

TAKING POWER SERIOUSLY

# Amandla!

South Africa's new progressive magazine standing for social justice.

ISSUE NO. 78 OCTOBER 2021



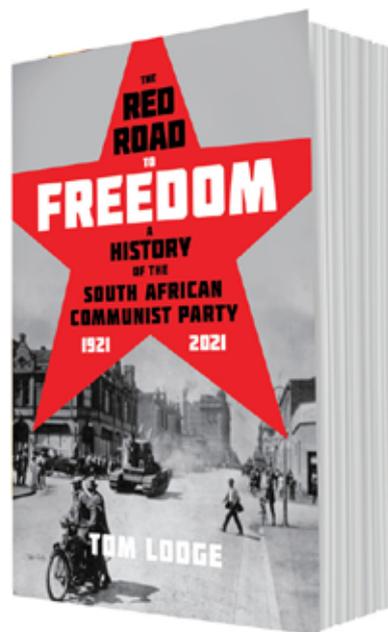
**LOCAL**

**GOVERNMENT -**

**SYSTEM FAILURE**



# Victories & Vicissitudes One Hundred Years of the SACP



*Red Road to Freedom*  
*A History of the South African Communist Party 1921–2021*  
By Tom Lodge

2021 marks the centenary of the foundation of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) and today's South African Communist Party (SACP). This milestone is marked by a work of great calibre and one that will be the book of record of the SACP for decades to come.

This book is the product of many years' research by Lodge, whose *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (1983) established him as a leading commentator on South African politics, past and present.

Lodge provides a richly detailed history of the Party's vicissitudes and victories; individuals –

their ideas, attitudes and activities – are sensitively located within their context. The text provides a fascinating sociology of the South African left over the last hundred years.

"A scholarly tour de force. Lodge brings to light forgotten episodes, fresh insights and challenges to some standard appraisals, always with an empathetic understanding of the tens of thousands of men and women who were part of this century of struggle."

JEREMY CRONIN

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**We publish what we like**

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## We welcome feedback

Email your comments to [info@amandla.org.za](mailto:info@amandla.org.za) or visit [www.amandla.org.za](http://www.amandla.org.za) for additional articles, news and views.

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## RECLAIM the local state

**A**FTER THE 2021 LOCAL government elections on 1st November, the overall architecture of the neoliberal local government system will remain largely unchallenged. A major factor enabling this is the strategic and programmatic weaknesses of progressive mass working class organisations, and the absence of an effective, mass-based and dynamic Left actively organising in working class communities. However, in that context, we

- in coalition governments in a few municipalities;
- The return of the IFP in parts of KZN;
- The possible rise and presence of explicitly xenophobic and racist political forces as elected public representatives; and
- Possible outlier outcomes with some of the independent and social movement candidates, only in a few areas.

The post-elections moment is key. Left and working class forces need to look beyond the elections and focus on sustainably building a longer-term, post elections set of strategies for transformation of local government. This can be the foundation to challenge and overcome the deep-seated municipal crisis and its neoliberal roots, whilst also building democratic popular power and alternatives which challenge the system. There is no short cut.

truthfulness. In one isolated case of former councillor Simphiwe Zwane, who stood and got elected on a social movement ticket in Johannesburg, we saw her consistently and actively supporting popular struggles.

It means movements and councillors who actively affirm and display anti-capitalist values and advance a people-centred morality in their personal and public lives.

This is why the political platform advanced by the Cry of the Xcluded is important. It is essentially a combination of radical, socialist perspectives and mass politics from below, together with transformative socio-economic demands and a commitment to full accountability and transparency.

### Mass struggles to make local government responsive

Even with the best will and commitment to the broad working class, any radicals occupying council seats will come up against significant systemic and structural constraints. These will limit the possibilities for the kind of radical change required.

Overall, the post-1994 local government system has been systematically shaped by a number of factors:

- The history of apartheid local government,
- The limited political transition that ended apartheid,
- The neoliberal policy choices made by the post-1994 government, and in particular the conservative fiscal framework, and
- The rise of a state-dependent parasitic class.

The fiscal framework is particularly a problem. It is based on the assumption that local government can raise its budget from the sale of services (known as “full-cost recovery”). So, less than 9% of the national budget is devoted to local government and, on average, only 30% of local government budgets comes from the national fiscus. This is a massive constraint on progressive councillors from doing anything more than being an opposition in the Council.

So, what strategies must we adopt to successfully roll back the conservative fiscal constraints on municipal financing? Not to be forgotten are demands to meet basic needs in the here and now, in the context of building real local democracy. None of this can be carried out by isolated councillors without a broader mass movement actively mobilising

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### Jobs! Services! Dignity! #WorkForUs

The political platform of the Cry of the Xcluded is important. It is a combination of radical, socialist perspectives & mass politics from below, together with transformative socio-economic demands & a commitment to full accountability & transparency.

must acknowledge the Left working class political manifesto and campaign of the Cry of the Xcluded, in the midst of many other independent candidates and movements contesting these elections.

The political significance of the elections lies in the following likely trends:

- The large number of working class voters who will not turn up;
- The further decline of the ANC in black working class areas;
- The consolidation of the DA in only a few areas where it governs or holds a significant share of the vote currently;
- Some increased support for the EFF, possibly including a major role

movements and councillors.

On the other hand, there can be significant potential for struggles opened up by Left and class struggle-based councillors in a number of municipalities. Such councillors can be exemplary people’s councillors, committed to work hard with their constituencies to shape an oppositional and transformative politics.

Such an approach requires strong movements which continue their campaigning and ensure that councillors remain accountable to their communities through regular meetings, information dissemination, transparency and

and organising working class communities.

Immediate struggles and demands correctly raise the need to end cut-offs and evictions, and to realise decent, high quality and adequate delivery of basic services. These services include water, electricity, housing that changes apartheid geography, sanitation, refuse removal, street lights, libraries, shelter at taxi ranks, etc.). Other priorities include local employment, an end to the “user pays” principle, and an end to the casualisation embedded in the Expanded Public Works Programme and Community Work Programme.

The tender system in municipalities has become the main opportunity for accumulation by local elites. Many activists are being killed either because they stand against or expose corruption in a development project. This points to the need for a major campaign to “remunicipalise” (bring service provision back to municipalities) and end outsourcing and corruption.

Building from this, we suggest key elements of what can be a serious and effective organising strategy from both a renewed Left and the broader social movements:

- Strong local organisations with layers of skilled and effective activists and leaders,
- Mobilising ordinary people to be active builders of organs of democratic mass power (street by street, block by block, ward by ward),
- Actively building broader unity and solidarity between different communities and municipalities in ways that go beyond local demands and roll back isolation and alienation. For example, the proposed campaign for remunicipalisation requires a strong and principled alliance between municipal worker trade unions and social movements, and
- The capacity to organise across apartheid geography.

The starting point is to support activists, movements and communities that are facing, feeling and responding to the impact of government’s anti-poor policies and the collapse of municipalities.

## Transformative struggles to advance alternatives from below

Beyond struggles for reforms to meet immediate demands, our organising has to include a longer-term agenda for thorough-going systemic change. How do we engage activists, movements and communities in this project? How do we connect immediate demands with systemic transformation so that we can challenge and roll back the capitalist logic of the market in the local state? How do popular forces come to own the notions of public goods and a social wage? For example, a social wage at the municipal level may include municipal commonage for small



Workers demonstrate in defence of “recuperated” ceramics factories in Argentina, where workers and the unemployed have taken over closed factories and workplaces and put them back into production (recuperated them).

farmers and urban agriculture, food parcels for indigent families at least partly made from local, common produce, free public transport, universal wifi at the local level, etc.

And then there are immediate socio-economic needs. Already, thousands of stokvels, bulk buying groups, mutual aid activities, community soup kitchens, food gardens, and largely poorly organised cooperatives exist in villages, informal settlements and townships. The barriers and struggles they face are many, including challenges around self-management, being squeezed by bigger players in the market, limited financing options, and municipal policies and by-laws that constrain their growth and potential.

We need to build effective and creative strategies, capacity and resources to organise around these challenges and barriers, whilst also harnessing them to advance a progressive economic logic.

Communities could strategically use resources from the Solidarity Fund, the SETAs, and other public finance institutions to overcome some of these challenges. But this requires effective organisation.

In Argentina and a few other countries, workers and the unemployed have followed the strategy of *Occupy, Resist and Produce*. They take over closed factories and workplaces, resist any opposition from previous owners and the state, and then start to put them back into production. This creates self-employment based on democratic self-management.

This sounds like a distant if not impossible dream. But the reality of the ongoing job losses means that we cannot

ignore such a strategy. This is also where we can link recently retrenched workers, who have trade union organising skills, with social movements and communities.

Progressive responses to the climate crisis have included programmes and strategies such as life beyond coal initiatives, just transition localities, climate jobs in renewable energy, climate-wise housing and public transport. Such ideas are already emerging in the struggles of communities resisting the power of mining companies. They require support, skills, capacity and resources.

## Onwards from the elections

The municipal level affects each and every household. Given rising unemployment and the need to survive, organising at community level has become quite critical and vital. This means forging a renewed mass, and class struggle-based Left in all the localities where the working class resides.

Already, in places like Makhanda, Bitou, Botshabelo, Cape Town, eThekweni and Johannesburg there exist radical activists and movements organising communities on many of these issues. The challenge is to find ways to connect, engage with and support this energy into sustained self-agency for reclaiming the local state from below.

# news briefs

## Up to 20 hours a day without electricity

In Govan Mbeki Municipality, power is cut for up to 20 hours a day. This has been going on for nearly two years and got worse in March last year. The cause, of course, is the failure of the Municipality to pay Eskom bills. As we explain in the feature of this issue, the causes of such

failures are structural – a full cost recovery system which simply cannot work in many municipalities. But those who suffer are the local residents and local businesses.

Now the Bethal Residents Association is taking the Municipality and Eskom to court, asking the court to bang their heads together and reach agreement on a repayment system which would prevent or limit further power cuts. How dysfunctional is this system, that residents have to go to court to try to restore sanity... and electricity.

## It's official: municipal bills skyrocket

According to the Johannesburg Property Owners and Managers Association, 10 years ago its council bill represented 14% of tenants' household expenses. Now it is almost 24%. And that money must come from other essentials, such as food. Another contributing factor to the massive explosion in hunger and poverty in South Africa

## Mining profits amid widespread hunger and poverty

Once again there is a commodities boom, and once again the mining companies know what to do with their massively expanding profits – pour them into the pockets of their largely non-South African shareholders. Of course, investors are delighted. As Philipp Wörz, fund manager at PSG Asset Management, put it, "Commodities have indeed been booming lately... Commodity companies will return a lot of cash to shareholders".

And not only are investors getting huge dividends. The share price has increased massively as well – from a 12-month low, Anglo American is up 71%, Kumba 58% and BHP 56%.

Stack that against 4.4%, the current offer for Numsa's engineering workers (who substantially service this high-performing mining industry). Or against the withdrawal of the R350 to the poorest South Africans, only reluctantly restored after massive riots. Or against the 2.3 million households which reported child hunger in South Africa in April/May this year.

As usual, austerity only applies to the poor.

## National Credit Regulator goes after the wrong crooks

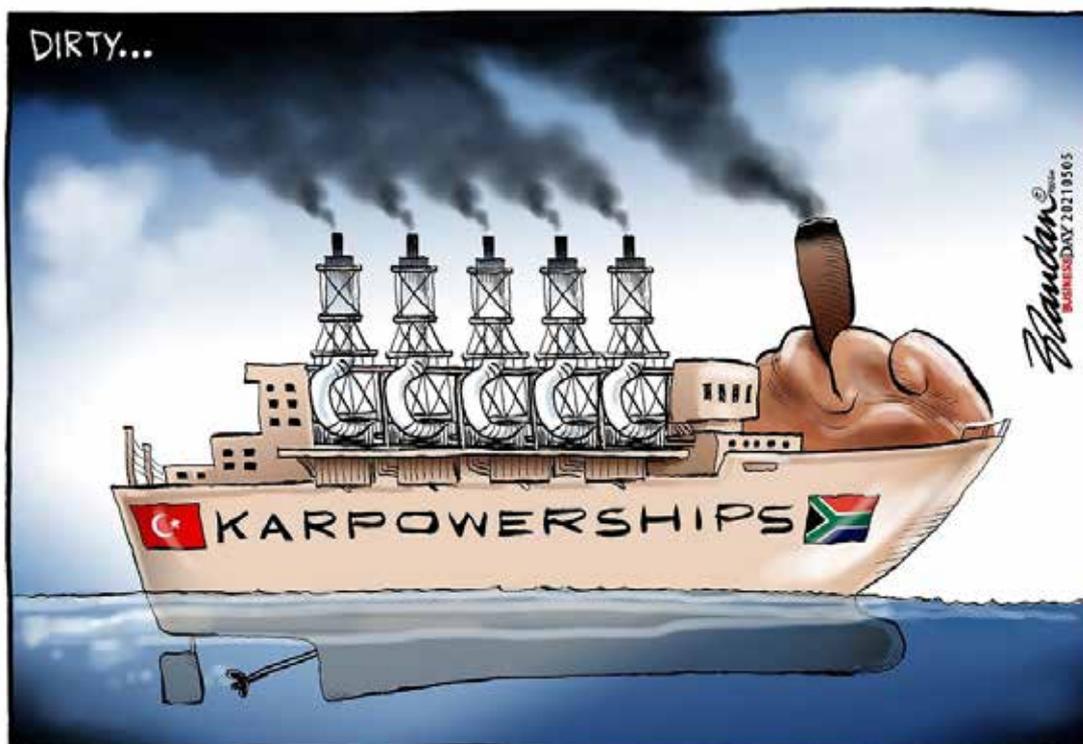
The Lungelo Lethu Human Rights Foundation has brought a R60 billion class action suit against South African banks for systematically selling repossessed properties "for a song". By doing this, it has defrauded the owners of those repossessed properties and enriched the buyers. The National Credit Regulator (NCR) has a clear mission: "to support the social and economic advancement of South Africa by regulating for a fair and non-discriminatory market place for access to consumer credit". So you would think that it would rejoice at this lawsuit and do everything it could to assist.

Unfortunately, the NCR hasn't seen it like this. They think that it is much more important to fight about whether those who brought the case were entitled to some

NCR documentation they are using to prove it. So the NCR has launched its own lawsuit to interdict the use of the documents. Thereby, coincidentally, it lets the banks off the hook. Which leads some to ask – which side of the fence is the NCR on anyway?

## Karpowerships: R228 billion on the line

The latest round in the attempts of Karpowerships and its friends to win a 20-year contract went decisively to Karpowerships. In another act of brazen defiance of all procedures, the National Energy Regulator (Nersa) has granted the Karpowerships' Turkish owners three gas-to-electricity generation licences. Now the only



Why is Gwede Mantashe so keen on this deal that his department's non-negotiable deadline was suddenly extended by two months when Karpowerships needed a bit more time?

obstacle in their way is the Environment Minister, Barbara Creecy. Since Nersa has given no reasons for its decision, it is impossible to know how it managed to avoid the fact that:

- Environmental authorisation had been refused by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE);
- The internal appeal process by Karpowership is still under way, challenging the decision by the DFFE.

On top of that, required licences, agreements and authorisations are absent. Will the Minister be as relaxed about procedure as Nersa? And why is Gwede Mantashe so keen on this deal that his department's non-negotiable deadline was suddenly extended by two months when Karpowerships needed a bit more time?

## Mantashe's clean coal

Speaking of Mantashe, while other South African cabinet ministers were meeting with climate envoys from the US and European countries, Gwede Mantashe's department has been pushing for more investment in coal. Deputy Director General Maqubela made the Department's position clear: "The attack on coal is premature. Investors who wish to continue investing in coal mining, must proceed. The Department will continue processing those licenses until we are certain of the viability of the replacement".

This is the "logic" behind the provisions in the [Mining and Energy Recovery Plan](#) to give hundreds of millions of rand to the Council for Geoscience to pursue the myth of "clean coal". Pursue strategies that will guarantee more severe global heating and wait and see what happens with alternatives. With leadership like that, no wonder South Africa is the 12th biggest source of greenhouse gases.

## Indigenous farmers silenced

This is an abbreviated version of a [report](#) from the Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt.

More than 500 indigenous and farmer organisations across the continents have

raised their voices to expose the UN's Food Systems Summit as only advocating one food system - so they're being silenced.

The United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) was held virtually at the end of September. During the last year, these indigenous and farmer organisations have raised their voices to expose the summit as advocating only one food system - the one that is polluting the soil, water, and air, and killing vital pollinators.

In contrast, the food system that feeds 75 to 80 percent of the human population - smallholder farmers practicing biodiverse cropping (in line with the principles of agroecology) - was

strengthened their global "food value chain," contributing to the consequences that over 23 percent of Africans (282 million people) still go to bed hungry every night.

A third criticism of the UN Food Systems Summit is that it heralds technological advances as the primary answer to overcoming continuing hunger in an era of climate change. Most of us applaud multiple revolutions in genetics while we queue for vaccines, but genetic manipulation of seeds threatens the future of food, because ownership of the technology controls ownership of the seed.

After appeals to transform the agenda, many of these farmers and advocates decided to boycott the summit. This "outside resistance" included African voices, who stated: "The current UNFSS process gives little space to traditional ecological knowledge, the celebration of traditional diets and cuisine....Indigenous and local community Africans have experience and knowledge relevant to the current and future food system. Any process or outcome that does not recognize this is an affront to millions of African food producers and consumers."

## Nightmare "welcome" for Afghan refugees

On the back of the chaotic withdrawal from Kabul after the defeat in Afghanistan, the British government promised

a "warm welcome" to Afghan refugees who had been evacuated. In reality, they slot into a system which currently has a backlog of 71,000 cases. Sometimes they wait months for a decision. Sometimes years. Meanwhile they are housed in accommodation that is reported as "damp, squalid, infested with rats, cramped, and primed for Covid infections". They are not allowed to work. Even if they do get refugee status eventually, the government can try to remove them again after 30 months, and then again after another 30 months, for years on end.

If that's a warm welcome, it makes us wonder what a colder one looks like.



Protest at Dungavel asylum seeker detention centre in UK. Asylum seekers are housed in accommodation that is reported as "damp, squalid, infested with rats, cramped, and primed for Covid infections"

only added to the agenda after months of criticism. Those in opposition to the summit say it is advancing industrial agriculture, which is the core problem, not solution, for addressing climate change, malnutrition, and hunger.

A second criticism is that corporations are trying to replace the UN system of one country-one vote with "stakeholders". This is a euphemism that may sound inclusive but really only invites those "who think like us" to the table. Smallholder farmers, who produce the majority of our food, are not invited.

This food summit is about the global business of agriculture, not the livelihoods of those who produce nutritious, biodiverse foods. Governments' attempts to regulate global food corporations (e.g. labelling unhealthy foods, taxing sugar products) meet strong opposition from these industries. Yet the corporations profited massively from the 2008 food crisis and

# MANIFESTO

**W**E ARE INDEPENDENT movements and individuals who have come together to campaign in this local government election under a common banner – the Cry of the Xcluded. We did not come from nowhere, even if elections are new to many of us. We have been active in our communities for years, campaigning for decent housing, land, affordable basic services, jobs and against corruption. Many of us fought in the liberation struggle.

We have decided to enter this election because our country finds itself at the edge of a cliff. The economy is so sick that it places the nation at a point of no return. The levels of poverty, and unemployment – in particular amongst our youth, women, persons with disabilities and LGBTQI+ community – have reached such proportions that the country can be plunged into another civil war and continued conflict if nothing is done.

**STOP  
STEALING  
FROM THE  
POOR – TAX  
THE RICH!**

Local government is in a terrible mess. In many municipalities basic services have collapsed. Our people have to face water and electricity cut-offs, even where they pay for services. Often raw sewage runs down our roads and many are in a shocking state. Clinics are overrun and often don't have basic medicines. This is not just a result of corruption. It is also an outcome of systematic under-funding of local government, budget cuts and the outsourcing of services to profit-making business interests, imposed by the ANC national and DA provincial governments. Another major cause of this crisis is the deployment of incompetent political appointees. Not only do we need a new vision for local government. We need a new vision for government and for the fundamental transformation of our society.

We have joined forces to continue OUR collective struggle to transform the lives of the poor majority and for a life of dignity.

## For us dignity means:

- Not going to bed hungry;
- A decent job with a living wage;
- Well-built houses in communities where we can live without fear;
- Decent free basic services, especially water, electricity and sanitation;
- Safety in our communities.

Although others have changed, we remain unapologetically radical. We believe people make their own history. We are our own liberators. Elections are a continuation of the struggle – not a substitute. If we are elected, we will take the struggle of the streets to the city and town halls to make poor people's struggles louder.

We are not politicians, we are activists. Our manifesto is guided by a saying of one of the great leaders of Africa, Amilcar Cabral: "tell no lies, claim no easy victories." In that vein, we will not make empty promises. The truth shall set us free.

## What we stand for

We have come together because, even though we belong to different organisations, we share certain values and beliefs. The most important are:

## Inequality is killing our country!

- It stands in the way of social and economic freedom.
- It tears apart our communities, and makes us suffer the indignities of hunger, poverty and violence.
- We stand for a Basic Income Grant of R1500 a month for all the unemployed and those earning less than R3500 a month.
- We want quality public education and health systems, not determined by wealth.
- We are for equality based on the redistribution of wealth, where the mines, land, banks, factories, cellphone networks, farms, food corporations, etc, are democratically owned and controlled by the people.

## Racism and xenophobia divides us!

- The economic and political elites foster divisions to turn poor against one another, to prevent the working class

**HOPE  
THROUGH  
UNITY AND  
ACTION!**

and poor from uniting in struggle.

- We are anti-racist and believe in a non-racial South Africa.
- We are anti-xenophobia – the discrimination against foreigners – and we decry the practice of the bosses to drive wages down by exploiting foreign nationals and migrants from deprived parts of our country.
- We fight all forms of discrimination or oppression based on the supposed colour of our skin, the language we speak or because of our religious beliefs.

## Sexism & gender-based violence oppresses women!

- No man must lift a hand to women or girls.
- Gender-based violence is not part of our culture.
- We are opposed to all forms of sexism and the discrimination and oppression of women or of any person because of their sexuality.
- Women who perform essential work in the home and community must be fully compensated, as it is the unpaid labour of women which is the source of their continued oppression.

## Integration not new Apartheid

- Spatial planning must be expedited to unify our cities, towns and villages.

*In addition we believe*

- The local government fiscal framework, based on full-cost recovery for services and puny funding from the national fiscus, is the main cause of the crisis of local government and must go.
- Extreme austerity imposed by Treasury is becoming the most painful and destructive policy for municipal governance we have experienced since the end of apartheid.
- Scientific knowledge is created by both indigenous and academic intellectuals.

We know that Covid 19, HIV-AIDS, TB, etc. pose great dangers for public health and can only be countered through scientifically-tested treatments, which can include western and non-western medicines.

- We face great dangers from climate change, and only the radical reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases from burning coal, gas and oil to generate energy, as well as many other causes that municipalities have control over, can prevent more extreme storms, floods, heatwaves, droughts and fires.
- We are for a just transition where workers and poor communities are compensated for closing down polluting industries, including in many municipalities which need to be restructured.

*We believe this struggle continues today and must be rebuilt based on unity and solidarity. Our campaign is not only about the crisis of local government or for the delivery of better services, but for a SOCIALIST South Africa where the enormous wealth of this country would be freed from the greed of the few and be used to ensure that everyone has a decent life, a life of dignity. We are for people before profit.*

*Unlike the politicians of the main political parties, we do not make empty promises. We want you to vote for candidates who are part of poor people's movements in communities and who will continue to fight against the injustices of the system.*

## We want democratic and people-controlled municipalities.

- We will fight for municipalities which will build and fix roads, water pipes and other infrastructure.
- We will struggle to ensure that services are supplied in greater quantity and quality than at present, with no disconnections due to inability to pay, and no collective disconnections in our communities (Eskom 'load reduction') if our neighbours cannot pay.
- We are against the tender system, which breeds corruption. We are against contracts and jobs for people because of political connections.
- We will fight privatisation and the outsourcing of municipal functions, including in the form of public private partnerships. Workers should be insourced and paid a living wage.
- We will demand transparency of all projects, contracts and financial transactions. Only through complete transparency over decision-making and public ownership can we ensure equality and accountability.

## We want well financed municipalities

This will require a massive increase in budgets for local government. This is why the Cry of the Xcluded commits to a hard fight:

- For participatory budgets & planning.
- Against budget cuts.
- For free basic services financed through national government transfers.
- To reduce top heavy management through rationalisation of bureaucratic hierarchies.
- For higher taxes on the very rich.
- For full accountability and transparency, where every municipal contract with private companies is published and easily accessible.
- For municipal land to be made available for integrated housing, commonage and for food gardens; we support the demand of rural women for one woman, one hectare for sustainable household consumption.
- For municipal land and resources to be made available for recreation, especially for our youth.
- For the implementation of social programmes for youth to provide employment, cultural activities and facilities to overcome substance abuse.
- To promote labour-intensive production through municipal by-laws – people before machines.
- To implement effective track and tracing for Covid-19 infections and to encourage free testing and vaccinations for all.
- To employ community health workers to provide primary health care at community level as part of building a comprehensive primary health care

**ORGANISE OR STARVE!**

**DIALOGUE FOR AN ANTI-CAPITALIST FUTURE**



system.

- Although education is not a municipal function, to do everything in our power to fight to get rid of pit latrines and to make education truly free.
- To provide free sanitary pads – menstruation is not a choice!
- For climate jobs by building municipal-owned wind and solar plants and supporting community renewable energy cooperatives.
- To prioritise the expansion of public transport to ensure free and safe public transport.
- To prioritise the employment of youth, especially unemployed graduates, to meet the unfulfilled needs of our people.

Voting for our candidates will mean a commitment to mobilisation and sustained struggle to change government policy. This cannot happen overnight, but only through uniting our communities in struggle and solidarity. Our priority is not government positions or being paid fat salaries to be a Councillor.

## Our pledge

Therefore we make the following pledge to fight against being bought off by money and interest groups:

All candidates standing for this bloc, if elected will:

- Receive a modest wage paid by their movement, comparable to the wages of government or industrial workers, and will contribute a percentage of their income to movement building in our communities.
- Refuse any position on any corporate board or contract with any profit-making company, and will have no business dealings with any part of government.
- Reside in the ward they are elected, make their contact details available to the community, be available 24/7 to address community needs, and hold monthly ward meetings.
- Be active in community based organisations.
- Respect the right of recall by the community, should they lose confidence with the elected candidate, in properly constituted assemblies based on the principles and commitments of this Manifesto.

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT INTERVIEWS

***Amandla!* interviewed representatives of three popular organisations which have decided to stand candidates in the local government elections. They were:**



## **PETER LOBESÉ**

Active  
United  
Front

**A**CTIVE UNITED FRONT derived its origin from United Front. It is a result of the Numsa moment in 2013, when the United Front was established as a front that unites the struggle of communities and the workplace. And then in 2016, United Front at a national level indicated that they are not ready to contest at a national or provincial level. But they will allow those communities who are ready to contest to do so.

We just put an “A” in front of United Front. We used Active United Front in order to contest. As it happened, we won one seat in the election, and the ANC and DA won six seats each. So we held the balance of power and our councillor, Peter Lobese, became the Mayor.

Despite the fact that Peter Lobese was ousted by the ANC and DA, AUF has grown. We are now contesting at a District Level – the Garden Route District. **(PL)**



## **MOTSI KHOKHOMA**

Botshabelo  
Unemployed  
Movement

**B**OTSHABELO UNEMPLOYED Movement (BUM) was founded in 1999 to address massive issues of unemployment, democratic control and social injustices in a non-sectarian manner. We aim to serve both the rural and peri-urban poor communities of our province. Botshabelo is a large township outside Bloemfontein.

We have registered for the election as Botshabelo Unemployed Movement and they regard us as a political party. But we know, we are not a political party, because we are operating only at the local level. **(MK)**



## **AYANDA KHOTA**

Unemployed People's  
Movement / Makana  
Citizens Front

**U**NEMPLOYED PEOPLE'S Movement (UPM) was formed in 2009 because there was a vacuum. We started by attending IDP (Integrated Development Plan) meetings, and people were saying that we've got to do something. These people are taking us for a ride.

Then there was a shut down in Makhanda on 16th June and a decision was taken to say, “We are sick and tired of political parties that are cruel, that are corrupt, that are not honest, that are lying, that have failed us. We must dismiss them. We must recall them. We must dissolve them”. And one way to do so, is to participate in this local government election, as a community.

So we were given that mandate to form this civic structure, Makana Citizens Front. **(AK)**

## 1. WHAT MADE YOU STAND IN THIS ELECTION?



**CORRUPTION, OUTSOURCING OF work, clinics of municipalities not functioning, roads bad, factories closing at the municipal level, no investments coming in, local economy falling apart, inequality growing, unemployment growing. All the municipalities are dysfunctional.**

But when you go to the budget of a ward, that ward every year is being given a particular amount of money, that can change the lives of the people. But these things are not being done. **(MK)**



**WE HAVE MARCHED TO THE City Hall to highlight the scourge of rape in our society, the scourge of unemployment in our society, the scourge of the collapse of governance. They say “It is not our competency”. What bullshit. They are failing to collect the refuse, they are failing on the electricity, they are failing on roads. But they think we must only fight for roads. They don’t understand that these things are intertwined. They don’t understand if they don’t deliver on their constitutional obligations, like lights, it makes certain people vulnerable.**

There is nothing that can ever be delivered by the current status quo. It’s run out, it’s torn out, it’s finished. The only thing that they can do, over and over again, it’s promises and promises and promises. **(AK)**



**ABUSE OF POWER, POOR SERVICE delivery, and the high cost of services, land questions and many other issues that the community were not happy with. People in the communities are suffering. We are at a grass-root level; we are seeing this suffering on a daily basis. It’s going to be worse now with Covid-19. **(PL)****

### Politicians don’t care



**WE HAVE SEEN WHAT HAPPENS when people are taking their mandate from political parties. Politicians don’t care about people. But when they are going to election, they suddenly remember them, because they want them to put them again in power. They are not implementing whatever the communities are asking them to do. **(MK)****



**AND ONE MUST BE HONEST TO SAY, these guys, they don’t listen, they don’t care. To them, it’s all about promises, it’s not about accountability. It’s coming over and over again with the same promises, with the same promises and different promises.**

The right to govern our people, has been appropriated by the politicians. There was a slogan “The people shall govern” and that slogan has been appropriated by politicians, and it is the politicians that are in government now. It is politicians that govern now. **(AK)**



**THERE ARE TWO organisations that are dominating politics. It is ANC and DA. And people are tired of those two organisations, they do not want them. They do not trust them anymore. And these organisations, they don’t even change their leaders. You find that there are leaders that have been leading in this organisation since 1994, they have been councillors since 1995 and they are still councillors today. And they have done nothing for the community **(PL)****

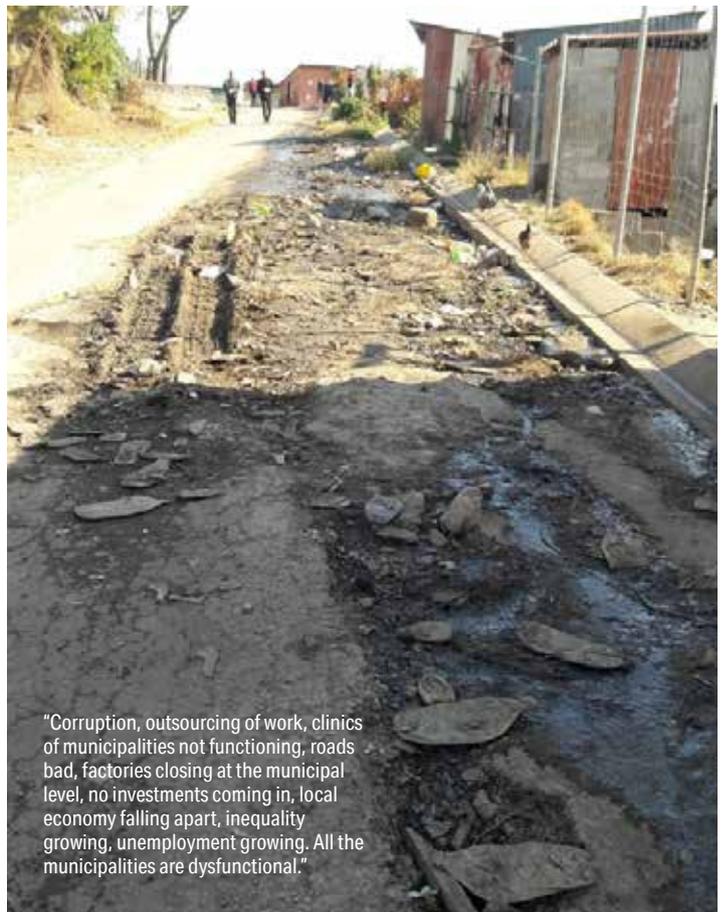
## 2.WHY DO YOU THINK YOU CAN DO BETTER?



**WE ARE NOT A POLITICAL PARTY. We are activists. So when you are an activist, you should be involved in issues that are affecting your community. You can’t just relax when you are an activist. You became an activist because of things that you see on the ground that are not going well. And that is why we are fielding comrades in terms of them being councillors. Because we want to change the status quo. **(MK)****



**WE ARE ACTIVISTS. YOU CANNOT separate our interests and those of the community, because we live in the community, we are part of that community, and we are pursuing the problems of that particular community. So, I think that makes us distinct from a political party. **(AK)****



“Corruption, outsourcing of work, clinics of municipalities not functioning, roads bad, factories closing at the municipal level, no investments coming in, local economy falling apart, inequality growing, unemployment growing. All the municipalities are dysfunctional.”



**WE ARE COMMUNITY activists who are championing the struggle for the working class at a local level, at a grassroot level. So, we are a hand of the community, we are not a political party. You can say we are a movement, a community-based movement.**

At times, political parties have got a tendency to divide the community. Ours is just to embrace the community struggle, because we are encouraging citizens to be active. Hence we are saying Active United Front, it means active citizens.

You will find members from various political parties in the United Front, from the ANC, from the EFF, from DA and others. But even in the election, they said they will stand by what United Front is going to do and they will vote for United Front. **(PL)**

## OUR PLEDGE

We have signed a pledge including:



**A living wage for councillors:** communities must have full control of our councillors, because they are not going to get that full salary. If you are getting R50,000 in PE, the organisation and communities will agree to pay you the living wage – R15,000, R12,500 at least. **(MK)**

**No corporate boards:** We will refuse to sit on any boards of corporations. Politicians are serving in all these corporate boards, whose sole interest is to maximise profit. And it's capturing them.

**Live locally:** if we get elected, our comrades will continue to stay where they are currently staying, in their respective wards. They will not hire trucks in the deep of the night and put in their furniture and go stay somewhere.



**Subject to recall:** we respect the right of recall. If our member is recalled, we will not be consulting with a political party whose head office is in Joburg. That makes us an activist

organisation. But also, that makes us a community organisation.

### Caretakers of the pledge

This pledge is important. Your councillors have committed to this oath. And most important, you have a very strong UPM outside, which will also be carers and caretakers of that pledge, to forever remind you that you have committed to this. That will continue to play that critical role that it's playing now. I think that can give us a peaceful night.

### Democracy and accountability

Before we started attending, IDP meetings were conducted in English and a bit of vernacular. But the details are hidden in English. English really excludes a majority of people. But all that the politicians were worried about was to get the white cloth on the table, the bottles of water, and their chairs covered.

We were challenging those details because they were excluding our people. Some of these wards are quite vast. It was important to organise transport for people to attend the meetings. And also make sure to give notice on time.

And accounting to the community: to say, "We were here and this is what we promised. This is what we have done and this is how we are moving forward". **(AK)**



### Mandate from our communities

We must take the mandate from our communities. Everything will come from communities. What they need, what they are thinking, what you can do in council. So that is the backbone of us participating in this election. The mandate from the communities, the suffering of the community, the demand of the community. **(MK)**



### OUR MANIFESTO SHOULD BE

localised and talk directly to what the municipality needs to do. Rather than to have this blanket, centralised approach of national political parties that there's service delivery and electricity and all of that.

Our people have said, Active United Front has been looking after us for the last five years. They will vote for the organisation that they know and they are used to, rather than following the old ways of voting.



**Service delivery protest in Makhanda.** "We are activists. You cannot separate our interests and those of the community, because we live in the community, we are part of that community, and we are pursuing the problems of that particular community. So, I think that makes us distinct from a political party".

Communities don't vote for a person, or an organisation that mushroomed during the election. Because they will first look at who are these leaders, where do they come from. (PL)

### 3. WHAT ARE YOU STANDING FOR?

 OVER AND ABOVE EVERYTHING, the concern to us was work, was jobs. And that very issue was absent in all the IDP meetings, the question of unemployment in this municipality. (AK)

 WE ARE NOT SAYING to people that we are going to do one, two, three, four for you. People and us, we must fight for these things, because we are trying to change how municipalities are functioning in totality. Why do we have EPWP workers who are not insourced by municipalities? Why are the people still saying in shacks? Our comrades should be fighting on a daily basis, not only for these elections. So we are building beyond elections. (MK)

 THE ACTUAL ISSUE THAT THE community wants is firstly land. All the available pieces of government land must be given to the community for farming, for housing and other recreational activities. Number two is job opportunities. People will be able to build their own houses, if you give them job opportunities. Number three is housing. Number four is crime. Violence against women and children, is another thing. And youth empowerment and women empowerment. Training and education, is also very important. Those are the five key pillars that we think we need to consider. (PL)

#### A different approach

 WE CAN INTRODUCE A BASIC Income Grant in Makhanda. But instead of giving cash, we give you food. With a municipality that has got more than six farms, you could start producing with a view to undermining hunger. And also extend that so that in our homes, in



Unemployed People's Movement Young Women's Forum march against handling of rape cases in Makhanda. "They say rape is not our competency. What bullshit... They don't understand if they don't deliver on their constitutional obligations, like lights, it makes certain people vulnerable."

our roofs, in our backyard gardens, we introduce a culture of producing our own food. We undermine the power of corporate in deciding what to eat and not eat.

We can introduce climate jobs. There's a water crisis because of the climate crisis. We can show that climate jobs are really not impossible.

And you have got these things that have been privatised. We can start thinking into that. There are windmills, for example, that are privately owned instead of being socialised. (AK)

### 4. HOW DO ELECTIONS FIT INTO BUILDING BROADER ORGANISATION AND STRUGGLE?

WE ARE BUILDING THE ORGANISATION for beyond the election, not only for

 elections. We are always on the ground, we are here, five years. These elections help us to popularise the organisation, because on a weekly basis we are on the media talking about BUM. (MK)

 IT'S NOT A MATTER OF ELECTING councillors that will represent us. It's a question of building a movement towards and beyond the local government elections. It's a matter of pushing the struggle and making sure that the struggle takes place in those council chambers. It's a struggle that must go on. It's a struggle that is going on.

You are reaching a number of people that you wouldn't reach under normal circumstances. You have got to get their thinking, the thinking pattern of our people. So it's also quite interesting. (AK)

 OURS IS NOT ABOUT WINNING elections. Ours is about fighting, whether there is an election or no election. People were saying, we are this group of people that is not happy with what the ANC, what the DA, are doing locally. So we are not ready to go and support these political parties in the next elections. They asked, "What are you saying? Are you saying we should fold our arms and do nothing in this election. Or should we come together, establish ourselves and contest this election?" (PL)

## 5. IS THIS PART OF BUILDING A NEW LEFT?



IF WE HAVE councillors or a councillor, we'll be building around them in terms of building the Left. So that we can have a vibrant political party of the left. So that we change the situation of our people. But if we don't do that, if we are just saying no, we will concentrate on BUM, we will exclude Amadiba Crisis Committee, we will exclude Amandla in PE, then we are not building anything. (MK)



WE ALSO CONNECT OUR STRUGGLES. We connect with other civic movements that are participating in elections, because we are not narrow. We are also building a left bloc that could then start to challenge the predatory political powers in this country, in a very serious and meaningful way. (AK)



WHAT WE WANT TO SEE, AT THE national and provincial level, is a structure or a movement or a body that will resemble the struggles that are happening at a local level.

At the moment, there is no organisation that is championing socialist policy, the working-class struggles. We were hoping that the SRWP, the workers party under NUMSA, was going to fill that void, but it did not do well.

The weakness here is the failure of a leading socialist movement. So all those people that want to see policies of the Left are wandering around. That's why we see them contesting as individuals or as community-based organisations.

We just need a coordinator at a national level that will properly coordinate and merge these local struggles, call these

independent candidates, hear from them what it is that pushed them to contest as independents. Bring them into the social movement. (PL)

## NO SOCIALISM IN ONE MUNICIPALITY



EVEN IF YOU WIN, YOU WILL NOT deliver socialism in Makhanda alone. Even if you are a revolutionist, you'd understand that you cannot deliver socialism in Makhanda, living in South Africa. You can't deliver socialism in South Africa, living in a continent. You can't deliver socialism in a continent, living in a world. It's just impossible.

Though you want to better the lives of our people, but I mean, look here, you are

some of the challenges that are there. The budget from municipalities is not enough.

At the moment, who is going to change those austerity measures? Toyi-toyis are not going to help. Burning streets is not going to help. The only thing that will change those National Treasury policies is a movement that is based on socialism.

Otherwise, in 2024, what are we going to do with all these voters that we have campaigned for in this local government election? This is the question that we could not answer in 2018.

When people conduct struggles in their communities at a local level, who will complement them at a national level? We are not represented there. Which means we will toyi-toyi on the ground and people will be taken to prison, they will be shot

by police, because they are not toyi-toyiing at a national and provincial level. And national will not change its policy and province will not change its policy. Because all these actions are happening at a local level, where they are not even touched, they are not even fearing the smell of the tear gas.

They are not even fearing the shots of the rubber bullet.

National legislation and supply chain policies are all hindering service delivery. Just supply chain management processes, will take you three months. You finish almost half of the year with supply chain processes, planning and all of that. By the time it's end of the year, financial year, some of the budget is difficult to spend.

If you look at some of these creches and schools, they need support, even community gardens, they need the support from the municipality. But the national government policies, National Treasury, are saying you can't support those kind of organisations. (PL)



"We must take the mandate from our communities. Everything will come from communities. What they need, what they are thinking, what you can do in council. So that is the backbone of us participating in this election. The mandate from the communities, the suffering of the community, the demand of the community."

living in an era of a neoliberalism of local government that doesn't have money. You have got a government that says fiscus in empty, fiscus doesn't have money. And you won't change them and say, "No there's money there, there's money in that". Because they are very rigid in their austerity roll out. (AK)



MEANINGFUL CHANGE DEPENDS on the National Treasury, and a change in national policies, especially the austerity measures. The truth of the matter is that the austerity measures by the National Treasury destroy all these beautiful manifesto ideas and then there's a feeling that they've been promising people. When you look at the budget, it's totally not enough to address



## 6. WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE FROM BITOU?

*Having been in office for the last 5 years, Peter Lobese has some additional reflections on the experience, and some advice for others.*

### Challenges...

The jealousy from these two political organisations, DA and ANC. If they are elected, they must know that they will be dealing with that. It's like you are sleeping with the lion or you are sleeping with the hyena. Even if you go into coalition with them, if you sleep with any of them, the chances are tomorrow we will not see you alive. On a daily basis they want to destroy you.

Sometimes the ANC councillors know all the ministers in the province or the departmental ministers. Behind your back, they will tell the minister not to implement certain projects, because if they implement those projects they will be to your benefit as a mayor of a small party, and they don't want you to shine. Because once you deliver that, they will put you at another level in the community.

The ANC are not prepared to respect any other political party. They have got this political monopoly. It is either you allow them to dictate, or else, if you don't allow them to dictate, everything is wrong. And everything must be destroyed. Rather than working and complementing other parties, they want to destroy what we are doing, the good we are doing, so that it should be implemented by them.

For example, I came with a lot of programmes. I got land and all of that; things that they have been failing to get over the past years. I challenged the national minister, provincial minister and I got those through. But at the verge of implementing it, they don't want you to be seen as somebody that implemented those plans. They want to implement themselves. So they will do anything to discipline you, to suspend you, to destroy you.

The ANC will allow DA to dominate and DA will allow ANC to dominate, but they don't want to have a small party to dominate or to have influence in what is happening at a local level. I think our comrades, when they go there, they must go there once they know that if they work with the ANC or DA they are playing with the lion and hyena.

### ...and advantages

#### Influence

These communities are saying to the political parties that politics are not your monopoly, to us at a local level. If we come together, we can be able to force you to listen to us. We can force you to sit down in the council chamber with us, even if you don't want. Whether they like it or not, they are hearing the voice of the Active United Front in each and every council meeting, in each and every workshop.

We influence policies, we influence budget. So we have said - we are having a seat, we will not vote for this budget if it does not address A and B. We will not vote for this policy if it's a capitalist policy. And that itself has given the community power. And you have seen the change that has happened in Plettenberg Bay. The people

asking as the community. Transparency around the housing allocation, transparency around job opportunities and increased job opportunities, getting land for the people, giving land to the people, giving bursaries.

When you give all this to people, you must not make favours or seek favours. We just gave it, whether you are DA or ANC or what. If you qualify, you get a house. We don't ask what organisation you belong to. We said as long as you are a beneficiary, whether you are EFF, DA you will get employment, you will get a house according to the housing policy, according to the recruitment policy of the municipality, according to the bursary policy. It's for that reason that now people started to have confidence in Active United Front. And they want to give us another chance to be there again, to continue to champion the very same things that they are doing.

#### Unite for implementation

The only thing that we are a friend with is that service delivery combat plan and its implementation. Because that service delivery combat plan is composed of DA manifesto, ANC manifesto and



**Gardens in Makhanda.** "With a municipality that has got more than six farms, you could start producing with a view to undermining hunger."

are saying it has never happened before. That is why you have seen the growth of Active United Front in that community. It's because of championing these socialist policies which are poor orientated.

#### Transparency

In the beginning, ANC and DA people did not understand this United Front thing. But, after we've been in government, it is only then they said no, this party when it's in government, it exactly did what we've been

our manifesto. We looked at those commonalities, those common issues that we say we are all championing for this community. You will find the ANC and DA are talking nicely - they are going to give this and this. Things that we will also identify as important in the community. But they don't implement that, they don't do anything about it. So if you fail to do that, we will review the coalition agreement and we will cancel it. **(PL)**

# THE PRIORITY SHOULD BE **AFFORDABLE SERVICES,** *not income for local government*

By Tracy Ledger

**T**HE NEW POST-1994 STATE envisaged a central role for local government to deliver the promised “better life for all”. The blueprint for this new form of local government was laid out in the 1998 *White Paper on Local Government*. The planned changes to the structure and operation of local government under the new Constitution were considerable: the White Paper imagined an entirely new kind of municipality, with radically different authorities and obligations. South Africa would (for the first time) have wall-to-wall municipalities, and local government would now deliver far more services to many more people.

*South Africa has been given a rare and historic opportunity to transform local government to meet the challenges of the next century. ... the existing local government system will be radically transformed.... (into) a system of local government which is centrally concerned with working with local citizens and communities to find sustainable ways to meet their needs and improve the quality of their lives.*

White Paper on Local Government, 1998

## Providing basic services to be developmental tool and source of income

In order for these ambitious goals to be achieved, a just-as-radical new fiscal framework for local government was required. It had to ensure that all municipalities had access to sufficient resources to discharge their mandates. The local government fiscal framework (LGFF) is the set of arrangements that should ensure that municipalities in aggregate have enough money to fund their developmental agenda.

The basis of the LGFF is that *own revenue* will contribute most of local



Although 85 per cent of all South African households have an electricity connection, most low-income households with such a connection still use other sources of energy (coal, gas, wood, paraffin, candles etc).

government’s funding requirements. The White Paper assumed that income from property rates and services charges would be sufficient to finance 73 per cent of all local government aggregate operating expenditure requirements, as indicated in Table 1. Operating expenditure includes all staff costs, office accommodation, payments to bulk services providers, all other non-capital costs associated with

goal of reducing poverty and inequality. Effective access has two components:

- Physical access – infrastructure and service delivery that ensures a reliable and quality service, and
- Affordability – services that are unaffordable cannot be accessed.

The 1998 White Paper emphasised the importance of affordable basic services in achieving the goal of universal access.

Income source	Assumed contribution to own revenue (%)	Assumed contribution to total operating expenditure (%)
Property rates and taxes	19.9	17.91
Electricity sales	41.4	37.26
Water	11.8	10.62
Sewerage & refuse removal	8.2	7.38

**Table 1:** White Paper proposed contribution of different income sources to own revenue and to total operating expenditure

delivering services, and infrastructure maintenance.

Because of the assumption that local municipalities can self-fund most of their expenditure, the national budget only contributes a relatively small funding top-up (less than 10% of total operating expenditure requirements) via the equitable share and conditional grants.

But universal access to services is also a critical part of South Africa’s long-term

When services are unaffordable for poor households, their contribution to poverty reduction is eroded. Unfortunately, neither the White Paper nor any subsequent legislation provided a clear definition of “affordable”.

The White Paper did not see any conflict between these two goals — services priced at a level that all households could afford, and services priced at a level that would ensure sufficient income for local government. The clear assumption was that there was a point of convergence in tariff setting at which both goals could be achieved — and the current municipal financial system is based on this.

## The envisaged win-win has become a lose-lose reality

Across the board, all municipal services have increased in price well above the rate of consumer price inflation over the last ten years. Between 2010 and 2020, the increase in headline consumer inflation was **68 per cent**. During that same period, the South African Reserve Bank reported the **following increases in municipal services costs**:

- Rates and taxes: +118 per cent
- Electricity: +177 per cent
- Water: +213 per cent

The data indicate that, in the year ended June 2020, the average monthly municipal account for the poorest households (a family of four with a combined monthly household income of less than R3,700 per

month. This represents more than one quarter of total monthly household income for the family of four.

We at the Public Affairs Research Institute propose that the cost of basic services should be contextualised against the background of poverty and food insecurity in South Africa. We refer to this as a Food First approach; one that takes note of the current dire state (and implications) of household food security:

- 27 per cent of South African children under the age of five are so malnourished that they are classified as stunted. Childhood stunting is positively associated with poor cognitive development, significantly increased likelihood of non-communicable diseases such as obesity and diabetes in later life, and

expenditure to pay for services such as electricity and water is fundamentally at odds with any progressive socio-economic policy, and undermines all other efforts in this regard.

## Possible solutions

Adopting a *Food First* approach to basic services pricing implies that:

- For households that live below the food poverty line (R2,340 per month for a family of four at April 2020 prices), no expenditure on a minimum amount of basic services should be considered affordable. This household does not have enough money to purchase sufficient food. And the minimum amount of basic services needs to be notably higher than current levels of free services. 200kWh of electricity and 10KL of water per household per month are more reasonable minimums.
- For households that live above the food poverty line, but below the lower bound poverty line (R3,360 per month for a family of four at April 2020 prices), again, no expenditure on basic services should be considered affordable. The household is already sacrificing food expenditure for other essential expenditure items, such as accommodation and transport.
- For households that live above the lower-bound poverty line, but below the upper-bound poverty line (R5,072 per month for a family of four at 2020 prices), expenditure on basic services would have to be no more than a few hundred Rand

per month to be considered affordable.

This approach towards the pricing of basic services would be in line with original policy intentions with respect to developmental local government. It would make a significant contribution towards reducing poverty and inequality. However, this approach cannot be implemented within the current limits of the LGFF, which has prioritised services as a source of revenue over all other policy goals. The entire over-arching financial model (including the oversight mechanisms to ensure quality and reliable services and cost containment) must change in order for affordable universal access to become a reality.

**Dr Tracy Ledger** is a senior researcher at the [Public Affairs Research Institute](#). The complete basic service report can be accessed [here](#).



When services are unaffordable for poor households, their contribution to poverty reduction is eroded. Unfortunately, neither the White Paper nor any subsequent legislation provided a clear definition of "affordable".

month) was R865 per month in a metro and R900 in a secondary town.

In fact, the effective basic services costs for households are generally higher than these amounts, due to energy requirements. Although 85 per cent of all South African households have an electricity connection, most low-income households with such a connection still use other sources of energy (coal, gas, wood, paraffin, candles etc.) especially for cooking because they cannot afford to purchase the equivalent in electricity. A rough conservative estimate of this expenditure would be R150 per month per household. Since this is correctly a basic-services expenditure, it should be added to the municipal accounts data set out above to generate a more accurate cost of what households are spending.

Thus, the average cost of accessing basic services for a poor household in 2020 was approximately R1,000 – R1,050 per

an increased propensity for violence in adults.

- At least 30 per cent of South African households regularly experience severe or moderate food insecurity.
- Most South African households purchase all the food that they consume. Household disposable income is thus the single most important factor contributing to food security. Any factor which reduces disposable household income available to purchase food contributes directly to exacerbating food insecurity.

For a household that does not have enough money to spend on purchasing a basic, nutritionally adequate basket of food, every Rand spent on basic services should be considered unaffordable. Such a household should be classified as one that is "unable to pay" in terms of the White Paper's intentions.

Forcing households to sacrifice food

# Is remunicipalisation the answer for local government?

By Zama Ndlovu

A SUCCESSFUL REFERENDUM TO expropriate apartments in Berlin for social housing has generated excitement worldwide about what is possible in the fight to resocialise – [remunicipalise](#) – public goods. (Remunicipalisation means returning a privatised service to local, public control). The activist-led campaign to buy back over 10% of apartments has been described as [“one of Europe’s most radical ripostes to gentrification”](#). It was supported by over a million people, as residents faced increasingly unaffordable rents in Berlin.

Across the world, even in the most industrialised nations, citizens are finding it harder to maintain decent living conditions in the financialised economy. Speculative real estate investment is just one of the many last stage capitalism offshoots that are pushing essential public goods outside the reach of more and more people.

## Municipalities in shambles

In South Africa, the site of redistribution is meant to be at the local level of government. The *Local Government Municipal Act of 2000* intends, amongst other things, “to establish a framework for support, monitoring and standard-setting by other spheres of government to progressively build local government into an efficient, frontline development agency capable of integrating the activities of all spheres of government for the overall social and economic upliftment of communities in harmony with their local natural environment”.

Some two decades after the passing of the Act, South Africa’s municipalities are in shambles. In June of this year, the auditor general, Tsakani Maluleke, told the parliamentary committee on public accounts that the financial state of municipalities was fast deteriorating, along with their ability to deliver.

According to the AG:

- Over 25% of municipalities were at risk of not continuing as going concerns.
- Half the collected revenues were going towards salaries, while only 2% of revenues were going towards maintaining public infrastructure.
- A shocking 63% of municipal debt was not recoverable, while the average creditor payment collection period was a staggering 209 days.

In the lead up to the local elections on 1st November, it may be tempting for analysts to say that our municipal woes

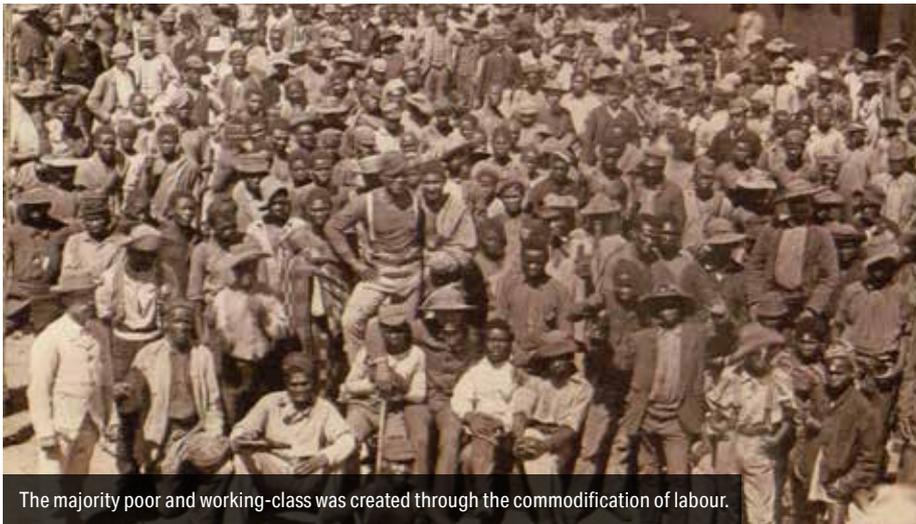
on water and electricity. This is in response to private failures, particularly post-crisis austerity measures that put financial sustainability above the public good.

A question then arises: can the concept of remunicipalisation be applied to the South African context? And if so, how?

## The creation of poverty

The vast majority of South Africans are poor. But to fully understand the implications of poverty in South Africa, one must understand how that society has manufactured that poverty.

An integral part of apartheid rule was to create racial, gender and other forms of domination and exclusion. These were institutionalised through law to create a class of cheap labour. Any discussion about public service provisioning that does not start with a recognition of this point inadvertently mischaracterises the post-apartheid



The majority poor and working-class was created through the commodification of labour.

are purely a result of low accountability and poor governance. After all, bankrupt municipalities fail to deliver water and sanitation; they fail to connect households to electricity; they fail to protect the environment against degradation; and they fail to protect citizens against the adversity caused by pollution. But reducing the failures of local government to issues of financial stability and corruption alone fails to acknowledge the inappropriateness of chosen delivery models in reckoning with our past.

## Remunicipalisation in South Africa?

Across the world, there have been growing calls for “remunicipalisation”, a movement towards reclaiming service provisioning of public goods from private and public-private partnerships back into public hands. This has particularly focused

state’s failures. The majority poor and working-class was created through the commodification of labour.

From the late 1800s to the early 1900s, the growing mining sector saw exponential growth in demand for labour. Meanwhile, white farmers and white labour grew more concerned by the competition presented by black labour and black farmers. Coalitions ensued, and lobbying culminated in the 1913 Native Land Act, and the multitudes of legislation that would successively deepen systemic diswelfare and entrench labour devaluation and exclusion. Citizens were stripped of their land and their citizenship, and reduced to poor, unskilled labourers, if that.

Black people were made servants to a capitalist system that created progressively fewer jobs for poor labour. Meanwhile, public policy for white South Africans

moved towards a mixed economy, with extensive welfare benefits. The state underinvested in social and economic infrastructure such as health, housing and education for Black people. At the same time, it invested heavily in the same public goods for the minority white population. By the 1970s the state had raised the standard of living of white South Africans to those of industrialised economies in the global West. So private sector actors began to put pressure on the apartheid state to privatise.

### The road to privatisation

The apartheid state itself was slow to privatise. This was partly because of the economic context, and partly because, aside from the private sector, there were no political pressures to privatise.

The pressure would eventually fall on the incoming African National Congress government. This was a party which, until the late 80s, had been committed to active intervention in distribution for a welfare state. This would be founded on principles of universality, and give relief to people who suffer from the diswelfare caused by the economic system.

### Full cost recovery

Within a few months of coming into government, the ANC swiftly moved away from its long-held principles on the role of government.

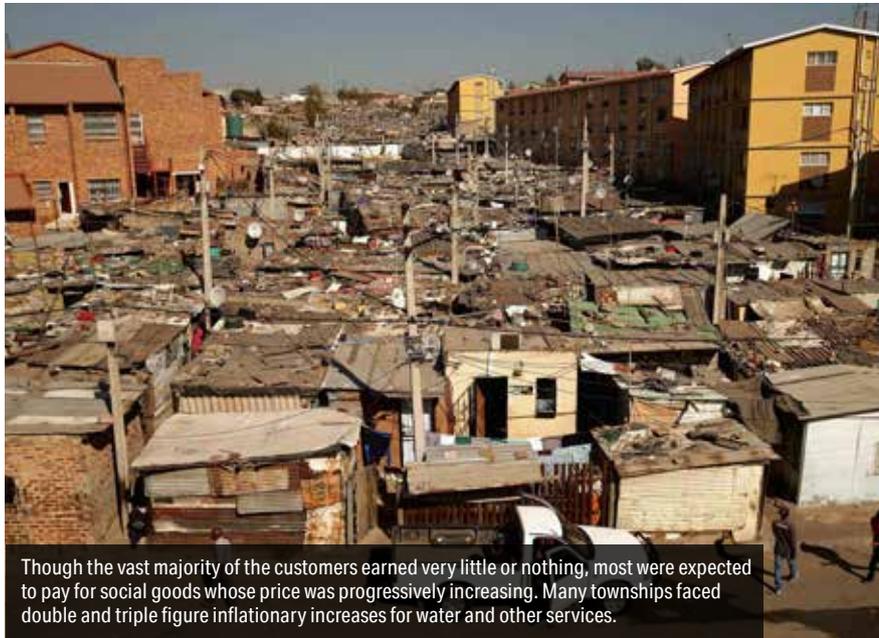
In late 1994, for example, the ANC gave officials the authority to only provide water if they could fully recover the cost of managing the water resources. In that same period, its government cut municipal grants and subsidies. Municipalities were expected to generate the lost revenue that the state no longer provided. Consequently, municipalities were forced to run corporations. In turn, many created agencies that were privately minded, even if they were publicly owned.

And so it was that the citizens, reduced to labourers in the Apartheid state, became customers in the post-Apartheid state. If there is such a thing

as demunicipalisation, this was when it happened.

Water boards were established through the Water Services Act of 1997 to provide, according to the government, retail water and sanitation services. Municipal utilities companies were created to play a large role in distribution and supply of energy, highly dependent on a now corruption-ravaged state utility. Provisions were made for the indigent through the allocation of free basic water and electricity, indigent programmes, and a revenue model that was based on cross-subsidisation.

And though the vast majority of the customers earned very little or nothing, most were expected to pay for social goods



Though the vast majority of the customers earned very little or nothing, most were expected to pay for social goods whose price was progressively increasing. Many townships faced double and triple figure inflationary increases for water and other services.

whose price was progressively increasing. Many townships faced double and triple figure inflationary increases for water and other services.

### Municipalities contribute to inequality

The post-Apartheid government has continuously used human rights language to frame its interventions. But its chosen municipal delivery model has not addressed the injustices of our past. Today's municipalities are contributing towards a deepening of inequality, both through their intended model of provisioning and their ethical and governance failures.

The corporate model of delivery fails to acknowledge that most South Africans did not have equitable access to the labour market. So any social policy that bound welfare to labour participation was regressive and anti-poor.

But is remunicipalisation the right answer, particularly in a system fraught with corruption and maladministration? Should citizens be asked to give over more power to public servants, who have used the available public resources to strengthen patronage networks at the expense of service delivery, even as we argue that the system is flawed?

### New models of accountability needed

We, the people, must be more imaginative than that. The biggest lesson we can learn from Berlin is that to galvanise society activists must find the one issue that all citizens understand and experience equally. But we don't have a strong and

ethical government to assure resocialisation. So different models of accountability, overseen directly by the people, such as community land trust funds, are required.

In its transition to becoming a governing party, the ANC let go of its founding principles at the directive of the World Bank, IMF and the powerful business community that would benefit the most from privatised public goods. The ANC failed to understand that its role was transformation and redistribution, not just service provisioning. But while many activists warned us, we the

citizens failed in holding the party and its government accountable for this betrayal.

Campaigns for remunicipalisation must not fail to acknowledge the unique South African context. This unethical and corrupt state has failed to transform society. It cannot be the guardian of universal public goods. If remunicipalisation is to work in South Africa, the accountability model between the municipality and the citizens will need to be reimagined. Social solidarity must be built through other forms of social contracting, and not through the state as it was once envisaged. Not, at least, until the state has fundamentally transformed.

**Zama Ndlovu** is a communicator, columnist, author and a member of the [3rd Republic](#).

# THE WATER CRISIS

## & LACK OF POLITICAL WILL IN NELSON MANDELA BAY

By Siyabulela Mama



In 2020, the NMB municipality reached Day Zero - the metro's dams had dropped to a combined storage level of only 18%. The biggest dam, the Kouga Dam, was at 8.31%.

**I**N 2018, THE NMB MUNICIPALITY diverted R300 million of the R700 million meant for replacing the metro's ageing water infrastructure - to pay legal bills, drop lawsuits, and hold summer season festivities. Meanwhile, the problem of water in Nelson Mandela Bay (NMB) threatens a jobs blood bath and companies taking their investment away or refusing to invest.

### Day Zero

In 2020, the NMB municipality reached Day Zero - the metro's dams had dropped to a combined storage level of only 18%. The biggest dam, the Kouga Dam, was at 8.31%. Taking into account medium and low risk dams, the average capacity was at 12.25 %.

And for this, communities of the working class were blamed for not using water sparingly.

In fact it is the municipality which has been failing to fix the ailing water infrastructure. Water leaks have not been fixed, although communities of the working class have reported them many times. Instead, we have seen R200 million of the money that was allocated to fix the water infrastructure returned to Treasury, as the Bobani regime could not spend it.

Water tanks are supplied on a large scale. These tanks require regular replenishment, often with water from already stressed dam and river water resources. The quality of this water is often poor and not fit for domestic use.

It has been this water frustration that has led to National Treasury dedicating to NMB R100 million to drill boreholes and locate suitable water yields. Some

boreholes are being delivered. But another R140 million has been requested to fix leaks. And there will be a desalination plant.

### Gross negligence

Despite all this, Nelson Mandela Bay Metro was left without water for six days recently, following a burst in a bulk supply line. While many officials and political heads are saying this is a result of sabotage, the Nelson Mandela Bay Mayor has conceded that actually it is a result of gross negligence and incompetence of metro officials in handling the crisis.

And it is the communities of the working class that are being punished for this incompetence. The municipality has increased water tariffs and has shut down water supply for people who are unable to pay their water bills. Many of these are people who have been reporting for weeks and weeks that they have leaks in their houses, and these have not been attended to.

### Outsourcing no solution

National Treasury has spent R1.8 million on five boreholes. But the funds are channelled through mismanaged entities, and tenders are awarded to consultants charging inflated amounts for deliverables hardly ever completed. The procurement and the tender system promote maladministration and corruption. Although each borehole costs R40,000, tenderpreneurs inflate the price to R200,000. This is where most of the money goes.

If we are going to deal successfully with the issue of service delivery and the problem of water, we really need to do away with the tendering system and

develop the capacity of municipalities to deal with this directly. Privatisation must stop.

Already, we are seeing analysts and water experts in the news talking about desalination as the only option that will bring a sustainable water system. This would bring about a good opportunity for reindustrialisation and the creation of jobs. But subjecting water to market fundamentalism is not an option, as this will result in the same challenges we face with the issue of food security now. And it will worsen this triad of unemployment, poverty and inequality. Not to mention the environmental costs, as desalination does not cater for the need for a low carbon reindustrialisation.

### Water for business, not people

In addition, this proposed desalination will cater for the Industrial Development Zone only; it will not be used by households in the township. So the water security they are talking about is only for big businesses - the economy comes first and people after, for the NMB municipality.

All this time, the Constitution guarantees South African Citizens an enshrined right to access clean sufficient water. This right to water intersects with environmental rights and is an enabling right for the enjoyment of other rights such as health and education. But not in Nelson Mandela Bay, apparently.

**Siyabulela Mama** is co-researcher at the Centre for Post-School Education and Training and an activist in the Assembly of the Unemployed.

# SCARCITY OF WATER

## INCREASES PRIVATE MARKET IN MBIZANA, EASTERN CAPE

By Local Correspondent

**I**N ALMOST ALL MUNICIPALITIES IN Eastern Cape there is a water crisis. There is no clean water or simply no water at all in working class or rural areas.

In Lurholweni township, in the Amadiba administrative area in Mbizana, Eastern Cape, there is no water. Years ago, the then Mbizana local municipality issued a tender to build water pipes everywhere in Lurholweni. The goal was to provide piped water to all households. The rusty pipes remain as a memory of a project not completed. No water ever ran through them.

### Water as a business

So, by the bridge over the Ntlakwe River at KwaBulala, where people also drive down to the riverbank to wash cars, private companies fetch water in tanks. Then they drive 10km back to the township and sell it to the more than 30,000 residents

was decided on and started to be rolled out. A household of eight people should be provided with 6,000 litres of water per month for free. Above that, you start to pay for it.

Twenty years later, there is no free basic water in Lurholweni. Water provision is private, via the informal economy. And of course you pay for it from the first litre.

For one person, with the privatised supply, the 25 litre minimum RDP standard costs R150 per month. For a household of 8 people, the monthly cost would be R1,200. In 2021, the minimum wage in South Africa for a 40-hour work week is R3,500. Even if one or two in a household have a job in Port Edward or at the Wild Coast Sun, R1,200 per month for water is simply out of the question.

And in the rural areas of Mbizana, where houses and homesteads are far apart and underground water pipes would

Hotel and Casino. People cannot be stopped from moving to the township to get a job. New shacks and houses are erected every month. In 2001, the basic goal was to have a community tap “not more than 200m” from any household.

### Responsibility disappears

As many have pointed out, responsibility for water provision and repair of water infrastructure was moved from local municipalities to the district municipalities in 2015. So, the responsibility for the private trucking of water to Lurholweni township, or for whatever the water situation in Mbizana is, lies with Alfred Nzo District Municipality. Unfortunately, it seems like the responsibility got lost in the transfer process.

This is why the local Integrated Development Plan (IDP) speaks of Alfred Nzo’s water provision plans for Mbizana as all in the “planning stages”.

### Solutions

In Sigidi village, a windmill by the school pumps water to two large tanks. Many local schools have this solution. In Sigidi, 120 learners and their teachers have water. Water windmills in schools were part of a national government program. To simply continue with such small investments in local water supply, everywhere in Mbizana’s rural areas and in the townships, should be a big improvement.

In addition, the Municipality ought to start to drill for water in Lurholweni township. But it is vital that it invests in the machinery itself and keeps control and ownership. Such a project must not be put out to tender.

There is a lot of water in Mbizana.

Why is there no water in the communities? Maybe it’s because development ambitions are directed elsewhere. In the IDP, we can read about a new “town on the coast”. This “Smart City” delirium surfaced in the media in September. Your local Amandla! correspondent will keep you in the loop.



There is no free basic water in Lurholweni. Water provision is private, via the informal economy. And of course you pay for it from the first litre.

of Lurholweni who bring their empty containers. The price - R5 per 25 litres.

Meanwhile, on SABC News in September, we heard municipal officials claiming “We supply the water”. Community members reply “No, we buy the water”.

By coincidence, 25 litres per person per day was the limit set for so called “RDP standard” water provision in 2001. This was when the [free basic water programme](#)

be a strange and costly solution, village communities fetch water from the rivers. But in many inland dry areas they also buy water from private trucks, just like in Lurholweni.

### Migration increases demand

Mass unemployment rules the country. Lurholweni is close to the largest employer in Mbizana, which is the Wild Coast Sun

# Why are our taps dry IN GAUTENG?

Vaal River pollution. Water quality of the Vaal Dam has been [deemed polluted](#) beyond acceptable standards, due to the dysfunction of the Emfuleni Municipality.

By Mary Galvin

**“The bottom line is that for the past 100 years Gauteng has been able to secure sufficient water to enable its residents to live as if water supply is not a constraint. Those days are over. The end. That has a bunch of consequences, with no easy answers, and poor people will increasingly bear the brunt.”** - Kathy Eales, a former water regulator for the City of Johannesburg.

**S**OUTH AFRICA’S WEALTHIEST AND most populated province is experiencing regular water scarcity that forces residents to cope as if they were in rural areas. City-dwellers in Gauteng, across race and class, are left frustrated by their struggle to access water. Incomplete and competing accounts about the reasons mean that many people have simply accepted that they don’t understand what is going on. This isn’t helped by sudden outages, with no communication to residents and no indication of how long they will last.

The reasons for dry taps are fairly, yet shockingly, straightforward. We explain them below. And an action plan has been prepared and approved by the Province and municipalities in the *Gauteng Province Water Security Perspective (GWSP)*. However, implementing these plans requires overcoming significant challenges: a lack of popular and political will, weak institutional capacity, and insufficient finance.

We also need to consider the underlying structural problem: the concentration of capital in Gauteng, historically around gold and now around the financial centre of Sandton. Natural resources are stretched under the

pressure of the masses of people who relocate to the country’s economic hub. So, demand and supply actions are simply buying time. The only long-term solution lies in the relocation of industry and people to places with sufficient natural resources.

## Dry season, drought and climate change

There is not enough water in water-scarce South Africa for the 14.8 million people who live in Gauteng, who comprise a quarter of South Africa’s population. Like many other cities in the world, such as Sao Paulo, Beijing, New Delhi and San Diego, water shortages are common, particularly as droughts are made more severe by climate change. Global climate projections show that droughts will become more frequent and more severe.

Gauteng depends on the Integrated Vaal River System (IVRS), which transfers water from other river basins to the Vaal. Most well-known is the expensive Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP), which takes water from the mountains of Lesotho through tunnels and pipelines into the Vaal. Yet the water quality of the Vaal Dam has been deemed polluted beyond acceptable standards, due to the dysfunction of the Emfuleni Municipality. These environmental justice issues are the focus of activists from the Vaal Environmental Justice Forum, sometimes working across race and class boundaries with NGO, *Save the Vaal*.

Water from the IVRS also supplies “strategic water users” that are responsible for almost half of South Africa’s GDP:

Eskom’s coal fired power stations, industries including Sasol, and mines. In other words, Gauteng residents lose their water to support economic activity in other provinces. (Also note the paradox: our scarce water resources feed economic activity that emits carbon and worsens climate change, making water even more scarce.)

## Technical

Local water shortages tend to be reported as a technical problem. Eskom’s power outages mean that pumps stop running, so reservoirs do not fill. Eventually they run so low that water is turned off to allow them to fill. And as soon as they start filling up, people use lots of water since they were waiting for it.

Sometimes systems fail because of poor maintenance or because urbanisation means that new infrastructure or expanded infrastructure is needed. This is not just a matter of adding pipes to people’s households or new areas, but also installing wider water systems to feed the pipes. It also has to do with the state of the pipes and pumps – can we depend on the water system to work under pressure? Municipalities have not invested adequately in expanding infrastructure and have underestimated the importance of maintenance. This is hard to remedy quickly.

Finally, there are differences between water systems by geographical area. Water systems can cope with extra demand in places where pipes and pumps have excess capacity and low water loss, but not where they don’t.

**Management**

Developing, expanding and maintaining water systems relies on municipalities and water utilities - primarily Rand Water. This raises a host of the usual questions. Are staff qualified to anticipate problems and deal with them effectively, or are they political appointments? Do water utilities coordinate plans and operations with municipalities and other stakeholders, or are they impeded by political infighting? Are funds used properly?

All of these factors can have a devastating impact on delivery.

**Finance**

Municipalities provide “retail” services to residents, making sure that water comes from their taps. But they must pay utilities like Rand Water for “bulk” water. According to the GWSP, municipalities owed R7.3 billion to water boards at the end of 2017. The boards were in turn in debt to the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) for R11 billion. This cross-debt affects DWS’ ability to pay for sustaining and expanding the bulk infrastructure that feeds Gauteng.

While the National Treasury provides funding for free basic water, the municipalities must still obtain revenue from their “customers” to pay Rand Water. This is where the corporatisation of services comes in, resisted by social movements globally and anti-privatisation movements in South Africa.

People need water to survive. Particularly with the economic devastation caused by Covid (especially for people who were already struggling), paying for water becomes impossible. They either try to depend on free basic water, or they use more than that and go into debt.

**Priorities: who matters?**

So where is the focus of water utilities? They attend most to customers who pay. As a result, their residential areas are likely to have better maintained pipes and get attention when there is a shortage. There is communication from the

municipality and there are tanks placed nearby. Ironically, these are the people who can afford to go to the shop to buy water. They have cars to collect water and they may have rainwater tanks for their garden.

As we see from the strategic water users, there is also the question of how water is allocated amongst sectors. People and the environment (the “ecological reserve”) are supposed to come first by law. But government leaders strive to meet the water demands of Eskom, industry and mining so that they can deliver jobs and electricity. The demand from the Limpopo, to feed Medupi and Kusile, means water is then not available for Gauteng residents.

**What can be done?**

We have a perfect storm threatening Gauteng’s water supply and it is rapidly intensifying. We need to address demand and supply in a way that is equitable and not punitive to the poor, formulate contingency plans and develop and implement a sustainable long-term future.

water usage by middle class users. While it is important to increase tariffs for these users to raise revenue, the amount available to all users needs to be restricted by law.

More water can be supplied, most notably with the completion of the Polihali Dam of the LHWP, but that is only expected to be completed by 2026 at the earliest. So the government has a “reconciliation plan” to balance demand and supply by planning for the extension and building of water systems. Funding an extension of supply should not be sought by squeezing poor people. Funds need to come from the national fiscus, and by increasing water tariffs and taxes on industry and other big users.

To do all this requires plans with foresight, taking into account increasing urbanisation, worsening climate change and water scarcity, and economic crisis. To develop and implement this, we need municipalities and utilities managed by capable individuals, and they need to work together effectively.

As climate change impacts spiral, it is critical to act now to extend water supply and control demand. At the same time, we need to ensure that contingency plans and backup capacity are in place so that we can survive a dry Gauteng. But let’s keep an eye on the longer-term vision: a movement of key economic sectors and human settlements to areas with water resources able to sustain life.

**Mary Galvin**

is an academic activist based in the Department of Anthropology and Development Studies at the University of Johannesburg. Her focus is on struggles for water and sanitation, and on climate change.



Atteridgeville, west of Pretoria. There is not enough water in water-scarce South Africa for the 14.8 million people who live in Gauteng, who comprise a quarter of South Africa’s population.

On average, the quantity of water that is consumed per capita in South Africa is very high. There is a lot of waste by all users. Overall public awareness needs to be raised so that there is widespread understanding of conservation.

But most poor people are using relatively little water to begin with. Pressure needs to be placed on middle class users to bring demand down. In eThekweni and in Cape Town, we see that tariff increases are not the most effective way to control the very high levels of

# IT'S YELLOW VERSUS BLUE

in Nelson Mandela Bay: *where are the Red & Green?*

By Janet Cherry

FROM THE GRASSROOTS, THERE IS widespread cynicism about the upcoming local government elections. This appears in statements such as this from a Cape Town resident, “Why should we vote for councillors to enrich themselves when we don’t have food?” On 3rd October, President Cyril Ramaphosa visited the crime-ravaged townships of the Nelson Mandela Metro, where residents claimed surprise at the number of police present for the President’s visit, “When we try to get the police to assist us, we’re told there are no vans to go out....the police only come when there is a high delegation of ANC leaders..... where are they coming from, because they are not here for the community?”.

The ANC has been hegemonic since 1994 in the townships of The Bay, although to its shock and dismay it lost the 2016 local government election, despite winning an overwhelming majority of the township wards. The ANC argues – as does the DA – that since 2016 the “coalition system” is the problem as it renders local government paralysed.

In the upcoming local government elections, the ANC and the DA are both committed to gaining an outright majority in Nelson Mandela Bay, so that they can “govern effectively” without the interference or vacillation of smaller parties. Yet is the coalition system the problem, or is it perhaps the local government system itself, with its proportional representation combined with direct representation of

communities?

The solution does not lie within the ANC, nor within the DA; nor does it lie within a different electoral system. It lies both within and outside of the system of multiparty democracy. Smaller parties and independent ward candidates forming coalitions around clear agendas may be an effective strategy to address it.

It is not necessary to go into the details of the crime and corruption that has occurred in the Bay; nor is it necessary to point out the obvious consequences in terms of service delivery. The question is – how should the forces of the Left, those concerned with the climate crisis as well as the meeting of the basic needs of the majority, respond to this dismal state of affairs? And in the current context, how should we respond to the local government election campaign? What is the strategy and what is the likely outcome?

## Communities are on their own

The first question to answer is whether the elections are important, and if so, what strategies should be adopted towards them. At a recent Local



The threat to the ANC’s hegemony in the townships of the Bay has come from a new party, the Abantu Integrity Movement (AIM), led by businessman Mkhulisi ‘Khusta’ Jack, one of the most effective community organisers of the UDF era.

Government Strategy Workshop, Dialogue for an Anti-capitalist Future (DAF) noted that the traditional political parties have left community struggles, and therefore communities are on their own.

Nowhere is this clearer than in Nelson Mandela Bay, where the “two big parties” are concerned with nobody but themselves. The DA and ANC both aim to win an outright majority, so that they can avoid forming alliances with smaller parties, and “win the war for the Bay”. At the DA launch in Nelson Mandela Bay on 3 October, it was stated that it was a war of “blue versus yellow” – there is no role for smaller parties.

In NMB there is an Independent Civic Movement and a Mandela Bay Community Movement, among many “small parties” contesting the election, as well as a number of independent candidates and one independent SANCO candidate. But unlike in Makana Municipality, with the Makana Citizens Front, there is no strong civic or residents-based alliance.

On the “labour left” UFEC has put up candidates, headed by Khusta Mtsila, who took up the single UFEC seat on the Council in 2016 when UFEC gained 1% of the



Activists mobilising around energy, food, water and land have discussed a strategy for influencing the elections through asking candidates to publicly endorse the Climate Justice Charter, and commit to taking certain actions related to a just transition.

vote. The UFEC strategy to use the PR vote to gain representation in Council proved that even a small party can play a significant role, at times even holding the balance of power. SRWP is not contesting this election.

## War talk

The threat to the ANC's hegemony in the townships of the Bay has come not from the "breakaways" from the Alliance – COPE (as in 2011) or UFEC (as in 2016) – but from a new party, the Abantu Integrity Movement (AIM), led by businessman Mkhusele 'Khusta' Jack, one of the most effective community organisers of the UDF era. If it can mobilise effectively, a party such as AIM, which focuses on service delivery to all residents of the Metro rather than one constituency, and which has the capacity to manage delivery and provide oversight, can potentially play an important role.

The "war talk" has thus been extended to the mobilisation of township residents, with the militarist legacy of the liberation struggle being resurrected. While the ANC has formed a "1970s-1980s Detachment" to bring in the activists from that generation to campaign, AIM has mobilised former ANC activists including the amabutho to form "detachments" led by "generals" to engage in a "war". Such is the attempt by AIM to use the ANC's own legacy to undermine its hegemony.

The biggest threat to the ANC's hegemony is not its programme, but its own internal divisions and failures. While Cosatu and the SACP have capitulated to the old Alliance rhetoric and expressed support for the ANC, the independent Left has come up with some more innovative strategic approaches to the local government elections.

## Green agenda largely ignored

Another important input to the local government strategy debate – not that the "big parties" have taken much notice of it – has been that of the Climate Justice Charter campaign. Activists mobilising around energy, food, water and land have discussed a strategy for influencing the elections through asking candidates to publicly endorse the Climate Justice Charter, and commit to taking certain actions related to a just transition.

There are no explicitly green parties and, despite the fact that the manifestos of the two "big parties" both contain some indication of how communities can benefit from changing regulation regarding decentralised renewable energy

supply, there has been hardly a mention of the climate crisis or the just transition.

## ANC Manifesto

The ANC does mention both climate change and the need for a just transition, where it commits to:

- **“Significantly increase the contribution of renewable energy to the country’s energy mix through a diversification of energy sources, and a just energy transition that creates new economic opportunities for workers and communities.**
- **Ensure safe and reliable electricity supply in this process.**
- **Oversee the retirement of aging coal-powered power stations to improve air quality for communities and reduce the greenhouse gases that cause climate change.**
- **Ensure all poor households receive the amount of free electricity allocations that they are entitled to.**
- **Invest in public renewable and cleaner power-generating capacity, and electricity transmission infrastructure to expand and strengthen the grid to accommodate new generation capacity and entrants, enabling municipalities to supply electricity to homes and businesses.”**

## DA Manifesto

**The DA, reflecting a market-based approach to the transition, notes that,** “We support people and businesses selling their excess wind- and solar-generated electricity to the grid for consumption by other users, benefitting both residents and the local economy.”

Smaller parties representing a specific agenda, or which are representing residents or civic movements in particular

localities, as well as independents standing as ward candidates, may be able to play a positive and influential role. After all, all parties agree on the same basic programme for local government: service delivery, especially the meeting of basic needs – water, electricity, sanitation and waste management – as well as assisting with shelter, security, local economic development, recreation and heritage, although these are not solely the responsibility of local government.

There is potential for some innovative initiatives relating to community owned renewable energy, in the context of the changing energy regulations and municipal procurement policies.

## Likely outcome

It is likely that AIM will do the best of the “civic parties” in winning township votes away from the ANC, given its strong anti-corruption message and the background of its candidates as effective community activists. On the labour Left, UFEC may (or may not) maintain its pockets of labour support.

If these two parties can gain three or four seats out of the PR vote, and if the ANC and DA support is fairly evenly divided, as in 2016, then these two parties could well hold the balance of power in the Metro, which would be a good thing. Overall, however, the narrative of the “yellow versus blue” is likely to prevail.

The voice of the environmental and labour Left will be lost in the fray, unless there is an effective strategy of “using the democratic space” which is available in the local government system. Ward candidates who truly represent the interests of mobilised communities, and PR candidates who carry a specific agenda, can work in alliance with the bigger parties, both to hold the bigger parties to account through careful oversight, and – more importantly – to make some progressive gains.

**Janet Cherry** is an ecosocialist activist and Professor of Development Studies at Nelson Mandela University in Gqeberha.

# WE NEED *a vanguard of the poor*

Interview with **Thapelo Mohapi**, Spokesperson of **Abahlali baseMjondolo**

**Amanda!:** There's lots of noise being made about the local government elections. Do these elections have any significance for Abahlali?

**Thapelo Mohapi:** NO. FOR US THE elections have never yielded any results. We have seen one party winning the elections and that party has never cared about the poorest of the poor. We are living under inhumane conditions in the informal settlement. The Black government is unable to provide services for people who are living in shacks. So, for as long as we are living in shacks of indignity, we don't see any elections as being the solution or bringing any solutions for us.

That's why we say that people should not vote for this current ANC-led government. For as long as the ANC continues to win the elections in local government, and the DA continues to run the Western Cape, we have not seen any result. For us there would not be any significant change, unless

these two parties are removed from the municipalities and the metros that they are running.

**A!:** Have you, as Abahlali, supported political parties in previous elections?

**TM:** YES, WE HAVE TAKEN DECISIONS at an Assembly. We are a grass-root, democratic social movement. We hold General Assemblies on a monthly basis.

In 2014, we decided to have a tactical vote against the ANC, and we voted for the official opposition party. But this vote was not necessarily to say Abahlali had joined the DA. It was a tactical vote to say we had enough of the ANC being in power. It has failed the poor in this country.

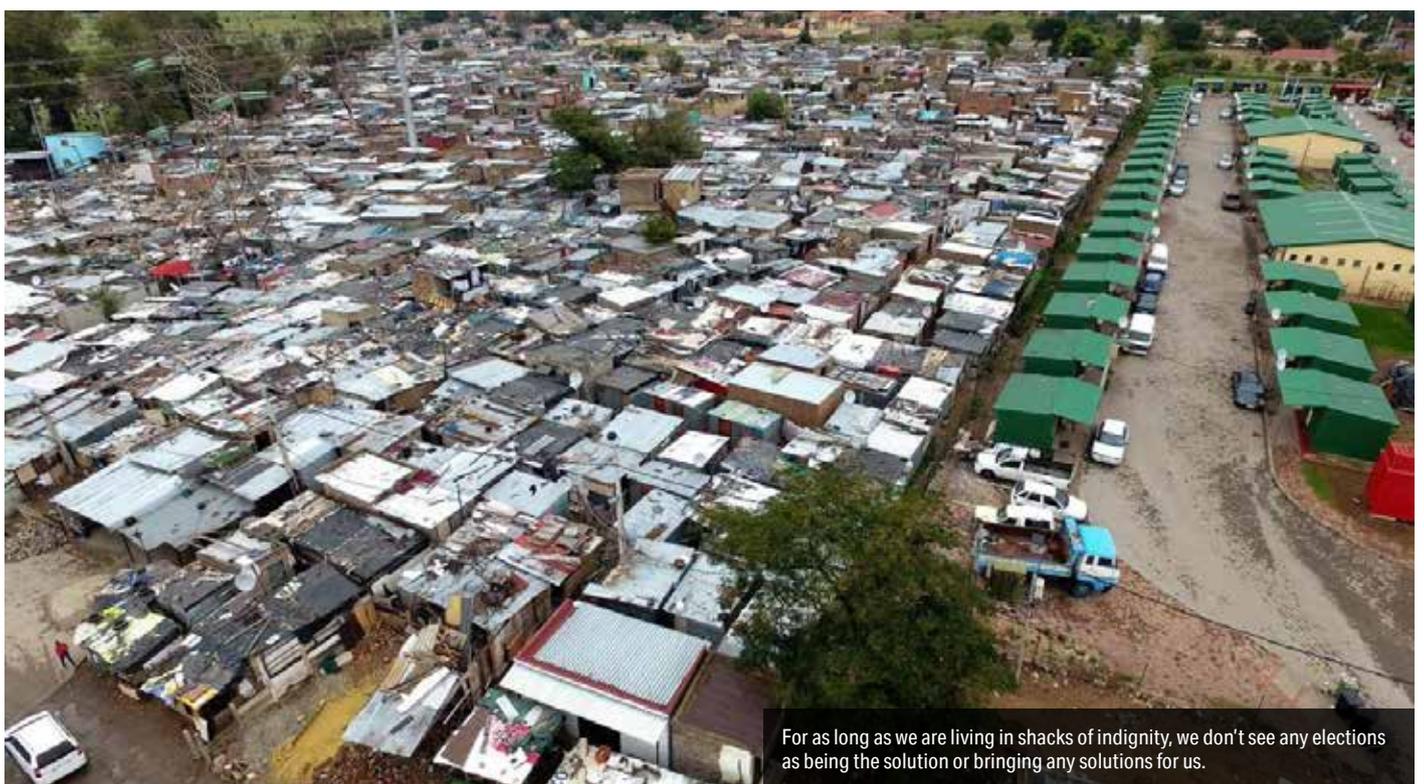
Of course, it did make an impact. The DA became the official opposition in KZN. And it turns out that the neoliberals are also in the Democratic Alliance.

**A!:** What would you see as the key lessons from this tactical voting?

**TM:** WELL, WE HAVE LEARNED OF course that there would be critics who will say that Abahlali are now voting for liberals. But remember, in 2006 and in 2009 we had what was called "No Land, No House, No Vote", which was a way of us boycotting the elections.

Then we saw it did not make any impact, because we were outside of the electoral process. We needed to be there, so that we can get rid of the ANC from government. Our aim is to get all the neoliberals in government out, so that we get a socialist party that will cater for the poor and marginalised in this country and will actually look into services in the informal settlements. A party that is grounded. A vanguard of the poor.

The EFF is fascist in Durban and encourages an anti-Indian approach. Even though it shares some sentiments with Abahlali, you need to first and foremost respect the people who are in your country. So, we differ with the EFF in that way, because we believe a human being is a human being, regardless of their colour,



For as long as we are living in shacks of indignity, we don't see any elections as being the solution or bringing any solutions for us.

regardless of their socio-economic status.

We will have a general assembly on 3rd October where we will take a serious position on the election. However, the members of Abahlali have been very clear, that we will not be voting for the ANC, because the ANC is killing members of Abahlali. They will not vote for the Democratic Alliance, because the Democratic Alliance is in power in the Western Cape and yet Black people continue to be poor. So, we are clear on who

understand the issues of the communities.

The crisis that we are having in this country is that there is no alternative at this point in time. We are organising people in masses. When we are having a protest, we will make the cities to come to a standstill. Yet, we don't have a vanguard party that will actually speak to the issues of the people on the ground, that we can actually say this is the party that we are supporting at this point in time. That alternative will only come when we, as the

have a process that is grounded or with the people on the ground. We don't want to make the same mistake, where people are going to turn their back on our own people.

In fact, there are two views. One is to say that we are ready now to have candidates, whether it's at municipal level or at national level elections. But others are saying, if we take our leaders there, they will change, and we will have no one to build this movement that has been built in this way. And therefore, we believe that we

need to start building first and foremost a formidable and strong movement on the ground that will change the status quo in this country.

So at this point in time, it's still discussions within Abahlali baseMjondolo as an organisation.

But for those organisations who are standing, I think it's a good thing if they are grounded with the community and community-driven. For example, if people are saying we are sick and tired of the Makana municipality not being able to provide water,

because I remember there was a crisis of water in that municipality at one stage. Why would you want to have these people back into the same government, to do the very same thing? No, you must find a way to get rid of them.

**AI:** When you speak about a vanguard party, there's been a lot of criticisms about this notion in the past. A "vanguard" can easily lead to a kind of substitution of a leadership for the masses.

**TM:** NO, I KNOW THAT. IT MUST BE A vanguard for the poor, it must be a vanguard for the people. It must take instructions from the people; it must not be run by individuals. It must not keep power in the leadership. The leadership must be able to be recalled any time. There must be assemblies on a daily basis; it must be democratic, so that everyone has a voice, even the poorest of the poor.

It must be the people who actually have greater voice than the leadership of the party.



In 2006 and in 2009 we had what was called "No Land, No House, No Vote", which was a way of us boycotting the elections.

should not be voted for. But we have not taken a stance as to which political party we would be supporting in these elections.

**AI:** Do you think that for Abahlali there would be value in people coming together into some kind of Left formation that can advance the interest of organisations such as Abahlali, for example?

**TM:** WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS HIGH TIME that we, as poorest of the poor, come together and come up with our own solution. Whatever formation we come up with must be grounded and it must be people-driven; it must speak issues of the people on the ground. We must have a right to recall, if somebody is not doing something that we need.

These councillors from the ANC and the Democratic Alliance only meet the communities whenever there's elections. They never meet the people on the ground, during the five-year term. We will recall somebody if they do not call a meeting within three months, to see and

poorest of the poor, unite and speak in one voice.

**AI:** A lot of the movements that we are working with and know of are going to engage in the local government elections, either through independent candidates they have put up, or as movements themselves. There's the Active United Front for example. And there's members from the Botshabelo Unemployed Movement as well. And a lot of them share your perspectives. Why hasn't Abahlali decided to contest the local government elections?

**TM:** WE WANT TO GET INTO THE ELECTORAL process once we are ready. We don't want to rush into it. One of the reasons and our concern is that when you get into the system, the system has a way of changing you. There were a lot of people who were speaking a socialist language, but when they got into government, they turned their back. That's why we have said let's give this some time, a discussion through communities, and find out how we can

# Structural problems with local government

By **Ayabonga Cawe**

**M**UNICIPALITIES HAVE IN many ways become dysfunctional sites of conflict over service delivery and a declining base of financial resources. We have all observed the tale of the decline. The Auditor General tells us of it every year.

Successive Divisions of Revenue and quarterly reports also tell a story of underspending. The recent National Treasury report on 3rd quarter spending by municipalities of conditional grants in the Division of Revenue framework is rather telling.

Capital spending levels were on average 62.5% of budget. This has major implications for the government's ability to meet its targets for expanded access to water, sanitation, electricity, and housing. Some municipalities had submitted rollover requests from the previous year: R4 billion in total. Only R111.7 million had been spent by the third quarter.

Local government expenditure is viewed as a critical counter-cyclical instrument in periods of crisis. But it seems delays in supply chain processes, late submission of implementation plans, and the non-

appointment or late appointment of service providers delay capital projects in areas where they are needed most. And of course that has an effect on employment as well. In addition, low spending leads to lower allocations in future. This effectively punishes poor communities for their municipalities' deep mismanagement and lack of initiative and capacity to spend resources. More importantly, this further deepens the crisis of social reproduction unfolding at a community level.

## Crisis of social reproduction?

Social reproduction refers to the tasks of giving birth, rearing the young, and looking after the ill and the old. In addition, [Nancy Fraser](#), the philosopher and political theorist argues, are the tasks focused on building and replenishing social bonds.

Social reproduction in South Africa has historically been "externalised" to the homelands or "Native Reserves", in the most unproductive parts of South Africa; and externalised to African women. It is this that was crucial to the "cheap labour" basis of the Apartheid and post-Apartheid economy. The cost of raising successive generations of the workforce fell not on industry, for whom such labour would

of these areas to the city, through the historic migration corridors of South Africa. As [Langa Zita](#) suggested earlier this year, this migrancy "long shattered much of the viability of the household" as a shock absorber of this crisis of social reproduction.

## Demarcation and boundary-making

There is a reframing of old debates around boundaries which allows for the re-emergence of a federalist politics that directly contests the notion of a unitary state. The DA and the Cape Independent Party, despite not having a common position on "Cape secession", agree on the need to strengthen the power and functional authority of provincial

government. This is to strengthen the hand of particular class and racial forces under the guise of performance and good governance.

And then there are the contests around boundary-making in areas on the margins of the "Native Reserves". We have seen the cases of Khutsong, Matatiele and recently Vhuwani. Perceptions around the link between boundaries, service delivery performance and economic opportunity can foment civic contests around space and its demarcation. This is



Social reproduction in South Africa has historically been "externalised" to the homelands or "Native Reserves", in the most unproductive parts of South Africa; and externalised to African women.

not a new debate. Govan Mbeki in 1993 made a similar critique of how boundary-making needed to be informed by a wide consideration of factors, rather than only the ethno-linguistic ghosts of Bantustans. Mbeki suggested, in the case of the eastern part of the Eastern Cape, that the only reason why the "districts in Eastern Pondoland" would remain in the Eastern Cape was for ethno-linguistic reasons – that the boundary makers thought "that Xhosa-speaking people were a cultural group of their own. Mbeki's preference was for the areas of KwaBhaca, Matatiele,

remain a critical input to production. Rather it fell, during Apartheid, on the marginal and subsistence production in the countryside in places like Giyani, Cofimvaba, KwaMhlanga and Quthing. Today, household and community level production has also been extensively impacted by a number of factors: the ecological crisis of a severe drought; Covid-19; entry of formal sector food and retail value chains in these areas. However, a deeper malaise may have to do with the historic flow of the working age population

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Kokstad, Mount Fletcher and eMaXesibeni to “fall in the Natal region with Durban as the industrial base”. The later struggles in Matatiele around this same issue indicated the correctness of Mbeki’s position. Durban is much closer as an industrial base to eMaXesibeni, than, say, Gqeberha.

### Municipal dysfunction & economic production

Industrial bases matter in the devolution of powers to local government for two related reasons.

The first, is that there is an interface between social reproductive and economic productive needs. It is critical that this is taken into account in the distribution of space and the planning of infrastructure. No industrialist will locate themselves in an area without roads, for instance, to transport inputs into their factories, and the finished goods outward to key consumer markets.

The second reason is related to the institutional functioning of municipalities as organs of state. Municipalities have devolved powers that allow them to levy property rates and other taxes on local households and companies. In many parts of South Africa, municipalities oversee jurisdictions without any companies to speak of, or household wages on which to levy property rates and other taxes.

Theoretically, conditional grant values are higher for municipalities with a lower economic or industrial base to levy. So, OR Tambo Municipality, with a smaller industrial base, will receive higher allocations per capita from national government in the form of conditional grants than, say, the eThekweni Metro.

Why does this matter? It matters because, firstly, our boundaries as discussed above are boundaries for policy.

And secondly municipalities need to respond to how the instruments of policy (budgets, personnel, legislation etc.) can enable and incentivise greater production, employment, and value addition. What we see however, is the opposite.

We can draw parallels between Lichtenburg and the Komani Industrial Park, where Clover and Twizza respectively have complained about the provision of

key inputs to their industrial production (electricity, water, roads etc.). Both municipalities are in areas close to the former Native Reserves of Transkei and Bophuthatswana, respectively. Along with Harrismith (which is close to Phuthaditjaba, in QwaQwa), they share the challenges of transitional municipal arrangements that had to merge the Republic–Homeland administrations, and service needs in a rapidly changing social environment.

But merger of administrative features like billing and new accounts from the old municipalities has failed, leading to chronic liquidity challenges. These have been sped up by political and factional contests that have made for a “perfect political storm”. The casualties have been households and companies, which have



And then there are the contests around boundary-making in areas on the margins of the “Native Reserves”. We have seen the cases of Khutsong, Matatiele and recently Vhuwani (pictured).

had to live through water shortages (due to incapacity to spend capital budgets), worn out roads and unmaintained substations that have led to persistent blackouts.

The implication has not only been a deepening of the social reproductive crisis mentioned above, but an economic production and investment crisis limiting the potential for employment, productivity gains and other spillovers from industrial investment.

These institutional challenges make the economic space for redistribution and reinvestment much smaller.

### Violent spillovers of intra-class conflicts over tenders and outsourcing

The fourth dimension of this crisis manifests itself in at times fatal political contests for space within political parties and the municipal administrations. These fights have become severe and fatal for two interrelated reasons. The first is

austerity. Together with the weaknesses in spending and reporting, this has led to lower allocations to infrastructure-related capital spending. In turn, this reduces the size of the pot for local “political entrepreneurs” linked to particular political factions.

The second is the weakness of the industrial base. This reduces opportunities for an entrepreneurial class, outside of the public sector and the provisioning of public goods. The only “opportunities” in some smaller municipalities are within the state, with limited scope for accumulation and social mobility outside it.

The electoral decline of the ANC in the metros (which remain the industrial core of South Africa) has also meant that these contests become even more concentrated in the rural and peri-urban periphery, with increasing intensity. And these contests also mobilise progressive policy such as “preferential procurement” for clientelist and at times “extortionist” purposes.

### Beyond 1st November

The outcome of these violent spillovers is not only death and the increasing mafia-like capture of local supply chain processes. It also empties of any substantive content policies aimed at broadening enterprise and social development into ever expanding critical areas of public provisioning. It creates a “dog eat dog” law of the

jungle, that withers the credibility of any redistributive policies aimed at social and racial redress.

The outcome is that conditional grants are spent unevenly. Where they are spent, they seldom contribute to building dedicated industrial capacity close to where the public provisioning needs are.

Unsurprisingly, this deepens the social reproductive crisis in the home, hollows out the local state and incentivises the industrial firm to downsize, distribute upwards, and where possible opt for flight. We must respond to and confront the task of changing this reality beyond 1st November.

**Ayabonga Cawe** is a development economist, policy advisor and broadcaster.

# SPIN-DOCTORING

## THE JULY CHAOS: *dangers of conspiratorialism*

By Patrick Bond

**W**HAT COMPETING narratives still circulate to explain the KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng chaos in mid-July? At least four seem to have emerged:

- **Chaos Theory 1** emanates from President Cyril Ramaphosa's [victimhood rhetoric](#) about "well-planned," "orchestrated" "economic sabotage" against his government, in which "instigators" from the Radical Economic Transformation (RET) faction within his own ruling African National Congress attempted to establish conditions for a coup.
- **Chaos Theory 2** relies upon the bizarre belief – promoted by the likes of Carl Niehaus, Mzwanele Manyi, Duduzile ("we see you!!!") Zuma-Sambudla and social-media influence Sphithiphithi Evaluator – that the tens of thousands of rioters supported imprisoned ex-president Jacob Zuma; as former #FeesMustFall Durban leader Bonginkosi Khanyile [appealed to a few followers](#), "Those who are continuing to burn the country must continue burning it until Bab' Msholozhi is released."
- **Chaos Theory 3** – as advanced by Khanya College [karibu!](#), the [Rural Women's Assembly](#) and [New Frame's initial editorial](#) – celebrates the "sleeping giant" proletarian awakening, "hunger riots," and the successful pressure on Ramaphosa to cough up a temporary ([typically tokenistic](#)) R350/month grant to the unemployed, restored in late July after being cut in Treasury's austerity spree a few weeks earlier.
- **Chaos Theory 4** is based on the "powder keg" context: decades of neoliberal frustrations were the explosive material detonated by Ramaphosa's tightening of harsh Covid-19 lockdown conditions on July 11 and the jailing of Zuma four days

*What competing narratives still circulate to explain the KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng chaos in mid-July?*



before that, with terrible blowback including the deaths of 350 mainly working-class and poor people that week, resurgent ethnicism, job-destroying vandalism, and arson (such as at a Mumbai-headquartered firm illegally storing toxic chemicals, resulting in an eco-catastrophe in northern Durban).

Is there a partial truth to be found in each theory, giving proponents regular opportunities to make their broader case? Can the theories be selectively combined? And would they apply in different places and at different times?

Yes, all that may be so... but what does the overwhelming evidence suggest and what are the political implications?

Some on the Left endorse Theory 1, even arguing – as did the [highly-respected](#) Jane Duncan in [Amandla! #77](#) – that the RET coup-mongering conspiracy was so vast that it entailed even the destruction of four community radio stations. This "conveniently" compelled listeners to instead seek information from dangerous social media, [posited](#) Media Monitoring Africa director [William Bird](#).

### Dearth of proof

But advocates of Chaos Theory 1 must acknowledge how little evidence emerged, especially from within the Zuma-infested state security apparatus. There were more than 1500 arrests for looting, but only 18 were supposed instigators. Prosecutors failed to make the case they were a danger to society: with one exception, all 18 were released on bail of R5000 or less (a Vaal ANC thug, Themba Mnisi, paid R40 000).

[Complained](#) KZN political commentator Likhona Mnguni: "When politicians came and told us about 12 instigators, it appeared as though they had concrete evidence on particular names who are influential and standing members of society. What we have gotten now is what I consider as fringe players whose ability is only to fan the fires of uncertainty and destabilisation on social media platforms."

Lack of evidence unnerved even experienced Daily Maverick reporter Ferial Haffajee, otherwise a prolific advocate of Chaos Theory 1. When influencer Zamaswazi Zinhle Majazi (Sphithiphithi Evaluator) was belatedly arrested six weeks after the violence had ceased, Haffajee [agreed](#) with her lawyer's allegation: "The case is in tatters. She was clearly shaken, nobody

## Evidence of well-orchestrated economic sabotage?

According to **Jane Duncan**:

*Scores of trucks were burnt in a matter of 24 hours. If the unrest was simply caused by social tensions fuelled by inequality, then why was a landfill site torched and attacks threatened on substations and reservoirs, as happened reportedly in the Msunduzi municipality? Why were schools and community radio stations attacked and vandalised? A psychiatric hospital? Why were a kidney dialysis facility and a pharmaceutical plant destroyed, frustrating access to medical supplies and stalling the Covid-19 vaccination programme? How did it happen that less obvious targets than malls were included: ones that would have required research and planning, such as distribution warehouses? Attributing these aspects of the unrest to a social powder keg that blew organically just doesn't cut it as a coherent explanation.*

First, the 'coordinated' road closures occur regularly at these very points. On the N2 in the stretch around Richards Bay, it's an extraordinarily rough battleground

associated with Northern KZN mining where assassinations are common, including Rio Tinto's local manager in May 2021).

And the N3 highway at Mooi River Plaza between Durban and Johannesburg is where nearly all the trucks burned on highways in mid-July met their fate (not "scores" of trucks: 28 is a big enough number). It's easy for anyone from the low-income community just meters away to halt a container truck, loot it and set it alight, as occurred on April 22nd 2021, March 28th 2019, August 6th 2018, April 30th 2018 (35 trucks burned), April 2nd 2018 and many other **occasions**.

These attacks are often brutally **xenophobic**, suggesting how desperate competing local truck drivers have become over the years. **MoneyWeb** even described July 9-10 in these terms: "the Zimbabwe Truckers Association and the SADC Truck Drivers Association report that several of their members were attacked last week under the cover of the general looting."

Second, the landfill, substations and reservoirs allegedly under fire in Pietermaritzburg (the only site of these reports) were **fake news**, it was **revealed** at News24 on 21st July.

Third, a kidney dialysis centre **supposedly targeted** in Durban was simply

unfortunate to be located in Riverhorse Valley, where vast swathes of logistics infrastructure were looted and burned. On 19th July, the owners **announced**, "The building the dialysis centre is located in was looted and set alight, but luckily suffered minimal damage." Many distribution centres and warehouses were in that Springfield complex, and a queue of vehicles to fetch loot stretched at least 1km along Queen Nandi Drive.

Fourth, the destruction of community radio stations panicked William Bird and other commentators on **mybroadband.co.za**. But instead of paranoia about a systemic attack on communications infrastructure, the simple explanation is that the valuable equipment inside was nicked by looters who didn't distinguish radio stations from other tempting sites. Intokozo FM was in Umlazi Megacity mall, which was **looted on 11th July** along with everything else. The Alexandra station AlexFM **lost** R5 million of equipment but was **back on the air** within a few days. In Mamelodi, again it was common **theft** at MamsFM to blame. KasieFM station had a **similar experience**, located in Sam Ntuli Mall in Katlehong, but a human chain stopped the looters.

expects a tweet can get you arrested."

The magistrate condemned state prosecutors and freed Majozi, who went back to **tweeting** the Zumite line. Haffajee **admitted** that, although the 18 "might have fanned the flames of the violence and looting, they were not the masterminds."

Even within the highest office in the land, there's no apparent urgency to unveil, much less lock up, supposed mastermind coup plotters. Not only are state prosecutors slacking, Ramaphosa himself on September 17th **blandly admitted** to Parliament that a "panel of experts" would investigate: "I look forward to their report, which they have promised me will be ready at the end of the year" (sic).

Ramaphosa is known for avoiding root causes of socio-economic crisis and,

instead, distracting us with inaccurate analysis that serves his own self-interest. On 15th August 2012 he emailed fellow Lonmin directors and the national police and mining ministers to persuade them the wildcat strike then costing his platinum firm profits (that were **shipped** to Bermuda **at his behest** in a classic illicit financial outflow) should not be considered a labour dispute but instead "dastardly criminal," thus deserving a "pointed response." (He only **admitted** in 2017, "I do apologise that I did not use appropriate language.")

Those still seeking masterminds, or promoting conspiratorialist Chaos Theory 1, do so not only devoid of convincing, concrete evidence. They unintentionally play into the hands of Ramaphosa-regime confusion mongers whose interests are to

relegitimise a crippled presidency and avoid making the structural socio-economic changes needed to defuse the powder keg.

What's still needed is neither reaffirmation of Ramaphosa's reality-denialism or misguided celebrations of looters, but a sober accounting of how little countervailing power our comrades – courageous trade unionists, social movements, community groups, feminists, student and youth formations, environmentalists, healthcare workers, LGBTQI activists, leftist political organisers and other grassroots forces – could muster against a mob mentality that turned in on itself.

The powder keg blew up, partially and entirely regressively. What can be done to redirect widespread alienation,

anger, hunger and desperation into movement-building and a genuine challenge to the *capitalist power structure* of which Ramaphosa is merely a temporary figurehead?

**Patrick Bond** is in the University of Johannesburg Department of Sociology.



N3 highway at Mooi River Plaza between Durban and Johannesburg is where nearly all the trucks burned on highways in mid-July met their fate. It's easy for anyone from the low-income community just meters away to halt a container truck, loot it and set it alight, as occurred on many other occasions.

# COP 26 & GREEN CAPITALISM:

## *hope lies in grassroots struggles*

By Daniel Tanuro

**T**HE INCREASING NUMBER OF climate disasters around the world are the result of a warming of “barely” 1.1°C compared to the pre-industrial era. From the [IPCC’s special 1.5°C report](#), any reasonable reader would conclude that everything must be done to keep the Earth well below this level. Beyond it, not only do the risks increase qualitatively (notably the risk that the main cities of the world will disappear under the sea and that vast areas will be rendered uninhabitable by the combination of heat and humidity). But the possibility also grows of a spate of positive feedback that will cause the Earth to irreversibly fall into a regime that no

### Green capitalism is an oxymoron

The figures in the equation leave no doubt. Let’s summarise them:

1. [Staying below 1.5°C](#) requires a reduction in net global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of 59% by 2030 and 100% by 2050;
2. 80% of these emissions are due to the combustion of fossil fuels;
3. In 2019, fossil fuels still powered 84.3% of humanity’s energy needs;
4. The construction of fossil fuel infrastructure (mines, pipelines, refineries, gas terminals, power plants, etc.) is hardly slowing down at all! And this is all massive plant and equipment, from which capital expects a return for

expropriation of the energy, finance and agribusiness monopolies.

The choice is stark: either humanity will liquidate capitalism, or capitalism will liquidate millions of innocent people in order to continue its barbaric course on a mutilated and perhaps uninhabitable planet.

### “Carbon neutrality”, the smoke and mirrors

Since Trump handed over to Biden, the world’s leading governments have been loudly touting their intention to achieve “carbon neutrality” by 2050. Yet global emissions continue to rise (except during the 2008 crisis and the 2020 pandemic)

and current national climate plans by 2030 will lead to 3.5°C of warming before the end of the century. The persistent gap between words and deeds can be explained quite simply:

1. Emissions from aviation and shipping are not accounted for, even though they are exploding due to the globalisation of trade.
2. Rich countries are not honouring their promise to provide \$100 billion a year to “developing” countries to help them get off fossil fuels, and the big polluters are arguing over how to share the burden.
3. Most importantly, all policymakers are – without saying so – committed to the so-called “temporary overrun” scenario of 1.5°C.



Floods after Cyclone Idai in Mozambique in 2019. The increasing number of climate disasters around the world are the result of a warming of “barely” 1.1°C compared to the pre-industrial era.

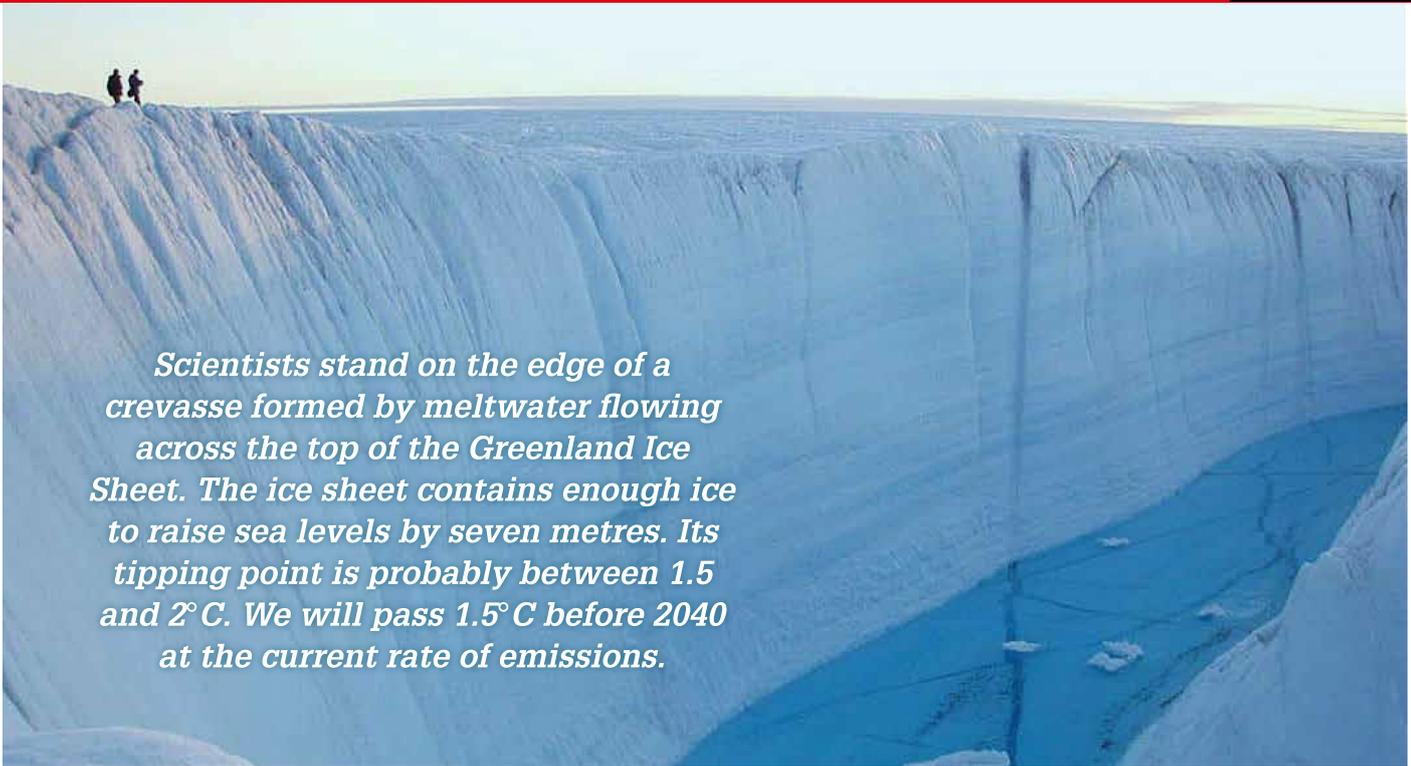
human being has ever experienced – in the long term, a sea level 13 metres higher than the current level, or [many times that](#).

Given the time lost since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio – and since Paris – it is not certain that the 1.5°C limit is still possible. What is certain is that it cannot be achieved without a break with the productivism of the market economy, which increases social inequalities and destroys nature. As Greta Thunberg rightly said, “The climate and ecological crisis simply cannot be solved within the framework of the current political and economic systems. That’s not an opinion. [It’s just simple maths.](#)”

about forty years. We know that three billion human beings lack the essentials of life and that the richest 10% of the population emit more than 50% of global CO<sub>2</sub>. So, the conclusion is unavoidable: changing the energy system to stay below 1.5°C, while devoting more energy to satisfying the legitimate rights of the poor, is strictly incompatible with the continuation of capitalist accumulation.

The catastrophe can only be stopped by a double shift that reduces global production by reorienting it to serve real, democratically determined human needs. This double shift requires the suppression of useless or harmful production and the

The idea of this scenario is to let the mercury rise above 1.5°C of warming, betting that the excess can be limited thanks to the massive deployment of nuclear power (called “low-carbon technology” for this purpose) and that it can then be compensated for thanks to so-called “[negative emission technologies](#)” (NETs). (NETs are methods of removing greenhouse gases from the atmosphere). However, on the one hand, there is no longer any need to demonstrate how dangerous nuclear power is. And on the other hand, most NETs are only at the prototype or demonstration stage. The tipping point of the Greenland ice sheet – which contains



*Scientists stand on the edge of a crevasse formed by meltwater flowing across the top of the Greenland Ice Sheet. The ice sheet contains enough ice to raise sea levels by seven metres. Its tipping point is probably between 1.5 and 2° C. We will pass 1.5° C before 2040 at the current rate of emissions.*

enough ice to raise sea levels by seven metres - is probably between 1.5 and 2°C. We will pass 1.5°C before 2040 at the current rate of emissions.

But we are led to believe that the planet could be cooled later by removing huge quantities of CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere and storing it underground. It is obvious that this insane scenario is essentially designed to save the sacred cow of capitalist growth by protecting the profits of the multinational oil, coal, gas and agribusiness corporations, as well as the banks that finance their destructive investments. Apart from nuclear world war, no madness so starkly illuminates the existential threat that capitalism poses to humanity.

[A recent report by the International Energy Agency \(IEA\)](#) outlines the path to achieving this policy. According to the IEA, achieving “net zero emissions” by 2050, while reviving post-pandemic growth, would require a variety of conditions including the need to:

- double the number of nuclear power plants;
- accept that one fifth of the world’s energy will continue to come from burning fossil fuels (emitting 7.6Gt CO<sub>2</sub>/year);
- capture and store these 7.6Gt of CO<sub>2</sub> underground each year in geological reservoirs (whose watertightness is not guaranteed);
- commit one third of the agricultural surface of the globe to permanent cultivation of industrial monocultures of energy biomass;
- and many more.

This is the true face of “green growth”!

## Market policies, disaster guaranteed

According to this approach, the market is supposed to coordinate the transition to “green capitalism” - through taxes, incentives and a generalisation of the system of [tradable emission rights](#). The European Union is at the forefront with its “Fit for 55” plan, aiming to reduce its emissions by 55% in 2030, compared to 1990 (insufficient promise: 65% is needed). The EU is a pioneer in the implementation of pollution rights in its major industrial sectors and will extend them to the construction and mobility sectors. A poorly insulated house or a more polluting vehicle will cost the consumer more. So, people on low incomes will be penalised.

The economies of the South will also be penalised - and their populations through them - by “carbon offsetting” and carbon tax at the borders. Carbon offsetting is when a country or company invests in emission-reducing investments instead of reducing emissions itself, such as tree plantations in another country, usually in the South. And all this is for a plan that (except by cheating) will not even reach its inadequate target, which is unattainable by market mechanisms.

The market is not neutral. If we leave it to the market, the “solutions” will spontaneously go in the direction of the market... that is to say, to the detriment of the popular classes, the dominated peoples and nature, and in favour of the owners. Reducing emissions by 55% is better than nothing, one might say. But 55% simply does not put us on the path to staying below 1.5 degrees of warming, and the gap cannot be made up afterwards, because CO<sub>2</sub> accumulates in the atmosphere.

## Hope is in the struggles

There is nothing to expect from neoliberal governments. For more than thirty years they have claimed to understand the ecological threat, but they have done almost nothing. Or rather, they have done a lot: their policies of austerity, privatisation, support for maximising the profits of multinationals and support for agribusiness have ruined biodiversity and disfigured ecosystems, while pushing us to the brink of the climate abyss.

They promise us “net zero emissions”, but their objective is not to save the planet: it is to put people to sleep by mitigating the catastrophe and to offer capitalists the profits of the market for new “clean” technologies and “capture-sequestration”... Needless to say, in order to “attract investors”, this also implies continuing the neoliberal-authoritarian policies of destruction of social and democratic rights. It is useless to plead to try to convince these people to change direction: only relations of force will be able to make them back down.

However, some hope lies in the struggles against productivist projects that destroy nature and people. In her book on the climate crisis *This Changes Everything. Capitalism vs. the Climate*, Naomi Klein has proposed to call these struggles by the general name “Blockadia”. It is in the crucible of this “ecological Blockadia”, and in its convergence with an equally urgent “social Blockadia”, that a new ecosocialist alternative project to the steamroller of Capital will emerge.

**Daniel Tanuro** is an agricultural engineer, climate specialist and revolutionary socialist.

# The double-edged sword – COSATU AND NUMSA STRIKES

By Karl Cloete

**S**TRIKES IN SOUTH AFRICA IN recent times have been few and far between. It is not always certain whether the lack of strikes speaks of worker militancy fatigue or weaker shop floor organisation coupled with the lack of capacitated shopstewards. What we know for certain is that there had been sufficient reason for workers to be angry, causing them to take on the spear and to launch an offensive against, among other things:

- The public sector wage begging (because it certainly was not bargaining)
- The sharp rise in unemployment
- The cutting back of CCMA funds and as such compromising the right of workers to get quick resolution for their unfair dismissals
- The continued existence of labour brokers who are responsible for a two tier labour market and casualisation

We could possibly blame the Covid-19 pandemic for causing havoc, but one suspects that the general crisis of the labour movement has been in the making long before Covid-19.

## The Numsa strike:

The Numsa engineering strike takes place at a time when a number of factors are stacked against workers:

1. Very serious efforts by the National Employers Association of SA (Neasa) and the Free Market Foundation to demolish bargaining councils and undo hard won gains in collective agreements.
2. Employers that are walking away from the national employer federation, Seifsa, having been mobilised by Neasa to embrace a minimalist approach to industry benefits and conditions of employment.
3. The inability to drive centralised

bargaining in conjunction with some plant-based bargaining that would keep members and employers engaged in struggle during the three-year duration of the national agreements.

The strike pulled out massive numbers of workers who are fed up with the status quo and the bullying of employers they have had to endure in the last decade or

so obvious for all to see, are the call on the one hand for workers to support the ANC in government elections and on the other hand the treatment the ANC government is meting out and which is now the reason for Cosatu national day of strike action on 7th October. The Cosatu strike is about calling on their members to join the fight against the ANC Government and the Private Sector bosses. It says:



The Numsa strike pulled out massive numbers of workers who are fed up with the status quo and the bullying of employers they have had to endure in the last decade or so.

- The government and the private sector must be pressured into fixing what it calls the country's economic mess.
- The federation also wants a reversal of budget cuts that led to a wage freeze in the public service.
- Here is where members ought to be asking searching questions about what could be the real intention

so. It is too early to tell how the strike may pan out, particularly if one considers divisive tactics by employers such as:

- The possibility of unilaterally paying increases higher than the 4.4% recommended by Seifsa.
- The possibility of plant level engagements by Numsa Shopstewards/Officials with individual workplaces/employers to get an improved wage deal at plant level.
- Locking out of striking workers unless they accept the terms of employers (in this regard the plastic industry lockout for more than two years is fresh in our minds).

Such developments would seriously sabotage the strike action and may even challenge and harm the unity of metalworkers.

## The Cosatu strike

Confusion has become the hallmark of Cosatu actions to the point of suggesting a sense of irrelevance of the 1985-born federation.

The confusing elements, which are

of Cosatu, particularly when Cosatu is a key stakeholder in Nedlac and a key partner in the ANC-led Alliance, where economic policies and economic direction are supposed to be shared amongst Alliance partners.

Cosatu had a lost opportunity when Saftu invited it into a collaborative effort and fight back strategy during the public sector wage deadlock.

## More austerity

In all probability both Numsa and Cosatu members would be absent from the streets when Minister of Finance, Enoch Godongwana, delivers his Medium Term Budget Framework on 4th November. The crisis in the labour movement will be further deepened when not even Saftu, Nactu or Fedusa would put shoulder to the wheel to campaign against austerity and neoliberal policies dished out by the ANC in the MTBF.

**Karl Cloete** is the former Numsa Deputy General Secretary.

# No cricket transformation *without* SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

By Michael Nassen Smith

**A** RECENT HISTORICAL biography, *Too Black to Wear Whites*, tells the story of Krom Hendricks, a talented black bowler thought to be the fastest in the country in the 1890s, whose national cricketing career was blocked by the colonial state. The authors demonstrate how Hendricks's exclusion from his country's national team on a tour to England, due to his "race", formed part of the broader history of racialisation and segregation of that period. Cricket, and the drama that unfolded on the various pitches, boardrooms, and clubhouses in Hendricks's time, and over his own career, expressed the contests over racial identity and the construction of a strict racial hierarchy that would culminate in the formation of the apartheid state in the 1940s. Cricket, in other words, is an expression of broader social life and needs to be seen as such.

Today, South African cricket, like South African society, is in disarray. The results on the field have been the worst in a generation - the Proteas find themselves languishing far from the top of the test and ODI

rankings (this writer does not take T20 rankings seriously). At the same time, the game's administration is in a desperate state, rocked by various financial scandals and general mismanagement. A postcolonial state, a government of the black majority, has replaced an apartheid and colonial state. Yet the issues that plagued South African cricket and society in the time of Krom Hendricks - racism, nepotism, corruption - stubbornly persist.

While the South African cricketers struggle to perform on the pitch, Cricket South Africa has launched the Social Justice and Nation-Building (SJN) hearings to address instances of racism in cricket since unification. Many black players have given testimony at the commission. Omar Henry, Ashwell Prince, Paul Adams and others have testified to experiencing various forms of racism while playing and training with the national side.

The commission's aims are focused mostly on individual instances of racism and discrimination.

It also seeks to understand the causes of racism in order to

eradicate it from the game. More ambitiously, it has set for itself the principal objective to "realise greater equality in cricket". The commission may indeed provide a necessary platform for players to speak freely about their experiences. Yet whether South African cricket will embody a greater sense of equality and fairness, and whether the national team will experience a meaningful shift in its institutional culture, remain to be seen.

## Reconciliation, where?

It was [Lungi Ngidi's innocuous words](#), spoken during a press interview in 2020, which in retrospect can be viewed as the beginning of a series of events that would finally lead to the formation of the SJN. Asked about the American political movement Black Lives Matter's potential impact on South African cricket, Ngidi casually responded that he thought it necessary that his team address issues of racism and discrimination in the sport. At this stage, the message of BLM and the "taking the knee" protest synonymous with the movement, had spread beyond the shores of the USA. The protest gesture had reached various international sporting codes, from European football to rugby to cricket. Inspired by the moment, Michael Holding, the great West Indian fast bowler, gave an improvised and emotional account of his own experience as a victim of racial prejudice and abuse during a live broadcast in the United Kingdom.

Ngidi's words were widely perceived to have provided a welcome opening to discuss problems related to racism and institutional culture within the South African cricketing community. But they attracted sharp rebukes from former white South African cricketers. Pat Symcox alleged Ngidi's interview was simply "nonsense". Boeta Dippenaar, in pure *rooi gevaar* form and clearly inspired by alt-right American tropes that are themselves expressions of deeply ingrained anti-Semitism and racism, suggested that BLM was nothing less than a "Marxist plot". Both argued that farm attacks needed more attention than racism in sport.

Viewed in a longer history and with a realistic view of our present social context, the views of Pat Symcox and



**Lungi Ngidi.** *It was his innocuous words ... that would finally lead to the formation of the Social Justice and Nation-Building hearings to address instances of racism in cricket since unification.*

Boeta Dippenaar are unsurprising and more broadly shared than perhaps many of us would like to admit. Indeed, while many of Ngidi's teammates – black and white – supported his efforts to bring the issue of racism and culture to the fore in the local cricketing community, some were uncomfortably silent or equivocal. Around the same time as Ngidi's interview, many South African rugby players refused to take the knee in solidarity with the message of BLM while playing in the European rugby leagues. Their stance was soon embraced by a group of South African cricketers, several of whom refused to take the knee.

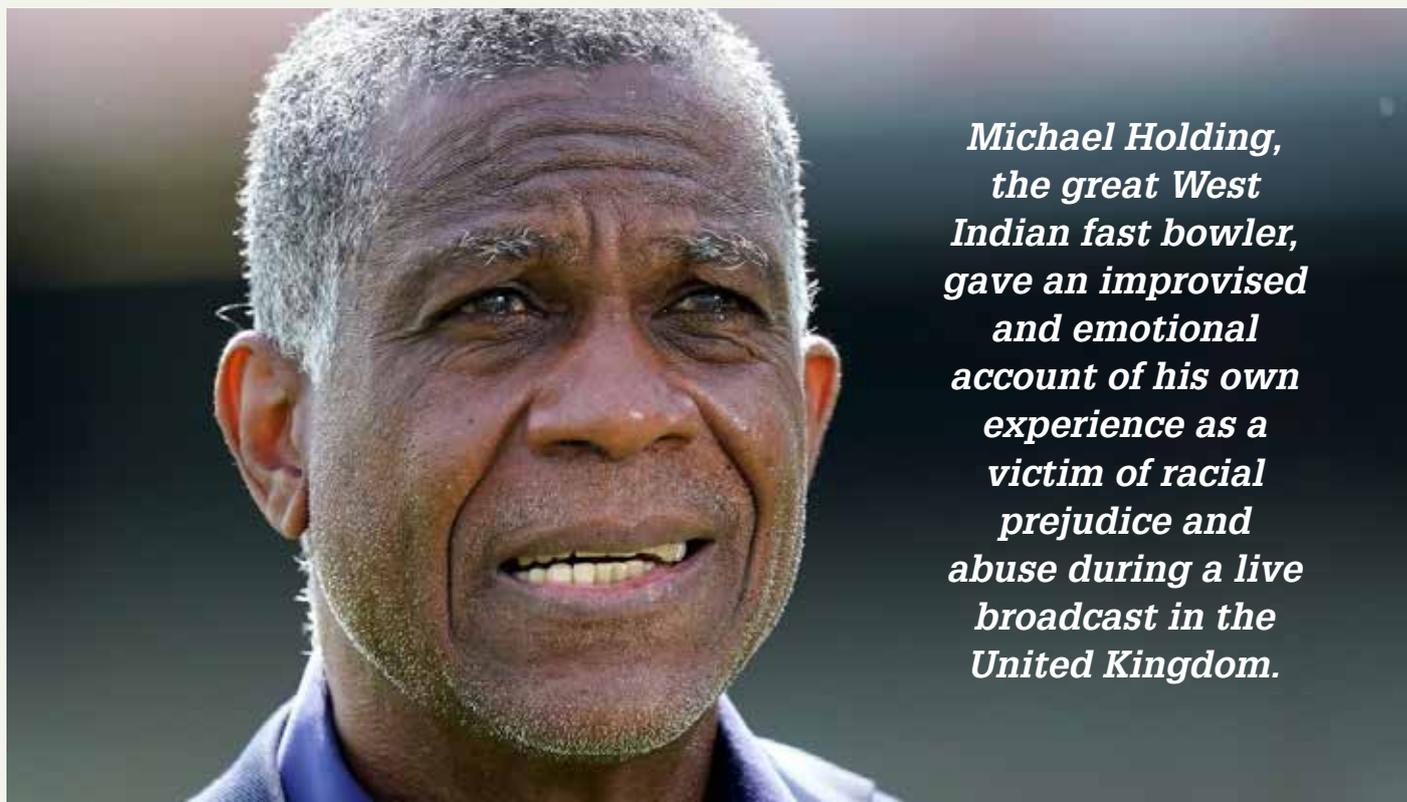
Ultimately, a seemingly simple

explain why he chose to do this.

Clearly, what matters is not exactly how the players choose to express their commitment to eradicate racism. But the clumsy approach of the South Africa team cannot be reduced, as Ngidi would now have it, to the whimsy of individual decision. Those with a sharper historical perspective, and a less comfortable view of the reality of contemporary South African society, know better than this. One can speculate, moreover, that the recent resignation of the Proteas assistant coach – who cited his discomfort with the institutional culture in the national side – has something to do with his own, less sanguine interpretation of the events

side on a regular basis. In a recent emotional interview on the SABC, Ntini confessed how he would sometimes prefer to jog to the games in the morning rather than sit with teammates on the bus. At the SJN Paul Adams, who played in the 1990s, recalled that he was regularly called a “brown shit” by his teammates, including current coach of the national team Mark Boucher.

Boucher's response to the accusations from Adams are telling. While he has apologised for his role in contributing to a climate of exclusion and alienation, he maintained that he was “naïve” about the offensiveness of his team's behaviour. Boucher is ultimately a product of his own upbringing in apartheid South Africa and his



*Michael Holding, the great West Indian fast bowler, gave an improvised and emotional account of his own experience as a victim of racial prejudice and abuse during a live broadcast in the United Kingdom.*

gesture in solidarity with anti-racism, embraced across the globe by variously racialised people and cultures, came up against the reality of South Africa's curious social dynamics. Conspiratorial right-wing ideologies, conservative Christianity, submerged or outright racism, and defensiveness and evasion regarding the persistence of racism in our social institutions, still prosper and flourish.

While Ngidi has insisted that the South African team are united in the cause to fight racism, the vagueness of that unity is expressed in the awkward manner in which the team attempted to express solidarity with the cause. The team simply could not agree on whether to kneel or to stand. Some, like Quinton de Kock, has stood stone faced making no gesture as those around him chose their own way of expressing solidarity. De Kock refused to

of the past year and how they have been received and interpreted in the team camp.

### Transformation deferred

Cricket, unlike any other sport, was deliberately constructed as the sport of national unity. Cricket could perform a role that rugby, with its associations with conservative Afrikanerdom, could not. Cricket had abandoned the Springbok for the Protea and was packaged by the media and government as the sport that would carry the aspirations of the new “rainbow nation”.

Recent events have exposed just how much of an illusion that sentiment was. Black cricketers of the 90s and early 2000s have shared painful memories of exclusion and alienation in the national team during the first years of “reconciliation”.

Makhaya Ntini was one of the first black South Africans to make the Proteas

actions and those of his teammates express the attitudes that many white South Africans carried with them into democracy. In these communities one could, with a straight face, use racially abusive language and claim that one was unaware of the offense caused. One could have reaped the benefits of racial discrimination, yet, when confronted with the bald facts of apartheid, plead ignorance about one's legislated privilege. Boucher claims that he was “naïve” when entering the national team in the 1990s. Yet it was not “naivety” that led to Paul Adams being called a “brown shit”.

### Social solutions for a social problem

Despite the flimsiness of Boucher's apology, he is correct to bemoan that, in his words, “there was no guidance, no culture discussions, no open forums and no-one appointed by the CSA to deal

with the awkwardness or questions or pressures that were being experienced by players and in particular players of colour” during his and Adams’s playing days.

This lack perhaps speaks to the awkwardness of the transition, where a recalcitrant old order was giving way to a new dispensation. Yet today, decades down the line, the fact that players are raising similar issues regarding exclusion and alienation, expresses a more disturbing reality.

The fact of the matter is that the hope for reconciliation and social transformation that came with the dawn of democracy has been frustrated and betrayed. The current rumbling in South African cricket is an expression of this broader failure to create institutions that embody the ideals of reconciliation, non-racialism and equality in substance.

And, just as our social problems of inequality cannot be resolved by replacing white faces in high places, the use of quotas in cricket are exposed to the same contradictions of an approach to transformation fixated on racial representation alone. We should recall that the use of quotas in cricket was championed by the same Mbeki government that was obsessed with creating a “black bourgeoisie”, an obsession which has left us with even wider inequality in the country.

Recognising the limitations of this approach to transformation, the SJN has turned towards attending to the spirit of the national team and South African cricketing culture more broadly. It is indeed positive that it is giving a platform for players, past and present, to reflect on their experience of racism. Yet the commission’s blind spots are the same ones that have plagued other institutions and policies that have been assigned the task of transitional justice.

Cricket is reliant on its own physical infrastructure – nets, fields, pitches – and development and transformation require greater investment in this area. Yet cricket

is also reliant on social infrastructure. Indeed, as long as our communities are plagued with poverty and related stressors, it is hard to imagine how South Africa will produce self-sustaining transformation on the cricket field. All of the stories of Ngidi, Rabada and Springbok captain Kolisi are stories of how talented black youth were afforded opportunities to study on scholarships and bursaries at private boys’ high schools on their way to the national team. This is not a sustainable pathway for substantive transformation of the sport and our society.

The problems in cricket are thus intimately connected with the problem of austerity, the neoliberal form of governance and the corruption that has decimated our public sector and administration.

There are international constraints worth mentioning. Treasury’s fiscal approach is justified for fear of reaction from domestic and international investors and the threat of credit downgrades. Global cricketing governance is analogous with the subordinate position that South Africa occupies in the global political economy. India, England and Australia dominate decision making at the International Cricket Council (ICC). They monopolise funding and schedule matches which suit their own agendas – leading to these teams dominating the test playing schedule in particular, starving our players of the opportunity to excel in the most meaningful format of

the game.

Ultimately, while the SJN desires greater equality in cricket, it does not foreground the material barriers to succeeding in this endeavour. The connection, in other words, between the specific issues of racism, alienation and exclusion in South African cricket and the broader material context of these issues is not being made. This limitation mirrors the limitations of other commissions of inquiry in post-apartheid South Africa – like the TRC, Zondo and Marikana Commissions – which focus on “truth-telling” and individual narratives, while ignoring systemic issues at work.

If the SJN is to realise its principal objective, and if the opening provided by the BLM moment is to translate into meaningful change, then the current efforts in South African cricket cannot continue to imitate the disabilities of previous attempts at transitional justice. It is up to progressives interested in cricket, and cricket’s place in society, to amplify this message and leverage the current conversation to raise the imperative of progressive social transformation.

**Michael Nassen** Smith is an Assistant Lecturer in the School of Economics at the University of Cape Town and PhD candidate at York University in Canada.



Most of the players standing here are South Africans. Many South African rugby players refused to take the knee in solidarity with the message of Black Lives Matter while playing in the European rugby leagues.

# 9/11

## HOW THE USA'S – AND UK'S – HUBRIS MET ITS NEMESIS

By Gilbert Achcar



The World Trade Centre buildings smoking on 9-11 after the attack.

*On the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the September 11th terrorist attacks, Gilbert Achcar explored the consequences of attempted US expansionism in the “Greater Middle East”.*

**T**WENTY YEARS AGO, NINETEEN men, filled with hatred of the United States and faith in the promise of paradise, blew themselves up, killing thousands of people and provoking one of the greatest global political shocks in world history. They all originated from the Middle East; fifteen of them were citizens of Washington’s oldest and closest ally in that region: the Saudi kingdom. The chickens had come home to roost.

For decades, the US government had intrigued in the Middle East, supporting despotic regimes and fostering Islamic fundamentalism as an antidote to anything deemed to be left-wing. In 1990, the USSR’s agony seemed to usher in a “new world order” dominated by Washington – what an American columnist aptly dubbed the “unipolar moment”. The US empire, which hitherto was still reeling from its “Vietnam syndrome”, managed to overcome it – or so Bush Sr believed – in launching a devastating attack on Iraq in 1991. Bush had been prompted by Margaret Thatcher to push Iraqi troops

out of neighbouring Kuwait, which they had invaded in August 1990. Iraq was then strangled by a cruel embargo that caused 90,000 excess deaths every year, according to UN figures.

### US expansionism

That was the first time ever that the United States conducted a fully-fledged war in the Middle East. It had hitherto waged wars by proxy, especially through its Israeli ally. The 9/11 attacks were the direct result of this shift: a spectacular “asymmetric” response on US soil to US massive deployment in the Middle East. And yet, far from stepping back and reconsidering an involvement that had blown back so dramatically, George W. Bush and the neoconservative wild bunch that populated his administration saw in 9/11 their Pearl Harbor. It was another opportunity to further US expansionism in what they called the Greater Middle East, a vast area stretching from Western Asia to Central Asia and “AfPak” with no common feature other than Islam.

Bush and his team brought post-Cold War American hubris to its peak. They went into Afghanistan, along with NATO and other allies, with a view to turning the country into a platform for US penetration

in a region strategically located between Russia’s heartland and China, the two potential challengers to Washington’s unipolar hegemony. Eighteen months later, they invaded Iraq, their most coveted prize due to its oil reserves and location in the Gulf, a vital region for oil-related strategic and economic reasons. This neo-colonial expedition was much more contested worldwide than the Afghan one, despite Tony Blair’s enthusiastic support and the UK’s inglorious participation.

The invasion of Iraq had been the leitmotiv of the *Project for the New American Century*, the think tank whose name epitomised American hubris and of which key figures of George W. Bush’s administration had been members. They held the self-delusory belief that the United States could remake Iraq in its image, and that the Iraqis would overwhelmingly espouse this prospect. They had much less illusion about Afghanistan, judging by the number of US troops deployed there – far less than in Iraq. But there too, they engaged in a foolish project of state-building, after realising that there were actually more willing collaborators of the US-led occupation in Afghanistan than in Iraq itself.

## Vietnam revisited

They thus discarded the cardinal lesson of Vietnam of never getting bogged down in a protracted military adventure whose success is uncertain. Iraq quickly turned into a quagmire. By 2006, the occupation had clearly become a mess. While US troops were busy fighting an Arab Sunni insurgency led by the same Al-Qaeda that Washington had extirpated from Afghanistan, Iran secured its control of Iraq by way of allied Arab Shia forces enabled by the US-UK occupation itself. The US ruling class blew the whistle and forced the occupation's main architect, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, to resign. A bipartisan commission of Congress devised an exit strategy, involving

had moved from Iraq into Syria in 2012, built up its forces there taking advantage of the civil war, then gone back into Iraq in a sweeping invasion of the Arab Sunni areas in the summer of 2014. This provoked an ignominious debacle of Iraq's governmental forces set up, trained, and armed by Washington.

The United States fought back against IS by massive bombing in support of local fighters on the ground, who paradoxically included left-wing Kurdish forces in Syria and pro-Iran militias in Iraq. IS was reduced back to an underground guerrilla force – except that it had already started spreading globally, especially in Africa and Asia. Taliban hard-line dissidents created

the goddess Nemesis and consequently been punished.

## War in small doses

The defeats in Iraq and Afghanistan have caused a relapse of the United States into the “Vietnam syndrome”. This doesn't mean though that Washington will refrain from imperial aggression: it only means that it won't engage anytime soon in protracted large-scale deployments in other countries with a view to rebuild their state. Washington will rather use more intensively its “over-the-horizon capabilities”, as Joe Biden pledged in his 31st August allocution. Obama, who had opposed in the Senate the 2003 invasion

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reasons.***



a temporary “surge” in US troops along with buying the allegiance of Arab Sunni tribes to overcome the insurgency. Bush then concluded an agreement with the Iran-backed Baghdad government for the withdrawal of US troops by the end of 2011. His successor, Barack Obama, oversaw the withdrawal's completion.

Obama tried to repeat the “surge” in Afghanistan. It failed miserably, as US-allied corrupt warlords never had much credit (the Taliban had taken over in 1996 after defeating them). Obama then initiated an exit programme, which his successor Donald Trump suspended for a while to try a new “surge” – not against the Taliban alone, but also against Al-Qaeda's new avatar, the Islamic State (IS). The latter

a local branch of IS. By getting rid of Osama bin Laden in 2011, Obama had finalised Al-Qaeda's defeat, only to witness soon after the emergence of its yet more violent avatar.

Trump eventually threw in the towel. He reduced the number of US troops to the bare minimum and concluded an agreement with the Taliban for the withdrawal of remaining foreign troops in 2021. This was overseen by Joe Biden, in the tragically botched manner that the whole world witnessed in August. The Kabul government's army collapsed in a debacle identical to that of the Baghdad government's troops. As in Greek mythology, the United States' (and UK's) hubris had once again inflamed the ire of

of Iraq, resorted much more intensively to drone strikes than his predecessor. This pattern was continued by Trump, along with missile strikes, and likewise with Biden.

It will no doubt further intensify. Such strikes are war in small doses, no less lethal over time than occasional massive injections, and more pernicious in that they escape public scrutiny. They must be stopped.

**Gilbert Achcar** is Professor of Development Studies and International Relations at SOAS, University of London.

*This article was first published on the website of [Labour Hub](#).*

# EVERY MONTH IS FOR WOMEN JAZZ MUSICIANS: *the South African case*

By Carol Martin

**A** NUMBER OF YOUNG, WORLD-traveled South African women musicians have been emerging and tuning our ears to a decade of exploratory sounds and beats that excite what “South African jazz” is becoming. Thanks to current recording technologies and available studios, the 2020 Covid-19 lthockdown has been able to fortunately convert some of those unemployment blues, faced by artists

melt for lovers of different jazz genres. Her successful *Exile* album (2018) was followed up with a collaborative *Live at Jazzwerkstatt*, recorded in Switzerland and released in March 2020 as Covid lockdowns hit.

During her residency with jazz artists in Switzerland, Ntuli was able to gain more intercultural experience by navigating her new Swiss colleagues’ sounds, particularly with a string



Thandi Ntuli

without paying audiences, into albums. Some are ambitious debut albums, and some not so bluesy but innovative. Women artists continue to be also faced with recurring themes in their industry of sexist portrayal, male hierarchical attitudes, and even gender-based violence issues. Let’s see what some leading South African women jazz artists are doing or saying....

## Thandi Ntuli (pianist) collaborates with Swiss musicians

In 2014, Ntuli’s debut album, *The Offering*, showed that Ntuli, a graduate of University of Cape Town’s College of Music Jazz Studies, is not only a technical clinician at the piano (since age 4), but a soulful improviser with the aural likes of a Bheki Mseleku. She uses chord structures, melodies, and rhythms characteristic of spirituals, South African gospel, Afro-jazz, and American bebop. Quite an exciting

quartet. This album surprises by combining different genres of Spoken Word, electronic and world music along with pointed lyrics. Her story vocals not only talk about exile, black love and its disappointments, but also about a “new way”, even rainbows. Her bold exploration of orchestral arrangements augers well for what South Africans can envision to be newer improvised formats on popular stages.

Watch her [Live at Jazzwerkstatt Bern 2019](#). Here, she is discovering and applying a classical feel with strings, horns, and woodwinds, performed by her European colleagues, along with bass slaps and Afro-rhythms of South African bassist, Shane Cooper. Reworking songs from her *Exile* album, this compendium of orchestral jive does convince that Ntuli has been well on her way to compositional heights, collaborating with and educating her young European peers in some delicate concerns faced by South African artists.



Shannon Mowday

## Shannon Mowday fights stereotypes and sexist definitions

Norway-based South African saxophonist, Shannon Mowday, gives an honest exposé of what a female musician faces in the industry in this video, courtesy of the [Cape Town Music Academy](#) (CTMA). Cape Town-born Mowday specialises in saxophones and woodwinds, while working as a composer, director, educator and a mom. She just wanted to play music, but talks about some frustrations and stumbling blocks she has experienced being a woman in the largely male world of jazz. As Mowday was researching album covers of lead female saxophonists and musicians, she discovered the fantasy-orientated, sexist, and pictorial vulgarities of women posing (sometimes in compromising positions) with their respective instruments.

So she took to Facebook (June 18th, 2020):

“I’m working on my album cover and just for fun searched some images of ‘saxophone covers’ from yester-year. WOW!!!!!!...and one ‘wonders’ why there are so many connotations of female saxophone players or how many ‘battles’ we

have to fight before we have played a note... Really??????? Whilst the 'giants' of jazz were doing their thing and being all creative and such and setting the 'blueprint' for jazz, this was the 'image' created for a woman with a saxophone...Yeah!! let's have that 'Me Too' discussion again!!!! [Sax Appeal: 48 Sexy Saxophone Album Covers](#) is a really special site with so many more of all these horrors."

Mowday refers to another CTMA video with pianist and UCT Lecturer, Amanda Tiffin, talking about "Gender Dynamics in the Music Industry" on [CTMA Moments with Masters](#). One wonders



© Siphilwe Mhlambi

Siya Makuzeni

how many women artists have remained silent, unlike Mowday, as they confront similar embarrassments and stereotypical annoyances when all they want to do is perform!

## Siya Makuzeni holds her own with orchestras, compositions, & lockdown

Standard Bank Young Artist for Jazz 2016, singer and trombonist, Siya Makuzeni, represents an inflorescence, a flowering of growth, from high school days in East London to her present band leader role and orchestral arrangements. Being used to isolation to enhance her compositions, she admits the Covid lockdown was quite helpful, enabling a shift of consciousness, even listening to how the earth's magnetic field was changing and influencing human emotions and movements. Her commissioned solo piano piece called *Rise* resonates how she was able to work through present uncertainties, to reflect on society, on self-awareness and resilience. It is to rise above fear. [To quote her purpose:](#) "To rise above all obstacles I may face and trust in my inner voice no matter how warped and confusing the outside world may be. This has been an on-going theme in my life, especially during this period we are facing now."

In 2016, her seasoned sextet released *Out of This World*, an album which includes the Standard Bank's 2017

winner for Jazz, Thandi Ntuli, on piano and keyboard. Besides playing trombone, Makuzeni also uses her vocal lyrics pedal to loop, sing and scat, portraying often wild, emoting sounds from six of her seven compositions. Makuzeni has been known for her vocal acrobatics, ranging from howls and high pitched whines to mellow, lower register yowls, which fuse her Xhosa sounds with some other basic roots of bebop and improvisational contemporary jazz. Watch her on [Downton Jazz](#).

From High School and beyond, Makuzeni met and even played with the great South African legends like the late Moses Molelekwa and Zim Ngqawana, Themba Mkize, Nduduzo Makhathini, and others of the early 2000s.

Such experience has honed her compassion skills to respond with disapproval for how, for instance, police handled the 2021 riots and looting in parts of South Africa.

"*Rise* means becoming aware of situations we find ourselves in, observing what's going on in society, speaking to people on the streets, and watching media and how fear has been affecting people, even me. I saw that, and needed to pay attention to it, to rise above fear."

She is finding peace in her ancestral journey: "There is a certain unspoken peace when I am in those lands, one that allows me to tap into the spiritual energy of those who came before me, my guides, my ancestors, and go forth into the unknown with an unshakable truth and determination."

When not performing live, Makuzeni is a music producer, session musician, arranger, songwriter, and voice-over artist. Her vocals have featured on Phillip Noyce-directed *Roots* and *Book Of Negroes* TV adapted productions, and her compositions have included music scores for Mzansi Magic's *The Road* drama series, aired in 2015. Most recently, she stands as the lone female arranger, singer, and instrumentalist on pianist Andile Yenana's Zania Dreaming Big Band album, *One Night at the Market Theatre*, with some 18 musicians.

Makuzeni articulates well her personal musical trajectory in the South African jazz landscape, and deserves being watched as she grows the spiritual and political agency of jazz as a radical healing force, while the pandemic disrupts and changes the speed and rhythm of daily life.

## Trombonist Siya Charles leads her sextet

Another lone-ranging female trombonist is Siya Charles, whose sextet brought rave reviews during the 2021 National Arts Festival. Recording live on stage at the *Gallery 44 on Long*, she proudly led her band of well-seasoned young Cape Town-based jazz musicians who come with the musical DNA from the University of Cape Town's College of Music. This bebop lady displayed class, swing, melody and versatility, caroling her band through



Siya Charles

mbaqanga, ghoema, and contemporary jazz beats, including swing and post-bop. While not demonstratively assertive about the politics of the day, Charles admitted that the pandemic lockdown offered her time and reserved energy to explore her musicality and compose more.

"I love the sextet because of the horns," she explained, as she confidently introduced her songs and band members' solos, including the two other horns of trumpeter Shaw Komori, offering clean runs, and the tenor sax wizardry of Zeke le Grange who still had Manhattan dust on his shoes. Her other chosen musicians were double bassist Sibusiso Matsimela who beboped his way determinedly, pianist Blake Hellaby who enjoyed his right hand rustles through the treble range, and drummer Damian Kamineth. All sounds became tight and orderly, with obvious respect for one another's musical skills.

From African grooves to jazz swing, this was a concert that deserves an album which, hopefully, is soon in its making. The horizon looks sunny!

**Carol Martin** is a writer, reviewer and blogger. You can find her musings at [All Jazz Radio Internet Radio](#).

# WAS IT A BREAKTHROUGH?

Breakthrough: *The Struggles and Secret Talks that Brought Apartheid South Africa to the Negotiating Table*, by **Pallo Jordan** and **Mac Maharaj**.

Reviewed by **Janet Cherry**

**A** FEW YEARS AGO, AT NELSON Mandela University, one of my students circulated an open letter to Nelson Mandela. The letter criticised Mandela for betraying the revolution and giving away the inheritance of the next generation. It is said that Mandela gave in to the forces of global capital through a process of “elite pacting”.

This refrain is repeated today by the EFF, the RET faction of the ANC and some youth and student organisations among others, with variations – the ANC leadership sold out to White Monopoly Capital; the Constitution entrenches the property rights of the settler colonialists and prevents land redistribution; the colonial state has not been dismantled and there has been no thoroughgoing transformation of society.

There is another argument heard frequently these days, emanating in particular from those who were activists in the Mass Democratic Movement in the 1980s. It is that, in the process of transition, the ANC suppressed the expressions of popular power that had developed through mass struggle inside the country, including dismantling the United Democratic Front. This precluded the potential for a transition to socialism and allowed the development of a new black elite.

*Breakthrough* deals with the 1980s and the events leading to the start of negotiations between the ANC and the NP in May 1990. It sets out to answer the question, “How did we get to the negotiating table?”. The narrative ends in May 1990, with the beginning of formal negotiations between the ANC and the NP.

Accepting that the argument is constrained by the time scope of the book, *Breakthrough*, as Dennis Davis’ introduction points out, does serve to “debunk the claim of a constitutional sell-out so prevalent among contemporary populists”, as well as other related myths about the process. These include that Madiba and/or Thabo Mbeki were negotiating behind the backs of anyone else in the ANC, and that someone

in the ANC leadership made a deal with White Monopoly Capital and/or the World Bank and/or Maggie Thatcher before negotiations had even begun.

In relation to the “people’s power” argument, the important contribution of this book is the care taken to explain the relationship between the ANC and the MDM. This is done through the intimate understanding of Pallo and Mac, as “insiders” with many

were committed to insurrection and/or people’s war, and the other selling out through negotiation. The democratic breakthrough is consistent with the two-stage theory of national democratic revolution: the national democracy was decisively won.

Pallo and Mac were both intimately involved in these events, but they do not rely only on their own experience; they draw on many sources including the archives of their former enemies. They convincingly weave together the complex empirical chain of events with the agency of various actors who were trying to find a way forward at that particular historical moment. They are both masters at “joining the dots”. Their argument is that the democratic breakthrough was an important victory brought about by the combined pressures of these different pillars of strategy. The agency of the liberation movement is at the forefront of the argument.

Yet, on reflection, it leaves one thinking that it was really chance, or contingency, that brought these implacable foes to the negotiating table. And whatever the situation in South Africa today, it was a “triumph of democracy”. We should defend the democracy that was achieved at such great cost. What we have done with the democratic space since 1994 is another question.

The book is written in a straightforward style, as well as being meticulously referenced. It will be accessible to a wide audience, and is hopefully to be distributed to schools and universities.

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decades experience of all four pillars of the liberation movement’s strategy: the role of international actors in relation to both the regime and the ANC; the relationship of the armed struggle to the mass movement; and the communication of the ANC leadership in Lusaka with the leadership on the Island and with the MDM through the underground, so that all components were on the same page as negotiations became a possibility – all is clearly laid out.

In the process, the book dispels the myth that there was a division between the ANC in exile and the MDM; and that there were two factions in the ANC, one the “real revolutionaries” who

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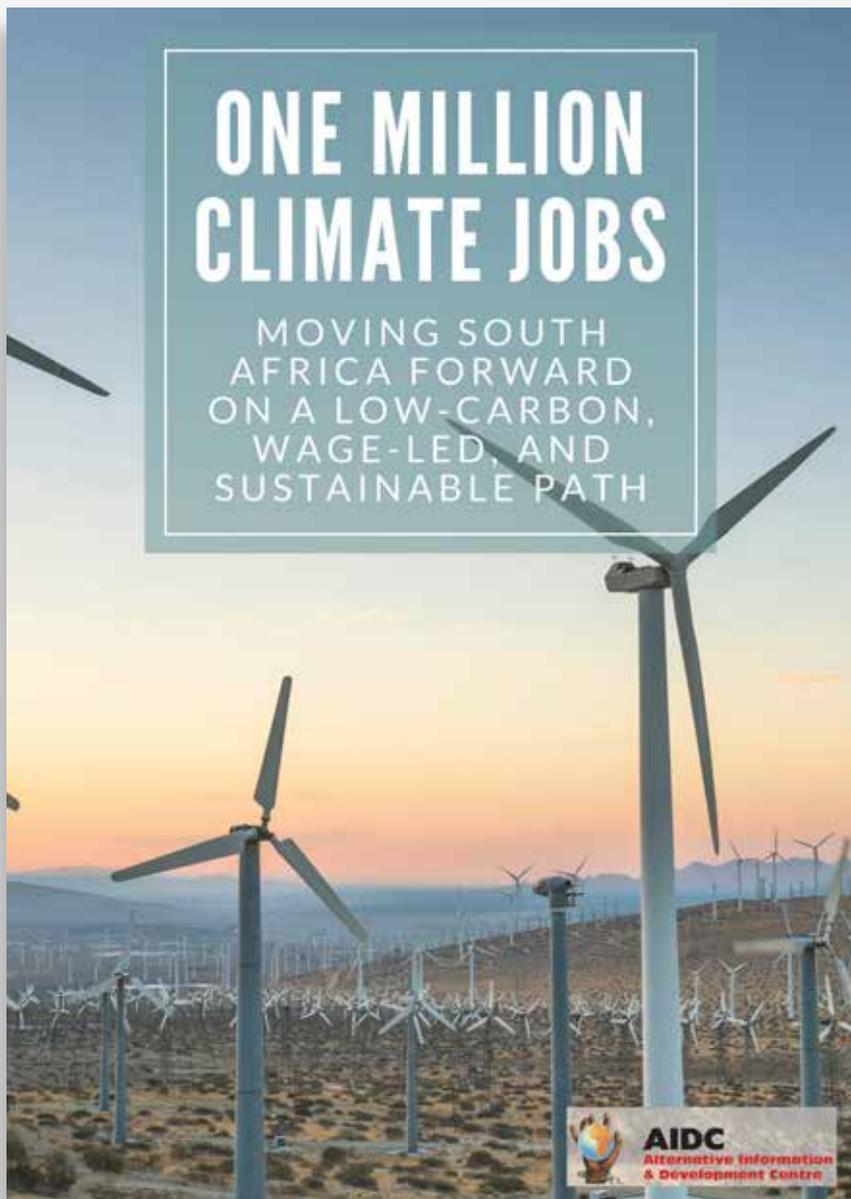
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# IN SOLIDARITY

## Refugees welcome



### Towards the dismantling of a bordered world

**H**UMAN MOBILITY IS INTEGRAL TO human her/history. In the 20th century it has been formalised as a human right, subject to international law protection in binding international Treaties. Yet in recent times there has been a rise in the policies of exclusion and racism in its many forms: forced displacement by the extractivism of transnational corporations, war, climate change and the militarisation of borders.

It is clear that the violations migrants and refugees face are institutionalised impunity and that these violations are "system crimes." Militarised and externalised borders play a key role, as do prohibition of rescue at sea, detention

centres and camps where thousands of migrant and refugee people are forcibly detained.

Against these violations, we call for a global pact of solidarity in defence of the full rights of migrants and refugees around the world, and for the creation of a society that is more equitable and just, where the human rights of everyone are respected no matter where you come from or where you go, and, of course, no matter the colour of your skin.

