efficient,

accountable, and responsive to the needs of all' (RSA, 1995: 14).

The White Paper set out eight priorities for transforming the public service: reorienting service delivery to meet basic needs and redress past imbalances; rationalisation and restructuring to ensure a unified, integrated and leaner public service; institution-building and reforms to promote greater accountability and organisational and management effectiveness; increasing representativeness through affirmative action; improving internal democracy and external accountability; human resource development and capacity building; improving employment conditions and labour relations; and promoting professional services ethos. This period of change in South Africa also coincided with what was dubbed a decade of public service renewal internationally – characterised mainly by the dominant new public administration paradigm associated with neo-liberal economic policies.

Undertaking this task in South Africa would not be without hurdles. The challenge facing government in redesigning the norms and standards of public service delivery was steep. The institutional configuration of the apartheid state, and its bureaucratic apparatus, was meant to enforce racial discrimination and ethnic separatism. The essence of the balkanisation of public service under apartheid was to direct the lion's share of the state's resources to sustain the privileged existence of the white minority while delivering inferior services to the black majority. Thus, maintaining separate development along the lines of privilege (for white people) and relative under-development for black people was the essence of the public service under apartheid.

The fractured character of the public services ordered along the lines of white public service in what was then the Republic of South Africa; the TBVC ➤

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For a public administration system in a developmental state to enjoy a reasonable degree of autonomy, it should invest in human capital and be effective in policy execution.



(Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei) states or Bantustan homeland system; self-governing territories; and the segment that was known as 'own affairs' – for coloured and Indian administration – expressed this reality. The amalgamation of a total of 11 separate entities was thus one of the key priorities of the democratic government. This amalgamation represented the first

phase in the transformation of public service. It was necessary to overcome the ugly practice of balkanisation of the public service along ethnic and regionalist lines and to achieve a unified public service system that reflected the principles of non-racialism.

As former Minister of Public Services and Administration Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi pointed out: '... these measures registered mixed success' (Fraser-Moleketi, 2006). This is also borne out by the Presidential Review Commission of 1996, whose report came out in March 1998. The commission report pointed to several weaknesses: the slow pace of transformation; lack of alignment between planning and budgeting; ineffective strategic management; and coordination problems. Some of these have been addressed since the report came out.

It is worth highlighting that the new democratic government could not willy-nilly remove the old-order bureaucrats since the same template under which the public service was to be reformed was cobbled through compromise during transitional negotiations in 1992 and 1993. The sunset clauses that were a crucial element of the 1993 interim Constitution helped secure the position of old-order bureaucrats. Still, public service had to rise to the challenge of managing social and economic change. There was an appreciation within the liberation movement that not all officials from the old order were rooted in the apartheid ideological system and orientation. There is much to suggest that many were willing and able to serve as professionals.

The new public service would be at the coalface of engineering the developmental state promise, ie to deliver service and give greater priority to the social and economic challenges faced by most South Africans. To provide a practical effect to this goal, the Public Service Act of 1994 was adopted. This was followed by the 1995 White Paper on the Transformation of Service

Delivery, with its enshrined principle of Batho Pele (Putting the People First). Batho Pele was a derivation of the idea that was embedded in the 1955 Freedom Charter – 'The people shall govern' – and later the RDP. Batho Pele focused on the values of public service and articulated seven pillars (DPSA, 2003):

1. **Consultation:** that the public should be consulted about the level and quality of services they are offered, and where possible given choice;
2. **Service standards:** that the public should be informed about the level and quality of service they receive so that they know what to expect;
3. **Access:** that citizens should be able to access services equally, with implementation of equal access to services achieved incrementally;
4. **Courtesy:** that services must be provided in a courteous environment;
5. **Information:** that citizens must be provided with the information about the services they are entitled to receive;
6. **Transparency:** that all departments of government should inform the public about the costs of services and the details of running departments; and
7. **Redress:** that if the promised standards of service are not achieved, the public should therefore be provided with reasons for non-delivery.

These seven pillars provided a cornerstone of what government would later refer to as a developmental state. Together with the RDP objectives, they are the norms against which it would be fair to judge the success – or lack thereof – of the new democratic state in overcoming the legacy of apartheid and delivering qualitatively better services to the people.



A 'TURN' TOWARDS A DEVELOPMENTAL AND CAPABLE STATE

As already pointed out, building a developmental state entailed overhauling the previous political, social and economic edifice that reinforced the apartheid system and creating a state that would restore the dignity of the previously disenfranchised by delivering better quality services and transforming the economy. Ben Turok (2011) defined a developmental state as marked by efficient institutional interventions directed at promoting economic growth and human development.

For such interventions to be effective, efficient bureaucratic machinery endowed with requisite skills and the right incentives was required. Ngcaweni (2020) defines these as being states that are characterised by diligent management of public affairs and courageous pursuit of society's aspirations for economic and spatial justice, social cohesion and epistemic (knowledge and cultural) freedom.

In determining the terms of our transition early on, and the precise role that the state was to play in catalysing development, the role of human and institutional capacities was left pretty much under-explored (Hirsch, 2005: 56). Yet, the solidity of the bureaucratic nerve-centre of the state is pivotal for the achievement of the many objectives that are set out in various policies, from the RDP to the current raft of developmental strategies in government. It is difficult to achieve developmental goals without well-established administrative structures and public servants who enjoy relative autonomy from undue political control.

For a public administration system in a developmental state to enjoy a reasonable degree of autonomy, it should invest in human capital and be effective in policy execution. Moreover, it has to have clearly defined roles, functions and authority that govern implementation at various levels.

This point was made much earlier and forcefully by Max Weber, the fountainhead of modern bureaucracy, who argued that a modern bureaucracy has to be defined by processes and functions that are interdependent and with clearly demarcated roles for different functional units (Weber, 1968: 956). He further pointed out:

The principles of the office hierarchy and of channels of appeal (*Instanzenzug*) stipulate a clearly established system of super and sub-ordination in which there is supervision of the lower offices by the higher ones. Such a system offers the governed the possibility of appealing, in a precisely regulated manner, the decision of a lower office to the corresponding superior authority. (Weber, 1968: 957)

According to the Weberian notion of bureaucracy, formal rules of institutions trump informal, personal rules and meritocracy, with specialised professional knowledge, has primacy over traditional power relations. As the former President of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, warned:

When those in office regard the power vested in them as a personal prerogative, they inevitably enrich themselves, promote their families, and favour their friends. The fundamental structures of the modern state are eroded, like the supporting beams of a house after termites have attacked them. Then the people have to pay dearly and long for the sins and crimes of their leaders. (Allison and Blackwill, 2013: 114-5)

Because they are insulated from undue political manipulation, public service institutions in a developmental state have the authority to create strategic plans and drive implementation at a high level. Meritocracy is a feature that was prized highly in developmental states, such as South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore, that we sometimes seek to emulate. The bright and the best are recruited into the public service and incentivised to perform at a high level compared to their peers in the private sector. As a result, bureaucrats in such states are highly skilled, competent, embedded and motivated to use their skills to contribute to the attainment of national development objectives (Wong, 2004).

Because merit-based recruitment processes in developmental states are institutionalised rather than following the model of cadre deployment or other crony-type appointments, the allegiance of top-level bureaucrats lies with society rather than with political party bosses. In this way, government bureaucracy operates like a well-oiled machine – efficient and effective. Lee Kuan Yew insisted that a country needs good institutions and individuals who believe in them and can run them; have a grasp of the virtues of good governance; and have a sense of transparency and accountability. As he put it, these are 'the spearheads in the society, on whom depends the pace of our progress' (Allison and Blackwill, 2013:41).

The best public services that deliver on their developmental mandates are those that the best people at the top lead. Apart from the insularity that competent bureaucrats have to enjoy to fulfil their responsibilities, the character of political leadership at the top should be nothing less than admirable. Good political leadership would be central to appreciating the authority divide at the interface and understanding the parameters of political responsibility. Concomitantly, it also requires that ➤

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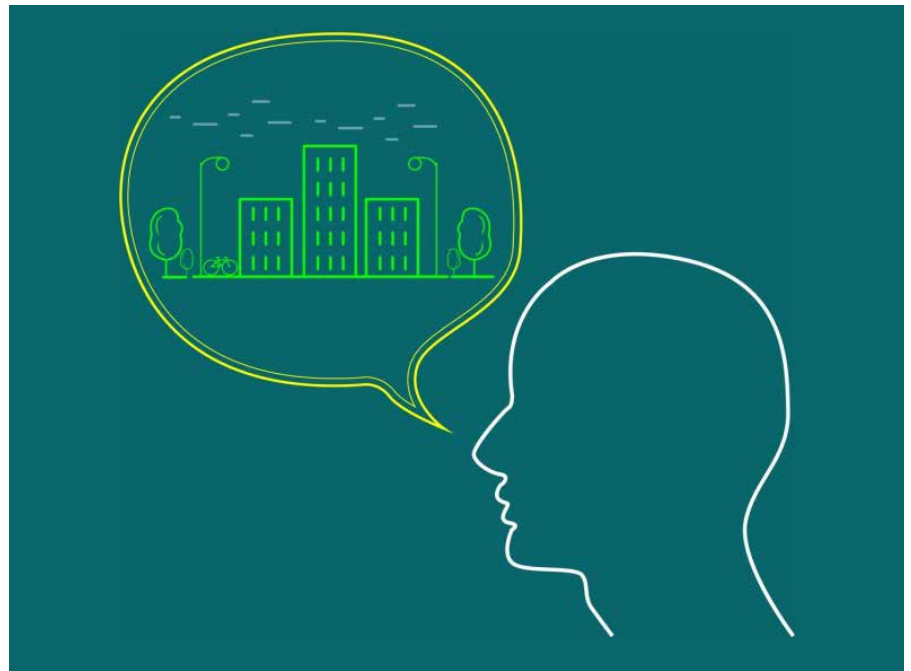
Ethics are not just about acts of theft in government or flouting of corporate governance in the private sector ... they also concern neglect by the state of its responsibilities to citizens.

competent bureaucrats are politically astute and can manage the interface well. While there are several examples where relationships have collapsed because of political overreach and administrative power plays, the reality is that these point to the imperatives of both good political leadership and astute bureaucrats.

THE CHALLENGE OF PUBLIC SERVICE STRUCTURE IN SOUTH AFRICA

There have been several attempts at restructuring the public service in South Africa, from the moment when Batho Pele was introduced to the phase that saw the employment of consultants to help with the implementation of various models of performance management systems. In fact, there is a voluminous raft of policies that have been gazetted since 1996, and invariably aimed at:

- Changing the way services are delivered;
- Improving human resource practices;
- Designing better performance management systems;



- Revising labour relations framework;
- Developing a new salary grading system; and
- Combatting corruption (Ncholo, 2000),

There have been various attempts aimed at improving the public service in the past. In 1999, the then Minister of Public Service and Administration, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, launched the South African Management Development Institute (SAMDI) as a successor to the Public Service Training Institute to improve efficiencies in the public service. However, institutional weaknesses did not diminish; instead, they increased. Batho Pele is yet to be deeply ingrained in the functioning of public service.

In 2004, President Thabo Mbeki launched another initiative in the form of the Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA). At the unveiling of PALAMA, Mbeki asserted that this new initiative would take government to a 'qualitatively higher trajectory' and will be marked by 'decisive transition in public management

development'. Yet, years later, corrupt behaviour in state agencies from national to local government multiplied.

Introducing a new ethos amongst civil servants will do little to achieve results when political principals at national, provincial and local government levels have limited understanding of authority parameters and lack appreciation of professional administrative standards. Real change needs to start at the top with setting new performance standards for appointing parliamentarians and members of the Executive. That would be a robust basis for constructing enduring pillars of a developmental public service that is both ethical and competent. Ministers may not be bureaucrats, but they are public officials and should not be exempt from ethical conduct or measure of competence. Setting an example for an effective public service would also require decisive and harsher action to be taken against members of the Executive who are under-performing, are entangled in conflicts of interest or engage in corrupt activities.



ETHICS AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE

As pointed out in the foregoing, the public sector ought to be a norm-setter in society and create a framework that disciplines wrongdoing and points to a high ethical standard. When the public sector is riddled with corruption, this lowers the ethical bar in society, and makes it easier for individuals and business people to exploit ethical weaknesses in the state. It is government that supplies norms and regulations in society, including regulating the conduct of business and setting the parameters of what is acceptable and not acceptable.

Ethics are not just about acts of theft in government or flouting of corporate governance in the private sector, which is a conservative view of ethics, they also concern neglect by the state of its responsibilities to citizens. When looking at leadership and possibilities for transformative shifts, it is essential that we look at those elements of society that hold formal power and those that possess social and informal power outside the domain of formal institutions. If we are to fix institutional and leadership defects in the public sector, and think about new frames of reference for leadership, we will need to look at the area of ethics and consider ways in which we can champion ethical renewal as a key component in our search for transformative leadership and social renewal. It is not possible to build state capacity in a climate that tolerates unethical conduct.

THE ROAD AHEAD: WHAT WOULD A CAPABLE STATE LOOK LIKE?

To reform the public service at the top, we need to think more in terms of professionalising the public service

and making it more efficient and effective. This will require government to empower the directors-general vis-à-vis the minister. In this regard, the director-general would co-determine the department's functions with the minister based on symmetric authority, with the minister responsible for the political mandate. Administrative and operational control should lie solely with the directors-general, who in turn should report to the President or a super director-general located either in the presidency or the Department of Public Services and Administration.

For this model to work, directors-general should be appointed according to a meritocratic selection process rather than the prevailing cadre deployment system that makes them beholden to politicians or political factions. Language plays an important role in framing our conception of the world. The potency of how cadre development as an idea anchors our understanding of how the state is resourced at the higher echelons is perhaps underestimated. If the civil service is renewed and becomes more professional, concepts such as cadre deployment should disappear. There is no consensus of what exactly cadre deployment refers to, and it becomes easier to opportunistically exploit it as a way to deploy individuals from favoured factions or cronies. Formally renouncing this concept will not devalue the importance of political astuteness and related capabilities in the state. If anything, this may signal a meaningful change in the direction of professionalisation.

CONCLUSION

There is a need for a higher ethical bar within the political leadership at the top to create a model public service. This

requirement means that performance imperatives should guide the process of appointing members of the Executive such that the best men and women in society should be the ones who lead. Meritocracy in the public service should begin at the top and permeate the entire system. That would be a significant step towards creating a capable developmental state.

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ENDNOTES

1. Quoted in Allison and Blackwill (2013: 112). **NA**

The university and public policy in Africa:

may tomorrow be more than just another name for today

By Firoz Khan and Willan Adonis

FIROZ KHAN is Associate Professor at the School of Public Leadership, University of Stellenbosch and WILLAN ADONIS is a researcher at the School of Public Leadership, US. *In this article the authors deliver a scathing criticism of white and western means of knowledge production typical of our universities and argue for a process of decolonisation that is simultaneously theoretical and political to face up to the asymmetrical power relations in the global scholarly community.*

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary academics, researchers and scholars continue churning out 'increasingly precise answers to increasingly irrelevant questions' (Del Rosso, 2014). These 'answers' are of 'declining practical relevance to policy makers', particularly in an 'age of global protest' (World Politics Review, 2021). 'Translating information into knowledge', Carlos Fuentes, the Mexican novelist, wrote is 'one of the greatest challenges facing modern society and contemporary civilisation' (cited in Gregorian, 1996: 598). Rest assured the poor can do without 'armchair erudition, dead knowledge, and the peddling of petty antiquities' (Nietzsche, 2000, in Reinert & Reinert, 2006: 59). 'Science, and above all the social sciences', said Friedrich Nietzsche, the German philosopher (2000), 'should serve life' (Ibid). How then to serve life in our troubled times when despair is 'convincing' and hope

in desperately short supply (inverting Williams 1989, in Macduff, 2017).

DECOLONISATION AND THE POVERTY OF THEORY

It was Africa Day, 18 May 2018, at the University of Western Cape, home of iconic liberation struggle thinkers. Students and faculty waited patiently in the large, packed lecture theatre for the keynote speaker, the 'white African' intellectual, Ben Turok. The fierce and fearless champion of the poor seethed with anger, full of contempt for those 'mystifying' decolonisation to 'some obscure psychological distortion'.

I told you that I am a white African. I have no identity crisis at all. I know what I am. I know what I have done. I know what I stand for. I apologise for nothing at all. I know my identity [applause], and I am not going to get

into debates about my identity. I know who I am. I understand if some people want to raise questions about their role in society but let us not say that that is more important than understanding the legacy of internal colonialism as a system (Turok, 2021).

Another African intellectual giant, the late Thandika Mkandawire (2005: 38), says arguments about 'Africa's recent past and current dependence' having 'anything to do with the present conditions' is usually met with the 'kind of eye-rolling impatience with which committed postmodernists treat people who still fail to understand that history has come to an end and so has struggle' against the unholy trinity of ignorance, poverty and disease.

Delivered to the continent by the 'African diaspora and South African (mostly white) scholars' (Ibid: 45),



postmodernism, writes Mkandawire (2009), has ‘both its feet firmly off the ground, aloof, cynical and patronising’ (131). Nigerian academic, Denis Ekpo (2003: 126), berates the ‘celebrated *postmodern condition*’ (added emphasis) as ‘nothing but the hypocritical self-flattering cry of overfed and spoiled children of hypercapitalism’. ‘So, what has hungry Africa got to do with the post-material disgust of the bored and the overfed’ (Ibid.)? Ato Quayson, the Ghanaian literary critic asks (2000):

What, for instance, is the use of discursive analysis of the language of the IMF’s [International Monetary Fund’s] economic recovery packages when this does not address the terrible economic and social disjunctures produced in developing countries by the application of IMF policies and those of other international monetary agencies? (cited in Mkandawire, 2005: 41).

Sadly, even those scholars and researchers in Africa and the diaspora who do not ‘occlude’ political economy (Mkandawire 2009:131) and *realpolitik* are equally unsure about theory to best serve life, especially the poor (Oloruntoba & Falola 2020). Advocating self-determination, self-reliance, pride and oneness of the human race, those of the *Pan African condition*, in particular, Thabo Mbeki’s African Renaissance, ‘seemingly lifted straight out of Black Consciousness ideology’ (Gevisser, 2009: 210), is ‘steeped in western dependency’ (Beckles, 2020: 66). With foreign direct investment and western financial assistance as the ‘only option available’ to the continent’s poor and hungry, Mbeki’s renaissance is a ‘general reformulation of the World Bank’s strategy for Africa’ (Ibid.). World Bank strategies in Africa have resulted

in excessive downsizing of the state; institutional mono-cropping and mono-tasking (Mkandawire, 2009); and the neglect of infrastructure and tertiary education (Mkandawire, 2014).

SCIENCE, MAKING DIFFERENTLY AND STORIES

Politicians, officials, academics and researchers in Africa encounter public policy texts, theories and curriculums that are blind, deaf and dumb to ‘their own history, lived experiences – and their dreams’ with ‘little exposure to their own continent and all its complexity’ (Heleta, 2016). When Africa appears and is taught in higher education curriculums, it ‘confirms student prejudices’ implanted by ‘Bantu education’ of a dark, negative and different continent ‘north of the Limpopo’, with ‘no intelligentsia with writings worth reading’ (Mamdani, 1998: 71).

Embedded in the 19th century white-washing/‘Aryanisation’ of history, the erasure and falsification of *The Contribution of Non-Europeans to World Civilisation* (willful) is aggravated by the willful ignorance of academics of the complicity of ‘scientific’ research in the worst excesses of colonialism and Empire (Smith, 2012).

J. Marion Sims, the father of modern gynaecology, gained infamy by conducting ‘experimental’ surgeries on enslaved women, sometimes several times without anaesthetic, ‘not painful enough to justify the trouble’, he said in 1857 (Holland, 2018). In 1876, Sims was appointed President of the American Medical Association for his ‘pioneering tools and surgical techniques in women’s reproductive health’ (Ibid.).

In 1923, the United States of America’s Public Health Service, with the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, tracked the natural progression of untreated syphilis. Six hundred poor, illiterate, male sharecroppers were recruited, 400 previously infected with syphilis. ‘Subjects’ were told they

were receiving free healthcare, meals and burial insurance in exchange for participating in the ‘Experiment’. Penicillin – an effective cure for syphilis in 1947 – was not administered and the study continued until 1972. Victims of the Tuskegee Experiment included wives of subjects and children born with congenital syphilis (Nix, 2020). In 1997, President Bill Clinton formally apologised to the families and those who died excruciatingly painful deaths in the ‘worst biomedical science’ experiment in USA history.

In April 2021, the University of Pennsylvania and Princeton University issued apologies for using bones of an African American child, killed by Philadelphia police in 1985, in their ‘forensic anthropology’ classes (Pilkington, 2021). Earlier in the month, the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology apologised for holding more than 1 000 ‘stolen skulls’ of enslaved people in their Morton Collection (Renschler & Monge, 2008). The anatomy professor, Samuel Morton, a 19th century white supremacist, amassed the collection upon ordering his slaves to desecrate the unmarked graves of other slaves, pulling and pillaging skulls and bones. A slave in life and in the *afterlife*, courtesy of Ivy League universities! Our society and educators best not forget that the ‘graveyard talks back’ (apologies to Roy, 2020).

The dominance of western science and the western cultural archive, ‘whiteness’ in mainstream knowledge and thought – even in hip and trendy transdisciplinarity (Le Grange, 2017) – is ‘identical to the idea of white supremacy’ (Baird, 2021). Predating the word ‘racism’ in English language by 80 years, ‘white superiority’ rationalised and justified slavery and the slave trade, the annihilation of indigenous people (Indians) in North America, the Belgian atrocities and genocide in the Congo, the colonisation of Africa and south-east Asia, the deployment of the Final ➤



Politicians, officials, academics and researchers in Africa encounter public policy texts, theories and curriculums that are blind, deaf and dumb to ‘their own history, lived experiences – and their dreams.’

Solution in Nazi Germany, the apartheid state in South Africa and the rising neo-fascism and religious nationalism the world over (Ibid.).

Whiteness, trans-euphoria and the university corporate does not encourage and support (unprofitable) scholarly study scrutinising the colonial underpinnings of ‘science’, development research and practice – all which sustain the ‘unjust post-colonial order’ (Nwajiaku-Dahou & Himmelstine, 2020: 5). Devastated by historical underinvestment, structural adjustment and austerity and increasing demand, African universities are sealing Faustian pacts with donors and grant-makers and obsess to be the ‘best-in-the-always-right-white-west’ (university ranking charts). Collectively, this undermines and trumps the necessary epistemic disobedience and intellectual trespass to passage to less unjust post-colonial orders.

The late anthropologist, anarchist academic and ‘house theorist of Occupy Wall Street’, David Graeber (2015: 29), reminds us that ‘the ultimate, hidden truth of the world is that it is something that we make and can just as easily

make differently’. Making differently – questioning, debating, asserting and contributing – is an arduous and dangerous undertaking comprising dislodging the single story, the only story of Africa inhabited by beasts with no heads and houses, and spores of the demon (‘half devil, half child’ according to the poet Rudyard Kipling, cited in Adichie, 2009). The Nigerian feminist novelist, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009), writes:

Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanise. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity ... [W]hen we reject the single story, when we realise that there is never a single story about any place, we [reclaim] our history.

Telling and writing stories to reclaim our history and dignity will confront deep and enduring asymmetrical power relations in the global scholarly community. Reviewers, editors and ‘publishing houses’ (Kaijage, 2019: 18) in the north ‘attribute truth only to the Western way of knowledge production’ (Heleta, 2016). It is said that ‘scholars in the global south continue be at the receiving end’ of northern masters who ‘set the tone, define the terms of reference, dictate the idiom of the discourse and impose modes of conceptual thinking’ (Kaijage, 2019: 18).

The confrontation is simultaneously theoretical and political.

THE THEORETICAL CONFRONTATION: WHITE IS ALWAYS RIGHT, AND WEST IS ALWAYS BEST

‘Development’ and, more specifically, ‘development research’ about the *other* in its ‘crudest form’ has:

... traditionally been about dissecting ... [and] measuring the political, socio-economic and cultural processes of black, brown and other subjects of colour against a standard of Northern whiteness and finds them incomplete, wanting, inferior or regressive. In essence, white is always right, and west is always best (Pailey, 2020: 729).

Scholarship in journalism, art, music and literature over the last decade has, however, ‘spurred the most serious reconsideration’ of the hegemonic whiteness of the ‘last 150 years’ (Baird, 2021). This is not without fightback! Indeed, there is a ‘full-scale, well-co-ordinated and well-funded political project’ - uniting liberals and the rightwing in the UK, Europe and USA - who deny their complicity and participation in the production and reproduction of present inequalities and oppose any form and modicum of ‘racial equality and social justice’ (Modiri, 2021). Speaking of the need for urgent redistribution, restitution and repatriations, the Reverend William Barber of the Poor People’s Campaign’ (USA) said:

You cannot fix these inequalities by just having Black businesses in the community or just by saying people pull themselves up by their own bootstrap. It was policies, government policies, intentional policies, that created disenfranchisement, that stole wealth, that built this country on the backs of people without them having to pay anything. ... 250 years of free labor/slavery, 100 years of segregation and



[payment of] less than a living wage of \$7.25 per hour. That means it has taken African Americans 400 years to get to \$7.25 an hour ... Well we can't wait another 400 years (25 June 2021, edited interview transcript).

But perhaps the 'project' and banning teaching about slavery, colonialism and placing the 'contributions of black Americans' at the 'center of [the] national narrative' – like the Pulitzer Prize-winning 1619 Project² of *The New York Times* – will now provide increasingly diminishing returns as the protests and critiques in academic and political spaces demanding radical change deepen and expand. The global assertion of black and brown personhood in the streets, universities, courts and city halls of both north and south – the Black Lives Matter-led global protests in America, South America and Asia – 'connected black people to experiences of colonialism, racism and state violence perpetrated by their governments' (*World Politics Review*, 2021). From Cape Town to Oxford, students and citizens are tearing down the officially immortalised and sanctified marble busts and towering statues of the slave traders, murderers and butchers of the indigenous 'non-white' people. Students are revolting against colonial iconography and white male supremacy in curriculums and academic disciplines. Universities everywhere are rewriting and reframing the parameters of academic discourse in bold and unyielding manifestos. The assertion, protests, tearing down, revolts and manifestos impel and compel philosophical, theoretical and ideological regeneration. More on regeneration and renaissances shortly.

Despite the protests against 'white is always right' and 'west is always best' – wherein white knowledge and white history defines and governs thought, prescription and action – public policy

teaching and learning in Africa is also oblivious to the continent's realities and development priorities. Most mainstream public policy texts 'take for granted' legal and regulatory systems, the public schools, healthcare and social security for the elderly, roads, security and defence as in the west (Deaton, 2015). But most of the world's population in Africa and Asia do not live under effective governments, i.e. states 'lack the capacity to tax and deliver services'. The social contract between governed and the government is 'often altogether absent' in much of Africa and Asia where children perish 'not of incurable disease but childhood illnesses that we have known how to treat for almost a century', according to Angus Deaton, who was awarded a Nobel prize for his work on poverty, welfare and consumption (*ibid.*). And rich countries are exacerbating matters via the arms trade, trade and agriculture subsidy policies, the pursuit and production of drugs 'not for diseases killing the poor' and technical advice tethered to aid. In many African countries, foreign aid constitutes more than half the national budget and governments are accountable to donors first, and citizens second (*ibid.*). A point returned to in the next section.

Dislodging the epistemic privilege of the west as the norm, standard and yardstick is about uncovering and deconstructing the biases and prejudices underpinning western knowledge and public policy, prioritising the human and epistemic rights of the subjugated, excluded and devalued (apologies to Demaria & Kothari, 2017). The *public lingua franca* – the resistance and oppositional discourses of those not featured in the 'taken for granted' hetero-normative textbooks, grand white papers, grey strategy documents and dead guidelines – namely #FeesMustFall, #RhodesMustFall, Black Lives Matter and the protests from Eswatini to Chile to Haiti to Hungary to Hong

Kong must find voice and expression in lectures, conferences and banquet halls. Post-, pluri- and anti-disciplinary orientations vs trans-euphoria – the western science and subject/discipline straddled *transdisciplinary condition* (Jessop & Nielsen, 2003, Le Grange, 2017) – will be critical in regenerating dull and lifeless curriculums and programmes, helping to repurpose and retool knowledge for government officials and administrators who must envision and manipulate abstract information and design executable models in the heat of competing ideologies, incompatible lived realities, sub-cultural predilections and the professional's own prejudices.

THE POLITICAL CONFRONTATION: REAL-WORLD POLICY PRACTICE, THE HARVARDS OF AFRICA AND THE RULING CLASS

Public policy and business schools the world over do not concern themselves much with the 'oppressive hierarchies of power running deep' in their teaching and learning (Banerjee, Rodriguez & Dar, 2020). Feeding on 'deliberate exclusion, ontological denial and the erasure of local forms and ways of knowing' (Hugo, 2018 cited in Motsaathebe, 2020), courses and curriculums of both schools reproduce and deepen power hierarchies. For example, numerous business and public policy and business schools in the south wax voluminously about 'good governance', 'democracy', 'citizenship' and 'participation'; what it 'ought to be' or 'should be'; and then proceed to dazzle with glitzy models, diagrams and organograms. Remarkably, many of these imported and imposed northern world class models and schemas derived or grounded in 'epistemologies of certainty' where 'often what passes as knowledge is little more than opinion' (Utting, 2006: 7) and the delusions of the wealthy and their functionaries in university economics departments (see Stein, 2021). ➤➤



Telling and writing stories to reclaim our history and dignity will confront deep and enduring asymmetrical power relations in the global scholarly community.

‘Good governance’, for instance, is everywhere applauded and promoted as motherhood and apple pie – ‘universally good’ – with little said of its origin and motivations. The current demand for the south to adopt world-class institutions of ‘good governance’ immediately is however at odds with the historical experience of developed countries. In an authoritative survey of the now developed economies, Britain and the United States (amongst others), Chang (2002) demonstrates that the strictures of ‘good governance’ – clean and efficient bureaucracy and judiciary, protection of property rights, contracts and patents, good corporate governance institutions and an independent central bank – were the *outcome* and not the cause of economic development.

The ‘good governance’ regime, in its present incarnation, ‘fatally’ damages the ‘possibility of creating a developmental transformation state’ (Khan, 2004: 188). Indeed, ‘good governance’ is positively anti-developmental compared to the previous ‘bad policies’ of the now developed countries where until 1913, and beyond universal suffrage and secret balloting was a novelty; there was widespread nepotism and corruption in the public sector;

corporate governance institutions fell miserably short of modern standards; competition law was non-existent; banking regulation was underdeveloped and inconsistent; insider trading and stock price manipulation was common; income tax was still a novelty; labour legislation regarding working hours, occupational safety, and child and female labour standards were patchy, coverage limited and enforcement poor; and trade barriers, infant industry protection, export subsidies, and violation of patents were the dynamo of industrial growth (Chang, 2002). In south-east Asia, the ‘governance’ regimes were clientelistic, characterised by ‘extensive cronyism’ but ‘compatible with heightened levels of productive investment and dynamic growth’ (Mkandawire, 1998: 11).

The historical record shows that capitalism and capitalist development ‘thrives under quite a diverse set of conditions’ (Moore, 1997 cited in Mkandawire, 2015: 578) including cronyism, ‘clientelism’, ‘presidentialism’, ‘neopatrimonialism’ and ‘neopatrimonialisation of the bourgeoisie’ (Ibid.) Botswana, ‘[one] of Africa’s success stories may also be one of its most clearly “patrimonial” or “neopatrimonial” states’.

Complex reciprocities link the government and its citizens, legitimacy is created and reinforced through both the rule of law and personal bonds and a mutually constitutive relationship exists between the personal and the public (Pitcher, Moran & Johnston, 2009 cited in Mkandawire, 2015: 578).

In Rwanda, not the poster child of ‘good governance’, patrimonialism, economic performance and service delivery are positively associated (see Khan & Pillay, 2019). Rwanda’s heterodox and statist development

path reduced unemployment, poverty and inequality significantly and rapidly. Unemployment ranged from 0.95% in 2004, peaking at 1.15% in 2014 and pegged at 0.97% in 2018 (Pletcher, 2019). The proportion of people living below the national poverty line declined from 60.6% in 2001 to 39.4% in 2014 (Ggombe & Newfarmer, 2017: 5). Inclusive growth policies reduced income inequality, the Gini coefficient declining from 0.52 in 2006 to 0.49 in 2011 (Ibid.).

Hence clientelism, cronyism and neopatrimonialism – bad policies and bad governance – are ‘not incompatible with dynamic capitalist development’ (Mkandawire, 2015: 578) measured by dramatic and rapid reductions in unemployment, poverty and inequality for households to escape want, squalor, ignorance and disease. In contrast, the discourse of ‘good governance’ that politicians and administrators shackle themselves to ‘often serves to legitimate neoliberalism’. Good governance is ‘a flanking and supporting mechanism for an essentially inegalitarian and unjust economic and political project’ (Jessop, 2008: 6).

Messy real-world policy practice where ‘good policies’ can be bad and ‘bad policies’ good, depending of course on history, academics in public policy and business schools of the south insist and persist in the uncritical prescription, utilization and detailed elaboration of disembodied ‘international best practice’ anti-developmental models, diagrams, case studies, flowcharts and log frames.

A case in point is South Africa. Post-apartheid public service and sector reform, driven mainly by (white) academics and academics-turned-consultants, courted and unquestioningly embraced neoliberal New Public Management (NPM) scripts and strictures (Matsiliza, 2020); preaching with evangelical zeal depoliticisation, deregulation, downsizing – Osborne and Gaebler-



style, (1992) – to the officials and politicians of the first democratically elected government. With emphasis on output, outcomes and efficiencies, post-apartheid public service transformation came to mean reorganising government bureaucracies into autonomous business-like entities and encouraging development management theories and tools (Chipkin, 2011).

The shameless grab of NPM witnessed the dismantling of the apartheid developmental state (1948-1990) (Freund, 2018), morphing into a lean, mean and pro-rich minimalist state machine. The people who suffered most under apartheid paid the heaviest price for democracy as the state downsized to fixer of markets and outsourcer of services. The price paid by the new politically enfranchised poor is the criminal under-investment in basic services and infrastructure in townships, shanty towns and shacks – a cause and outcome of the decimation of the state's infrastructural power and productive capacity (Mazzucato & Quaggiotto, 2020). De-institutionalisation, the destruction of the state and under-investment in infrastructure are today branded the 'big failure of small government' (Ibid.). Not unsurprising then is that the state today is 'once again a key actor' in today's economic reflation and public health responses (Deane, 2020).

Even with messy real-world policy practice and good governance policy failure, business schools, and arguably public policy schools, are wont to change, still 'unsure about the merits of decolonizing' knowledge and practice (Kelly & Hrenyk, 2020). Business schools do not teach that the early forms of scientific management – later the foundation of modern quantitative techniques for workforce – derived from slave plantation owners (Rosenthal, 2018). Business schools seem to want to deny or erase their colonial foundations.

Schools are silent on the misery and devastation of the white man's 'manifest destiny' of 'Civilisation, Commerce and Christianity'. Little is said in their courses and curriculums of the overt and structural violence of extractive economies, the auto-petroleum bloc, the military-industrial complex, financial speculation and the precarious livelihoods of growing millions banished to the gig economy. The 'over-representation of white academics' in business schools, the dominance of English, and fixation on the northern star (the 'most powerful business schools are in America and Europe') reinforces exclusion, erasure and denialism (Banerjee, Rodriguez & Dar, 2020).

When the quest to be the 'best-in-the-always-right-white-west' and third-stream income (the 'consulting gem') is added to the lethal cocktail of exclusion, denial and erasure, business schools frequently degenerate into institutional aberrations of questionable higher education, national and continental developmental relevance. A case in point is the leading business school of the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa. According to the University of Stellenbosch (USB) homepage, it is ranked in the 'Top 100 Business Schools in the World; Top 3 Schools in Africa; and No 1 in South Africa'. USB strives to 'develop responsible leaders', 'create new knowledge', 'contribute to better business and better societies all over the world' and assist students 'to lead responsibly so they can go into the world as stewards of society' (Ibid.).

In his acceptance speech of a generous donation by a multinational brewing and beverage company of new premises for the USB in the luxurious and leafy winelands, the Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Stellenbosch, Wim De Villiers, beamed about USB as the 'only business school on the continent' with 'triple accreditation' of the internationally

prestigious kind (Operations & Finance, SU, 2019). A year earlier, in 2018, De Villiers naively, but not unsurprisingly, questioned the integrity of USB's MBA curriculum. It is worth quoting De Villiers at some length:

'Curriculum renewal is to look both at assessing courses and determining whether they are still relevant or need to change. We want to incorporate this notion of decolonising the curriculum'. He cited the MBA as an example, saying it was not relevant to use case studies only from North America or Europe. 'We should develop local case studies that speak to our local experience and context' (in Govender, 2018).

The historical dependence of business, and public policy, schools in Africa on 'first-world' case studies, most notably the 'Harvard School' (UCT Newsroom, 2016); the unbridled aspiration to be 'an Oxford or a Harvard of the South', a 'little piece of Europe in Africa' (apologies to De Villiers, 2017); and the hyper-aggressive entrepreneurialism of business schools peddling platinum-plated, star-studded, accredited, off-the-shelf, Tupperware courses to students and government is arguably unlikely to deliver 'responsible leaders' and 'stewards of society' dedicated to improving the lot of Africa's poor and hungry. Tragically, deviation from this curriculum and path is not promising because university governors and administrators have become addicted to the prestige, ranking, spoils and revenue in the design of gold-plated foreign courses and delivery of masterful northern profitable irrelevance.

The American philosopher, political activist, social critic and public intellectual, Cornel West (West, 2021 in Democracy Now, 2021), issues a dire warning to those walking the elitist Harvard path: 'Harvard's commodified state tied to big money, tied to image, and, in the end, just being of service to the empire and being of service to the ruling classes'. >>

“

**Devastated
by historical
underinvestment,
structural
adjustment and
austerity and
increasing demand,
African universities
are sealing Faustian
pacts with donors
and grant-makers.**

CONCLUSION: AFRICA ALWAYS BRINGS FORTH/ CONTRIBUTES SOMETHING NEW

This need not be the outcome! Tomorrow ‘can be more than just another name for today’ (apologies to Galeano, 2013: 148) if we choose to make our continent, communities and universities differently. Elitist institutions producing elitist stooges (Williams, 2015) are of no good to Africa’s dispossessed, displaced and disempowered. The ‘mass production of low-quality graduates’ (Ogam, 2007 in Mbeki, 2015) is of little value to the hungry, unemployed and homeless of Africa.

Serving life demands of our governors, administrators, chancellors, rectors and deans of African universities to reimagine and rethink the role, status, mission and duties of the African university. Pixley Seme’s 1906 provocation – is still current:

Whither is fled the visionary gleam,
Where is it now, the glory
and the dream?

And when the governors, academy and academics of various *conditions*, convictions and affiliations gather to dream and engineer Africa’s ‘liberation from foreign rule, autocracy, hunger, poverty, ignorance, disease and dehumanisation’ (paraphrased Mbeki, 2015: xv) be warned that society and students are marching and rioting in the streets demanding prosperous, inclusive and sustainable tomorrows that white papers, strategies, guidelines and ‘taken for granted’ textbooks have not delivered.

It is true that renaissances cannot be conjured up like a spell (Maloka, n.d.). It is true that renaissances release enormous creative energies and uncontrollable forces that destroy (Mbeki, 2000). It is also true that ‘*Semper aliquid novi Africa affert*’ (Africa always brings forth/contributes something new) (Pliny the Elder 23-79 AD, cited in Department of International Relations and Cooperation, 2004).

A university anchored in and responsive to the needs of the poor, hungry and homeless of Africa is possibly ‘something new’ to our chancellors, rectors, deans and administrators in the public policy and business schools of Africa, especially those who ‘spend more time with donors than scholars’ (Sen, 2021). A curriculum grounded in and alive to the rights and priorities of the poor combined with the *public lingua franca* – resistance narratives, oppositional discourses and radical impulses of our age of global protest – is possibly ‘something new’ for universities and schools in the south.

The African continent, society, universities, academy, schools and learners must and will bring forth ‘something new’ because they all *dream, demand, deserve* and are *entitled* to freedom from the yoke of internal colonialism, neo-colonialism, mental colonialism, western theoretical evangelism, the World Bank and the paternalism of the bored and overfed!

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Two views on improving our electoral system

At present, all people elected to Parliament and to the nine provincial legislatures have to be members of political parties. In 2020, the Constitutional Court declared that this provision (in place since 1994) is unconstitutional. The Court gave Parliament 24 months to amend the current Electoral Act to allow independent candidates to stand in national and provincial elections. This could have significant implications for the existing closed list proportional representation system. It also raises the possibility – that has long been mooted – that a form of constituency-based representation may be considered.

First off the mark to confront this challenge was MP Mosiuoa Lekota, leader of the Congress of the People (COPE) party, who tabled a Private Member's Bill, the Electoral Laws Second Amendment Bill (B34-2020), in Parliament on 4 December

2020 (PMG 2021a). This Bill is presently with the Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs.

In a parallel process, the Minister of Home Affairs, Aaron Motsoaledi, appointed a Ministerial Advisory Committee on the Electoral System. This is chaired by prominent former activist, politician and business leader Valli Moosa. Its job is to produce a draft Bill that government will consider and present to Parliament in due course (Motsoaledi, 2021).

Parliament, led by the Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs, has held several presentations, workshops and public hearings on the complex issues around changing the electoral system to meet the general directions of the Constitutional Court judgment and, of course, to satisfy the Constitution itself. Issues with the electoral system in South Africa have had considerable attention over the last two decades and more, with very

little action. MPs may be hesitant to do their work of holding the Executive to account – because they may owe their positions in Parliament to senior members of the same party!

In the articles below, *New Agenda* provides an insight into two approaches proposed for a new electoral system. First, former MP Farouk Cassim discusses Mosiuoa Lekota's Private Member's Bill. It is followed by an edited version of a submission by the Council for the Advancement of the SA Constitution (CASAC) to the Ministerial Advisory Committee on the Electoral System.

Motsoaledi, A. 2021. Debate on the Home Affairs Budget Vote 5, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, Minister of Home Affairs, National Assembly 19 May. Available at <https://pmg.org.za/briefing/32985/>

PMG. 2021a. Electoral Act amendment; Electoral Laws Second Amendment Bill; with Minister. Report on a meeting of the Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs. 09 February. Available at <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/32156/> [Includes presentation by Farouk Cassim] **NA**

Private Member's Bill to introduce multi-party constituencies

By Farouk Cassim

A former Member of Parliament for the IFP, Farouk Cassim is now a member of COPE and an advisor to Mosiuoa Lekota.

Member of Parliament and leader of the Congress of the People (COPE) Mosiuoa Lekota submitted a Private Member's Bill, the Electoral Laws Second Amendment Bill (B34-2020), to the National Assembly (NA) in December 2020 in response to a ConCourt ruling in favour of amending the Electoral Act 73 of 1998. This served as a trigger to get electoral reform under way. His advisor, party member FAROUK CASSIM, outlines the changes proposed in this Bill.

Mosiuoa Lekota submitted the Electoral Laws Second Amendment Bill (B34-2020), in his capacity as a Member of Parliament, to the NA in December 2020. This followed the judgment handed down by Justice Madlanga on June 11, 2020,

which deemed that our electoral law was, in part, unconstitutional. The Constitutional Court gave Parliament until June 22, 2022 to amend Electoral Act 73 of 1998.

The need to change how we elect our MPs and Members of Provincial Legislatures (MPLs) started way back. On 26 March 1999, President Mandela, in his very last address to the NA, asked whether Parliament did not 'need to re-examine our electoral system, so as to improve the nature of our relationship, as public representatives, with the voters!' Three years later, in 2002, the Cabinet appointed a team under the leadership of the late political analyst, businessman and politician, Frederik van Zyl Slabbert, to investigate electoral systems and to report on what would best suit South Africa. One of the task team's main recommendations was for South Africa to have a mix of proportional representation and a constituency-based system. However, Cabinet shelved the recommendations.

In 2006, in a discussion document for its 2006 conference, the Congress of SA Trade Unions (Cosatu) punted a constituency-based electoral system which 'will promote more dynamic contact between the people and

public representatives, [and hold] the possibility of people's views being heard.' It also favoured introducing the element of constituents in more directly determining candidates.

The Cosatu document pointedly highlighted the problems associated with the closed list proportional representation (PR) system, namely: 'The current system of proportional representation also undermines independent thought as individual careers depend on those in the party leadership and the deployment committee. Unless we can achieve it soon, the movement towards sycophancy is inevitable.' Cosatu correctly and presciently expected that sycophancy was soon going to dominate our politics. This is indeed what happened.

In 2006, the Speaker of the NA appointed an independent panel, chaired by former MP Pregs Govender, to investigate the deficiencies of our electoral system. The panel recommended a mixed system that captured 'the benefits of both the constituency-based and proportional representation electoral systems'. As section 46(1)(d) of our Constitution requires the electoral system to ➤

result, in general, in proportional representation, Parliament needed to make the electoral system constituency based. This is what the Van Zyl Slabbert panel had also recommended.

Parliament demurred for all of 15 years in creating a constituency-based system. It wanted more convincing. It gave the task to former president Kgalema Motlanthe, and in 2017 the High-Level Panel, led by Motlanthe, made the following submission in its report to Parliament:

One of the major challenges with the current electoral system is the weakness of the proportional representation system in holding politicians to account to the electorate. Members of Parliament are appointed not directly by voters, but rather by their party, based on candidate lists submitted to the Electoral Commission ahead of the elections. This makes them beholden to the party and its leadership rather than voters, and places party politics and loyalties ahead of effectiveness and delivery.

Parliament needed to act on this report. As usual, it did not.

On 15 August 2019, four applicants, the New Nation Movement NPC, Ms Chantal Dawn Revell, GRO and Indigenous First Nation Advocacy SA made their case in the Constitutional Court that the Electoral Act is unconstitutional. They argued it was unjustifiable for the electoral system to limit the right of citizens to stand for public office as independents. The Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution (CASAC) and the Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse (OUTA) took part as *amici curiae* (friends of the Court). This follows the dismissal of the case heard in the Western Cape High Court in April 2019.

On 17 June 2020, in a judgment penned by Madlanga J (concurring in by Cameron J, Jafta J, Khampepe J, Mathopo AJ, Mhlantla J, Theron J and Victor AJ), the Constitutional Court upheld the appeal and set aside the order of the High Court. It held that the Electoral Act is unconstitutional to the extent that it requires that adult citizens be elected to the NA and provincial legislatures only through their membership of political parties.

The first judgment held that the declaration of invalidity must take effect from the date of the judgment. Finally, it suspended the declaration of invalidity for 24 months. Parliament has until June 2022 to amend our electoral law so that it passes constitutional muster.¹ After discussions with several people who were interested in this judgment and who believed that Parliament had overlooked too many recommendations to undertake electoral reform, Mosiuoa Lekota seized the bull by the horns. He started the drafting of the Electoral Laws Second Amendment Bill (B34-2020) and officially lodged it with Parliament on 4 December 2020.²

The following are the key elements of the Private Member's Bill (B34-2020):

1. Inclusion of independent candidates in elections;
2. Creating a hybrid system providing for proportional representation and for 52 multi-member constituencies;
3. Keeping the single transferable vote mechanism to ensure proportional representation;
4. Substituting the closed list PR system with an open list PR system allowing voters the right to vote for a specific candidate on a political party's list rather than the party per se as has happened from 1994;
5. Requiring each candidate to publish how that candidate will seek to advance the Bill of Rights when elected;

6. Achieving a smaller national legislature, as well as smaller provincial legislatures; and
7. Making provision for the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to explore the viability and desirability of electronic voting.

Why did we choose to have 52 multi-member constituencies? Simply because South Africa already has 52 wall-to-wall boundary-delimited districts. These comprise 44 municipal districts and eight metropolitan council areas. We all know that municipal government is failing citizens abysmally. The failure of the two higher levels of government to abide by the constitutional injunction in section 41(1)(h) to 'co-operate with one another in mutual trust and good faith by- (i) fostering friendly relations; (ii) assisting and supporting one another; and (iii) informing one another on matters of common interest' has exacerbated the situation. The Bill has sought to make constituencies align with district boundaries to ensure that co-operative governance works as intended in the Constitution. MPs, Members of Provincial Legislatures (MPLs) and councillors who come from one geographical district will need to form a team to service the people in that area in each sphere of government.

MULTI-MEMBER CONSTITUENCIES

Since there are only 52 districts, some districts will have more representatives in each of the two legislatures than others. This is especially true of metropolitan areas. The Bill has decreased the number of MPs from 400 to 350 and the number of MPLs from 430 to 300. In the NA, 300 MPs will come from constituencies and 50 from the country in its entirety. The Constitution will allow for such an arrangement. The 52 constituencies, therefore, will send 300 public representatives to the NA and 300 public

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[Does Parliament not] ‘need to re-examine our electoral system, so as to improve the nature of our relationship, as public representatives, with the voters!’ – Nelson Mandela



representatives to the nine provincial legislatures. In this way, South Africa will have 650 public representatives and not 840 members as at present. South Africa will have 190 fewer public representatives if the Bill becomes law.

The metros will have more than 20 MPs and more than 20 MPLs. Some districts with sparse populations will have just one MP and one MPL, but most constituencies will have multi-member representation. In the metropolitan areas, the IEC will combine five or six contiguous wards to create a seat or sub-constituency. Each seat will have one MP, one MPL and five or more councillors. Each seat will have to have a constituency office where

citizens can meet a public representative from the NA or the provincial legislature and several councillors. This will provide citizens with a one-stop service.

TRANSFERABLE VOTE

The Bill envisages a system where the IEC will determine a quota for each seat. Suppose the quota is 35,000 votes, each candidate who gets 35 001 votes will have a seat in the legislature to which the voting applied. Any excess votes will spill over to the next candidate. In this way, a political party will win seats in proportion to the number of votes it gained in the election. However, the Bill adds an important element, the open list.

OPEN LIST

From 1994, South Africa has used the closed list proportional representation system. In this system, people voted for a political party and the candidates listed by the party. The Bill proposes a big change. Political parties will still submit their respective lists of candidates in placement position determined by each party. If the Bill becomes law, voters will select the candidate they prefer and not the party per se. This, most likely, will see the order on the list rearranged. Voter preference will trump party preference. A candidate who occupies an inferior position in the list could displace someone higher up on the list. Voters will determine who occupies which position on the list.

Elected representatives will carry a mandate from voters. They will, therefore, have to account to voters first and only after that to their respective parties. As mentioned above, excess votes of each candidate who meets the IEC quota will spill over to the candidate next on the list. Political parties will lose nothing in this arrangement but voters will score handsomely.

CANDIDATES MUST GIVE AN UNDERTAKING TO ADVANCE THE BILL OF RIGHTS

The Bill of Rights is the most prized jewel in our Constitution. It makes our Constitution the envy of people around the world. Yet, in elections, inferior manifestos have precedence over the Bill of Rights. The Bill rectifies this.

Wikipedia notes that ‘the Bill of Rights, [is] a human rights charter that protects the civil, political and socio-economic rights of all people in South Africa. The rights in the Bill [of Rights] apply to all law, including the common law, and bind all branches of the government, including the national executive, Parliament, the judiciary, provincial governments and municipal councils. Some provisions, such as those prohibiting unfair discrimination, also apply to the actions of private persons.’ Section 7 of our Constitution states:

1. The Bill of Rights is a cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. It enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom.
2. The state must respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights in the Bill of Rights.
3. The rights in the Bill of Rights are subject to the limitations contained or referred to in section 36, or elsewhere in the Bill.

The Bill requires an undertaking from each candidate that upon being elected that candidate, as a public representative, will do his or her utmost to ensure that the state will indeed ‘respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights in the Bill of Rights’. It is important for the credibility of our Constitution and our democracy that each MP and each MPL has such an obligation and meets that obligation. ➤

REDUCING THE SIZE OF GOVERNMENT

The government is bloated. The Bill proposes to reduce the number of public representatives to the extent the Constitution allows. How will that work? Hypothetically, if the voter numbers are as in column two of in the following table, it will work something like this:

Fifty more seats in the NA will come from votes that are cast nationally. Arrangements for constituting the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) will remain as at present because the Constitution prescribes the procedure for its establishment.

VOTING PROCEDURE

The Bill proposes new voting procedures, ideally electronic voting. Each candidate for each of the 52 constituencies will have a unique number. Upon activation of the screen, the system will require a voter to input the number of the constituency candidate they select for the NA, the number for the provincial candidate selected for the provincial legislature and the third number for the candidate receiving the vote nationally. If the head shot, party symbol and logo on the screen for each segment of the election show the selected candidate, the voter will confirm that. If not, the voter will go back and make the required correction. When the voter has made the three selections, and confirmed them, the printer will print three cards, each with a different colour. The voter will then slide the card, face down, into the ballot box with the matching colour. This will make vote counting easy and swift as voting

PROVINCE	VOTERS WHO CAST THEIR VOTES	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL VOTERS	PROVINCIAL SEAT ALLOCATION	NATIONAL SEAT ALLOCATION	FINAL NA SEAT ALLOCATION
Gauteng	6,381,220	23.848%	40	71.544	71
Western Cape	3,128,567	11.693%	35	35.079	35
KwaZulu-Natal	5,524,666	20.648%	40	61.944	61*
Northern Cape	626,471	2.341%+1%	30	10.023	10
Mpumalanga	1,951,776	7.295%	30	21.885	22*
Free State	1,462,508	5.466%	30	16.398	16
Eastern Cape	3,363,161	12.57%	35	37.71	37
North West	1,702,728	6.364%	30	19.092	19
Limpopo	2,608,460	9.745%	30	29.235	29
			300	302.91	300

station managers will use machines. Where any party disputes the votes tally, manual counting can take place.

CONCLUSION

We need to concentrate our minds on the loss of interest in voting and revive citizen interest in elections and strengthen our democracy.

Finally, the insurrection that occurred in July 2021 revealed to all of us the danger of factionalism that the closed list proportional representation system presents. The fight inside the ANC spilled onto the streets and became an insurrection that damaged our economy, caused loss of life, strained race relationships and scared both local and international investors.

We need to heed what Nelson Mandela, Pregs Govender as the leader of her panel, and Kgalema Motlanthe as the leader of the High-Level Panel advised Parliament. We need to ditch the

closed list proportional representation system to improve governance, heighten accountability and bring brighter talent into government. South Africa can no longer afford a system which exists to support the patronage network and place incapable people in ministerial positions to achieve party political balance.

The Electoral Laws Second Amendment Bill (B34-2020) is available for scrutiny at <https://www.parliament.gov.za/bill/2294692>. As citizens of South Africa, we need to study what it contains and determine whether the amendments made to the Electoral Act 73 of 1998 go far enough to lift us to a higher plain.

ENDNOTES

1. See <http://www.saflii.org/za/cases/ZACC/2020/11media.pdf>
2. See <https://www.parliament.gov.za/bill/2294692> **NA**



‘Single-member constituencies provide a direct form of accountability’

Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution

The following are highlights from the Proposal for Electoral Reform submitted to the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Electoral Reform by the Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution (CASAC). *This is an edited version of the council’s submission to the Ministerial Advisory Committee chaired by Valli Moosa.*

CASAC urges Parliament to consider that the electoral system is the fundamental mechanism around which any democracy pivots.

While the legislative changes that are being considered by Parliament are aimed at satisfying the ruling of the Constitutional Court, it is also an opportunity to improve parliamentary representation in South Africa and strengthen the basis of our constitutional democracy. The amendment of the electoral system

must, however, take into account the trade-offs inherent to changing electoral systems.

The two most important principles guiding an electoral system are accountability and fairness; others include simplicity and inclusivity.

Accountability is a relatively simple principle: representatives should be held responsible for their performance by constituents, and constituents should have a way to register their disappointment or approval of the conduct of their representatives.

Fairness is a more complex principle, but it can be simplified as including both representativity and the expression of every voter’s voice through electoral mechanics. This means that the composition of a legislative body should more or less express the will of the people (ie proportionality), and votes should not be wasted or discarded where possible.

These two goals, at least where it concerns electoral systems, have differing solutions. Proportional representation is undoubtedly the fairest and most inclusive system, but it seems to have caused an accountability deficit and weakened the status of MPs in relation to their party hierarchies. Single-member constituency systems, on the other hand, produce obvious mechanisms of accountability. But these

are ‘winner-takes-all’ systems, ie many constituents’ votes are effectively not represented when the candidate they vote for is not elected.

It has become relatively orthodox to advance a multi-member constituency system with a proportional list component as the future of South Africa’s electoral system. This stretches back to the majority view of the 2002 Van Zyl Slabbert Electoral Task Team, which recommended a multi-member system based on the boundaries of district councils with a compensatory national party list.

It is CASAC’s contention that the multi-member system does not deliver direct accountability between representatives and constituents, but rather a diffuse accountability that could lead to blame-shifting among multi-member representatives. The fact that constituencies will necessarily be geographically and/or population-wise very large, militates against any direct relationship between MPs and the voter. Multi-member constituencies could also encourage the cultivation of electoral niches by representatives, rather than encouraging cross-cleavage campaigning, and appeals to all potential voters. The architecture of multi-member constituencies, at least as envisaged in the Van Zyl Slabbert report, would also result in significant over-representation ►►

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... accountability and fairness are the most important principles for an electoral system but they must be combined with simplicity and inclusivity.

of smaller constituencies, to the detriment of larger constituencies. The creation of an imbalance in voting power (ie increasing the comparative value of one voter's vote over another's) is an undesirable outcome.

For these reasons, CASAC prefers the adoption of a single-member constituency system, which delivers constituencies of relatively similar population size. This will of course entail the creation of fairly large constituencies in areas of low population density, but the benefits could easily outweigh the potential downsides.

Single-member constituencies provide a direct form of accountability: the local representative is the link between constituents and Parliament. A common dissatisfaction with representation in South Africa is that articulating grievances and having them heard by those with the power to address them is difficult if not impossible. Constituency representatives are an obvious mechanism for the collation of societal grievances or inputs on proposed legislation or policy.

The current system attempts to achieve this through setting aside specific 'constituency periods' and the assignment of constituencies to MPs, but few South Africans seem to know



who their constituency representatives are or how to contact them, and MPs have little incentive to pay attention to constituency grievances given their election is not dependent on any specific community's support. Moreover, there is no system in Parliament for MPs to report back on their consultations with their constituents. Parliament conducts public hearings on some issues of national importance, but these are mass gatherings, often stage-managed and ineffective in giving voice to ordinary people.

Single-member districts will require MPs to pay attention to the desires and concerns of their constituents if they wish to be re-elected. It also provides a mechanism for constituents unhappy with their representative to express their dissatisfaction through the ballot box at the following election.

The introduction of directly elected representatives should also have a positive upside for the behaviour of Parliament: MPs will be, at least theoretically, more powerful and will not be vulnerable to arbitrary removal from Parliament by party officials. This ought to comparatively empower Parliament

vis-à-vis parties and government, and therefore strengthen parliamentary oversight (although this should not be taken as a given). Examples of directly elected ward councillors voting against party lines in the interests of good governance at municipal level do exist, and this pattern could be replicated at national level. However, electoral system design will have to decide whether directly elected MPs on a party ballot could be removed by the loss of party membership or not. In other words, consideration must be given to deleting section 47(3) (c) of the Constitution. While giving constituency MPs security of tenure for their electoral term will strengthen their hand, it may also contradict the desires of their constituents who voted for representatives because of their party affiliation.

The accountability and directness of the link between constituents and representatives in single-member districts certainly seems a desirable outcome for an electoral system, especially in the South African context where accountability has been at best illusory.

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CASAC prefers the adoption of a single-member constituency system, which delivers constituencies of relatively similar population size.

However, there are obvious disadvantages to single-member districts. The most obvious is that they produce unfair outcomes: while the voting system (two-round, transferable or not, etc) can mediate this effect, generally single-member districts are good for large parties and those with regional support concentration, and bad for smaller parties, especially those with widely dispersed support. Single-member districts with a first-past-the-post (FPTP)/Westminster voting system have the most disproportional outcomes. In effect, this would all but eliminate small parties from Parliament, and diminish the fairness and inclusivity of the current electoral system. FPTP also means that some voters' votes are wasted, in that their voice will not be represented if their preferred constituency candidate loses.

To compensate for this, and to ensure the constitutionality of the electoral system (which must result in terms of section 46(1)(d) of the Constitution 'in general in proportionality'), a proportional representation component must be included. The Van Zyl Slabbert majority view argued for a 300:100 split, where

300 constituency seats across 69 constituencies would be supplemented by 100 compensatory proportional seats. The number of constituency seats in comparison to proportional seats is something that is probably best decided based on how constituencies would be demarcated, and what the imbalances in registered voters are between existing demarcations. Several options prefer constituencies demarcated along municipal lines, which, while allowing for the grouping of people with similar general interests into electoral districts, would also create huge imbalances in constituency size and population. It may therefore be necessary for the number of seats in the National Assembly to be increased for the municipal demarcation option to be implemented.

Another issue that must be decided is whether the proportional list should be compensatory or separate from the constituency ballot. Compensatory lists are to correct the disproportionality of outcomes from constituency systems, by compensating affected parties with seats based on their vote share in constituency elections. It is a mechanism that does not accommodate independents or individuals contesting constituency elections – their votes would be lost/discarded in a compensatory list.

Separate proportional ballots would allow for voters to split their ballot, and vote in their constituency based on the performance of their representative, while still voting for their party preference at a national level.

Both systems have drawbacks, as do all electoral models. Separate ballots would not necessarily guarantee completely fair and proportional seat allocation outcomes, although they would soften the blow for smaller parties. A compensatory list, however, removes the option for a split ballot, which increases the voice available to a voter to express their preferences at

both local and national level. It may also be detrimental to smaller parties, who will have to run candidates in all constituencies if they wish to have a sufficient national vote share to be represented in Parliament. A separate ballot is thus a more appropriate choice, as it will allow small parties to run national campaigns and give voters more options to express their political preferences.

There are a number of further modalities that Parliament will have to consider, in terms of actual balloting systems (transferable votes, for instance), what would qualify a candidate for electoral victory (first-past-the-post or majorities achieved through two-round elections?) and the demarcation of constituencies.

Nevertheless, CASAC believes that the correct choice of electoral system in terms of the balance of accountability and fairness is a single-member constituency system combined with a separate national proportional ballot.

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The death of KK

Kenneth Kaunda: last of the giants

By James Ngculu

A former MK commissar and a founding member of the MK Military Intelligence, and later its Deputy Chief, JAMES NGCULU left South Africa for military training following the 1976 Soweto uprising. After years of exile, he returned to South Africa and became an MP in the first democratic Parliament.

Kenneth Kaunda, the first president of independent Zambia, died on 17 June 2021. He will always be remembered by the people of South Africa with a deep sense of gratitude for his unwavering support for the liberation movements and the base he provided when they were in exile. JAMES NGCULU of the South African Communist Party paid tribute to this giant of Pan-Africanism at an online memorial. The Institute for African Alternatives thanks him for allowing us to publish his speech. IFAA takes this opportunity to bow its head to Kaunda, a friend and comrade to South Africa during the darkest times.



THE END OF AN ERA

The passing on of Kaunda marks the end of an era. It closes the chapter of those founding fathers of the [then] OAU [Organisation of Africa Unity], who committed Africa to unity and the fight against colonialism and apartheid. Africa shall forever be indebted to a group of great giants committed to the humanist values of Kaunda.

These are greats such as Haile Selassie I, Ahmed Ben Bella, Abdel Nasser, Habib Bourguiba, Ahmadu Ahidjo, Leopold Senghor, Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Ahmed Sekou Touré, Patrice Lumumba, Jomo Kenyatta, Julius Nyerere, Philibert Tsitsiraka, William Tubman, O R Tambo, Agostinho Neto, Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo, Eduardo Mondlane and Samora Machel, and Nelson Mandela. The only leader of the national liberation movement remaining now is Sam Nujoma.

MOULDING A UNITED ZAMBIA

Kenneth Kaunda's mission [was always] to unite Zambia into one country. He mobilized various parties to unite behind the Choma Declaration and the new government system of 'one party participatory democracy'.

DOWN MEMORY LANE – THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

In the township of Chilenje, there is a small house, now called Chilenje House Number 394, that was home to Kenneth Kaunda between 1960 and 1962. The modesty of this house is the best depiction of the modesty KK embodied throughout his life.

The ANC moved its headquarters from Morogoro, Tanzania to Lusaka, Zambia in 1970. It was based at the African Liberation Centre, in Kamwala, just outside the Lusaka central business district. This was the property of the Zambian government and was guarded by the army [against] raids, especially by [the then Rhodesian Ian] Smith regime. The Liberation Centre accommodated all the liberation movements of southern Africa.

The ANC's chief representative was Thomas Nkobi, who also was deputy treasurer general. (The treasurer general

was Malome Moses Kotane, who was at the time in a hospital in Moscow). Nkobi worked with Tennyson Makiwane, Gertrude Shope and Jacky Sedibe, among others.

This became the gathering place for the liberation movements of southern Africa, yet today it has no plaque or symbol reflecting its historic importance.

Zambian Broadcasting Services (ZBS), situated in the suburb of Longacres in Lusaka, is where [the ANC's] Radio Freedom started its broadcasts on 25 May 1973. It operated in these studios alongside the MPLA, Unita, Swapo and Zapu. It is here that Radio Freedom, under Thabo Mbeki and Duma Nokwe, beamed its broadcasts to South Africa. Its message moved many people and the opening staccato of a volley of gunfire from AK 47s evoked in listeners a spirit of defiance and commitment to fight for justice.

In 1974, the ANC moved its headquarters to a backroom of a building in a sanitary lane between Chachacha and Cairo roads in Lusaka's central business district. It was from here that president OR Tambo, secretary general Alfred Nzo and treasurer general Thomas Nkobi operated. Sindiso Mfenyana was the administrator of the secretary general's office.

Sadly today this office of the ANC lies in ruins. There is no commemorative plaque here either marking this building as a heritage site. The backroom is now a storeroom for a general goods store and the building is derelict with piles of grey computers lying on top of each other. It's a very bad and sad sight.

When veteran journalist Nikiwe Bikitsha went to Zambia to see the ANC's historic places she visited the ANC headquarters and was astonished by what she saw. Accompanied by a tour guide who specialises in liberation routes in Zambia, she said at [the former] ANC HQ, "We leave the ghost of the ANC beneath the rubble, under the debris of grey, dusty TVs".

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**The presence of the national liberation movement impacted on the lives of
Zambians, but
Kenneth Kaunda
was steadfast in his
support of the ANC.**



**ANC HQ (Chachacha Rd), Lusaka, from:
Nikiwe Bikitsha, 2017**

OR Tambo stayed in many places. At first, he occasionally stayed at Kabolongwa, a suburb in Lusaka, at the home of a school principal, a Mr Gaoepe. Later he stayed with a number of MK soldiers in Makeni, a farming area known as Gonagudzingwa just outside Lusaka. By the 1980s, OR had established his residence in a suburb of Avondale, where he occupied a double storey building. This house is now a national heritage site known as OR Tambo House.

These symbols [remind us] of the trailblazers of our movement who stayed in Lusaka for the better part of their exile lives. These veterans, who spearheaded the struggle against apartheid, would have shed a tear over the death of Kaunda as they remembered the road they travelled. It

is a moment to think also of those who have departed, for theirs was a service unparalleled in commitment and unsurpassed in dedication and bravery.

The list of these trailblazers cannot fit into this space. However, we remember O R Tambo, Duma Nokwe, Thomas Nkobi, Alfred Nzo, Mzwai Piliso, Joe Modise, Mangwana Nkobi, Tiny Nokwe, Sophie de Bruyn, Ray and Jack Simons, Mac Maharaj, Reg September, Josiah Jele, Joe Nhlanhla, John Motshabe, Gertrude Shope, Sizakele Sigxeshe, Ruth Mompoti, Agnes Msimang, Zola Skweyiya, Robert Ramano, Simon Makana, Sam Komane, Peter Boroko, Anthony Mongalo, Willie Williams, Cassius Make, Ulyses Modise, Dalaboy Mtyeku, Vuyisile Mdala, Japhet Ndlovi, Hinsta Tshume and many others.

These veterans who made Zambia their home were completely dependent on the supplies given to them, including *mphando* and *Arbanye*. Amazingly, *Arbanye* remained at 20 Kwacha (equivalent to less than R1) from 1970 to 1990. The symbolism of this 20 Kwacha *Arbanye* should never be lost. It's an eloquent statement about the ANC leadership; every cadre and leader of the ANC must not aspire to monetary value or riches.

No money was provided for petrol. ANC members were given vouchers for use at specific garages. Food and clothing were supplied by the ANC. We got to know of the queues at Awolo's place where we got our food supplies (Awolo was the comrade responsible for this all his exile life). All these measures were to discourage corruption and expose anyone living a life of opulence.

These veterans of the liberation movement, the living and the dead, understood the singular commitment of Kaunda to liberation struggle, a struggle infused with justice and commitment. He was a father figure who was not just loving but also humane and charming. His signature song, *Tiyende pamodzi ndi mtima umodzi* – 'let's go as one, with one heart' – still evokes fond memories today. ►►

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**In honour of KK,
[we] once again
salute the Zambian
people. Despite their
sufferings, they
never turned against
... the liberation
movements.**

ONE ZAMBIA, ONE NATION

To quote Kaunda, ‘there is no doubt in my mind that without the government of national unity’s declaration of “One Party Participatory Democracy,” we could not have achieved much for the needy and the freedom struggle. The declaration was God sent, helping the people and the region.’

We were impressed by the slogan for a united Zambia that Kaunda would shout at gatherings at the showgrounds. The significance of his slogan, ‘one Zambia, one nation’, is immense. To South Africans it represents the statement of the founding fathers of the ANC; we are one nation.

The ‘one Zambia, one nation’ slogan was a paradigmatic statement of a common nationhood and a united country. It was a nation bound by a common national anthem and flag. Being Bemba or Ngoni was subservient to Zambian-ness.

Kaunda also championed the one-party state, [which] was a dominant paradigm in the African continent then. Kaunda pursued this policy infused with his humanism philosophy. The humanism espoused by Kenneth Kaunda was not synonymous with pacifism. It recognised the right of the colonised to free themselves by any means possible. In the context

of struggle, against apartheid and the Namibian occupation, there was strength in the one-party state policy.

KAUNDA THE DIPLOMAT, HUMANIST

KK was an accomplished diplomat. His meetings with [former apartheid prime minister, John] Vorster in 1974 at the Victoria Falls demonstrated his diplomatic skills. His friendly, ever-present white handkerchief, and his strong Christian beliefs, belied the supreme commitment of KK to the national liberation struggle in southern Africa. We South Africans, in particular, owe him a huge debt of gratitude.

Not only did he allow the ANC to work without interference, he also turned a blind eye to MK activities, and actively assisted the ANC. At Lusaka International Airport many MK cadres left for their missions usually with forged passports or an A4-sized ‘passport’ provided to the ANC people by the Zambian government. The ANC had its own dedicated person at immigration, ‘Cde Javel’, to clear all ANC people at Lusaka airport. MK also had facilities in Livingstone which allowed it to move arms and personnel across the mighty Zambezi River. Many cadres who were deployed to South Africa and the forward areas used this route.

Kenneth Kaunda was fully aware of the risks to Zambia’s economy and people of hosting the ANC and MK. Zambian police and security [forces] knew about MK activities, but never prevented them. Kaunda continued to fully support the ANC even when the economy was beginning to show signs of crumbling following the slump in copper exports and sales. The Zambian economy was pummeled and GDP nearly collapsed, yet Kaunda and Zambia never flinched in its support for the ANC.

Things got worse after the Nkomati Accord was signed, and many MK personnel [who had been in Mozambique] were moved to Lusaka. They joined MK communities in

places such as Chunga, and Mtendere, which became a hive of MK presence synonymous with the ANC and MK.

Lilanda, which accommodated leaders such as Duma Nokwe and Thomas Nkobi, was the place where the ANC community went to queue for food. Lilanda also had ANC offices, colloquially known as the Green House, and Lilanda township had a huge ANC community. When the ANC community left, many of the ANC houses in Lilanda reverted back to the Zambian Housing Corporation.

Kabwata, which hosted a meeting place of the PMC and MHQ, was where Alfred Nzo, Sizakele Sigxashe, Agnes Msimang and Joe Nhlanhla lived. Others who stayed there for a while included Joe Modise, Chris Hani and Steve Tshwete. Kabwata township also had a huge ANC community. Another township with a large ANC community was Chilenje where Cassius Make stayed. (He was later killed by apartheid security forces).

The DIP operated from Makeni, a smallholding outside Lusaka. The ANC also had a children’s creche at Greater East Road, Lusaka. This was a Women Section project sponsored by the Italians. There was a clinic in Emmersdale, the ANC had Star furnishers which made furniture for the ANC and a garage where ANC cars were repaired.

Zambian people are extremely friendly people. They have a wry sense of humour that will floor anyone unaccustomed to such jokes. Zambia had pubs on every corner. Loudspeakers outside would bellow African music while inside bands entertained patrons.

The hospitality of Zambians was best demonstrated in these pubs. They wouldn’t hesitate to invite South Africans to join them in sharing a Mosi beer, the only available beer and a popular drink in Zambia. The internationalism of Kenneth Kaunda and UNIP was demonstrated to South Africans. Zambians knew the pain Kaunda’s support [for the ANC] caused in their individual and collective lives

“

**They called us
freedom fighters.
They understood
Kaunda's mission
that Zambia shall
be free when Africa
is free.**



but they still loved South Africans and supported their struggle.

We, the community in exile, felt this devastating economic decline in shortages of food and goods. Shortages of Mosi beer [led to] extremely high prices. Mealie meal, the staple food of Zambians, was in short supply. The presence of the national liberation movement indeed impacted on the lives of Zambians, but Kenneth Kaunda was steadfast in his support of the ANC

and Swapo of Namibia. Never once did he call O R Tambo to say that the exile community was a burden or was making him unpopular with his people.

For this, the death of Kenneth David Kaunda is indeed a very sad moment. We members of the ANC owe Zambia, Africa and the international community that supported our struggle a huge debt of gratitude. The death of Kaunda is indeed an end of an era of leaders who were selfless and committed to the ideals of freedom, whatever the toll and pain.

We used to sing “Oh’ the Soviet people, Oh’ the loving people, Oh’ the Cuban people, Oh’ the loving people, Oh’ the Zambian people, Oh’ the loving people – we are far from home, we shall need you, we shall love you, for the things you have done for us”. This, comrades, is an internationalist song of the ANC in appreciation of internationalism in the struggle against apartheid. This must remain etched in our hearts.

We, members of the ANC, having imbibed the tradition of the Freedom Charter that there shall be peace and friendship, must remain true to this internationalism. In this regard, the freedoms and struggles of the Saharawi people and people of Palestine, and the blockade against Cuba, must occupy our minds.

The youth of South Africa must be educated about the quality of leaders such as Kenneth Kaunda. These are leaders of a rare breed. In honour of KK, his life and times, it is important to once again salute the Zambian people. Despite their sufferings, they never turned against Kaunda or UNIP, or the liberation movements. They called us

freedom fighters. They were ready to share with South Africans. Even the *mshanga* boys”, those young chaps in the informal economy who sold loose cigarettes for a living, never stopped loving and respecting freedom fighters. They understood Kaunda’s mission that Zambia shall be free when Africa is free.

Kaunda and his colleagues pledged their support and commitment to African unity and pan-Africanism. They knew that the role and manoeuvres of colonial powers would linger on even after liberation.

OR Tambo, delivering his January statement in 1987, said:

President Kaunda, together with his party, UNIP, and its government and the brotherly people of Zambia, stands as a great pillar of strength for the peoples of southern Africa, for the people of South Africa and Namibia a pillar that is visible from across the continent and beyond the oceans.

At 97 not out, with Covid-19 ravaging Africa and the world, Kaunda died having fulfilled his mission on earth. Now that the curtain has closed, and Kaunda joins his esteemed colleagues in another world, we shall no longer see him with his guitar, singing *Tiyende pamodzi ndi mtamo umodzi* ‘let’s go as one in one heart’.

He leaves a Zambia that is united. A Zambia that honoured him with 25 days of mourning! We can imagine him waving his white handkerchief to many revolutionaries as his final goodbye.

Everlasting glory to Kenneth David Kaunda. **NA**

Surfacing: On Being Black and Feminist in South Africa

Edited by Desiree Lewis and Gabeba Baderoon

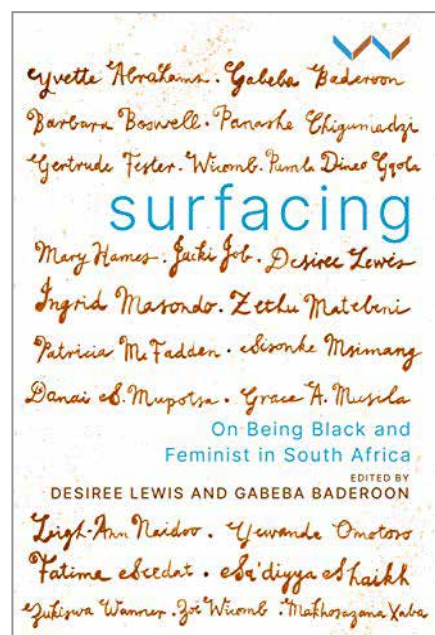
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Review by Mandisa Haarhoff and Lakhiyia Hicks

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Surfacing: On Being Black and Feminist in South Africa is an important reader on feminist thought in South Africa and its multiple contributors open the space for multi-directional questions, critical insight and intimate resonance. As well as the editors it includes Sisonke Msimang, Zoë Wicomb, Mary Hames, Gertrude Fester-Wicomb, Fatima Seedat, Jacki Job, Sa'diyya Shaikh, Zethu Matebeni, Ingrid Masondo, Danai Mupotsa, Yewande Omotoso, Zukiswa Wanner, Barbara Boswell, Grace Musila, Panashe Chigumadzi, Leigh-Ann Naidoo, Makhosazana Xaba, Yvette Abrahams and Patricia McFadden.

Edited by Desiree Lewis and Gabeba Baderoon, the book is poetics-meets-research-meets-conversation grounded in the dynamic landscape of black South African feminism. *Surfacing* forefronts

feminist voices and the ways in which South Africa's black feminists have engaged the longstanding crisis of an anti-black, cis-heterosexist, gender-binary-fixed, patriarchal and ableist world.

Surfacing invites ways of engaging with black, African and, in this case, South African feminism as a large-scale movement that cannot be held by one figure or explained through one nation. It is significant then, that in bold red ink, the book cover is etched with the names of each contributor – not just the editors' names, as is usually the case. Such intentionality speaks to visibilising multiple representations of black feminists and brings to the surface an array of experiences and personal perspectives that challenge an assumed single-story monologue.

Focusing on black and South African

feminism, the book seeks to highlight the diversity that comes to the surface when we are attentive to multiple perspectives and experiences located in our geographical, national, religious, political, racial, gendered, socio-economic, sexual, embodied positionalities, dynamics and relations. For Lewis and Baderoon, 'this collection is an intervention into the global and national circuits of knowledge-making, debate and pedagogy that, until now, have obscured the dynamic form of black feminist thought and practice in South Africa'.

South African feminists have contributed extensively to a myriad of fields, such as Literary Studies, Queer Studies, Health Sciences, Gender Studies and Law, with a vibrant on-the-ground activist movement. Lewis and Baderoon offer *Surfacing* to evince the potent presence and impact of South African feminists and the socio-political, religious and cultural environment that frames their persistence towards a liberatory expression as part of the larger global feminist imagination. Black feminist thought from South Africa cannot be dislodged and is always already present within currents of feminist imagining across the world.

Black feminism, argue the editors, has been for too long reserved for the intellectual contributions of North American and, to some degree, West African black feminists, sidelining the concurrent presence of feminist thought and activism in Southern Africa. We know quite well the danger of distinguishing and iconising a single feminist figure with the current example of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie whose feminism has been globalised to represent the entire continent. Her trans-exclusionary statements and refusal at accountability have only concretised an idea of African feminism as fixed on cis-gender womanhood and hostile to its large queer and gender diverse community across the spectrum.

The book itself does not disrupt this stereotyping view, however, it

scratches the surface of recognizing the contribution of trans, gender nonconforming, non-binary, and intersex feminists with Gertrude Fester-Wicomb's essay. Whilst the project of this book is clearly centred on the diversity of black feminism in South Africa by extending black to include non-black feminists who are black in the Black Consciousness articulation of blackness, the curation of only cis-gender contributors emphasize the problem in Black African feminism where non-binary, transgender, and intersex feminists do not figure in their own voice in African feminism and anthologies like this one. Certainly, as the editors anticipate, the editors anticipate these kinds of limits: 'It acknowledges the depth of a body of black feminist thought while also recognising the limitations of surveying the terrain. No collection is definitive. Nor can it be representative of a given topic or of a single group: there are always fractures, omissions and silences. Bringing together this group of women writers conveys some of the key connections and dialogues among perspectives and voices that continue to be sidelined in publishing, scholarship and public debates in South Africa.'

What is the current terrain of black feminism and what kind of interventions does it invite? What would a deliberate gender diverse, and non-binary-trans-intersex conscious feminist project bring to the surface and how would it illuminate the longstanding presence and contribution of feminist thought produced by gender-nonconforming, transgender and intersex thinkers, activists, and art makers?

In 'Queering the Queer,' Fester-Wicomb teases out the limits of a homogeneous queer identity by looking at the stories of Richard Rive, the late Sally Gross and her own. In a book about being feminist in South Africa, the story of Sally Gross, a womxn born intersex and assigned male at birth, and a feminist in her own right, is important precisely because feminism

is not a cis-gender female assigned at birth enterprise. Gertrude Fester-Wicomb admits to having failed Sally Gross by adhering to the chair of the Commission for Gender Equality's advice 'to discontinue the project'. Perhaps, the invitation in this failure is how might the practice of feminism in South Africa disabuse itself from imagining change to come from within the very institutions, systems and structures built on our undoing. To petition political leaders for transformation has proven a farce, even as we've witnessed marginal changes that don't resolve the problem of being black and the gendered, sexual, embodied and material realisations of that blackness. It also brings to bear the need to call ourselves to account, be accountable for impact (not merely our intentions), constantly self-evaluate how we show up in our feminist work, and reckon with the limits of our own imagination, theorisation, ethics and the ways we might reify the very systems we actively work to transform.

Sisonke Msimang's essay on 'Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and the Archive,' and Desiree Lewis' conversation with Zoë Wicomb in 'Representing Sara Baartman in the New Millennium,' incisively challenge the ways in which Baartman and Madikizela-Mandela have been taken up in generic ways that lack rigour and evade complexity. Msimang, who published *The Resurrection of Winnie Mandela* in 2018, reflects on how Winnie Madikizela-Mandela's story has been 'misinterpreted and weaponized against her,' and how a feminist approach of care might allow complex parts of figures such as Madikizela-Mandela to emerge without falling to the extremes of either unscrupulously vilifying or uncritically celebrating them. The intimacy of the personal essay affords Msimang the spaciousness to trace her journey as the biographer of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela alongside a childhood memory of her neighbour whose identity she protects with the made-up name, Aida. Msimang powerfully holds these ➤

two womxn, of different generational and national contexts, as equally commanding and deserving of non-judgement, and the right to their lives and bodies beyond the hold of men, society and antiblack porno-trope.

Perhaps even more sharply, Wicomb's conversation with Lewis on the 'enrobing' and 'disrobing' of Willie Bester's Sara Baartman statue at the University of Cape Town astutely points to the troubling entitlement to Sara Baartman, as seen in the litany of artworks, literary works, relational claims, defences and advocations for agency, that all but scratch the surface to make sense of and explain the condition of blackness as structured by racial slavery and its expression in the treatment of the 'ungendered' and exploitable female-assigned black body that Baartman represents. Wicomb states, 'Baartman can be seen as a ready-made cipher: her history – situated as it is in colonial history – lends itself to all kinds of meanings and manipulations, always available for metonymic displacement'. What might occur should we suspend reaching for the readily available fleshiness of Sara Baartman, and even Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, and perhaps rigorously attend to the terms of agreement that determine our

socio-structural lineage to Baartman's abjection?

Building towards 'Remaking' (or 'making anew'), the 'Unmaking' section turns to the capacity of feminist agitation and questioning to uproot institutions of power such as religion/spirituality, education and the law, and our own internalised self-sabotaging notions. 'South African Feminism in Search of the Sacred,' by Fatima Seedat, reflects on the jarring yet common interjection of a cis-gender male patriarchal symbol in a space centered on the safety, freedom and agency of womxn. At the 2018 #TotalShutdown march against gender-based violence at the Cape Town Parliament, a cleric started the proceedings with a prayer to God the Father, unbothered by the ways in which imaging God as male and patriarchal is the basis for much of the ideology used to dominate, infantilise and justify the violation of womxn. What might be disrupted, fall away and even transpire when we conceive of God as divinely non-binary or unsexed and ungendered? What is required, as Seedat invites, is more than a mere semantic shift, and rather an intra-structural shift that necessitates unpacking and reimagining the deep implications of religion in our racial, sexual, gendered

and economic construction of the world.

Reflecting the multi-layered reality of feminist thought and praxis, Danai S. Mupotsa's essay, 'Breathing Under Water,' is a poetic meditation on the layers of feminist voices she embodies, wears like ink etched beneath the surface of her skin, has swallowed and holds in her stomach. Mupotsa's tracing of layers of feminist influences illuminates the rhizomatic, ghostly and citational reality of feminist thought. From her daughter, grandmother, to writers Bessie Head, Christina Sharpe, Koleka Putuma, Chinelo Okparanta, Audre Lorde and the poet-healer vangile gantshe, who wrote the 'breathing under water' poetry novella *red cotton* after which Mupotsa has titled her essay. These essays bring to the forefront the feminism in the shadows, by the wayside — the 'experiential feminism' passed on by Makhosazana Xaba's mother; the forceful feminism of Miriam Tlali and its impact on Barbara Boswell; the necessary transnational feminist solidarities highlighted by Leigh-Ann Naidoo; the unassuming and humorous feminism of Grace Musila's grandfathers, her 'Two Husbands' and the radical environmental feminism of Yvette Abrahams. **NA**



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