



101

Local
Governance
Lessons
from the
Great
Governance
ZA
Podcast

Harlan Cloete



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from the
Great Governance ZA Podcast

Includes 101 Local Governance Definitions

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About the author


Dr Harlan Courtenay Alva Cloete is a research fellow and engaged scholar at the University of the Free State, specializing in evidence-based governance systems within the public sector, with a particular focus on local government and local governance. His academic contributions include transforming his Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree into a textbook titled, *South Africa Works – Everyone’s Guide to Understanding Skills Development in South Africa (2005)*, along with the accompanying course. His Ph.D., completed in 2016, centred on The Management of Human Resource Development (HRD) in South African Local Government and lead to the development of the HRD for Good Municipal Governance course (2017) and the subsequent textbook, *Guide to Effectively Manage Human Resource Development in South African Local Government** (2019).

Beyond academia, Dr Cloete is the founder of Great Governance ZA, a podcast launched in 2021 that uncovers hidden stories of excellence in local governance. He is a regular media contributor on matters of local governance, appearing on television and radio, and writes the occasional column for publications. He publishes widely in peer-reviewed journals and presents at various national and international conferences. Additionally, he has played a pioneering role in community broadcasting as the chairman and founding member of KC107.7, a community broadcaster station serving the greater Paarl Valley in the Cape Winelands since 1996. As social entrepreneur, he initiated the Cape Winelands Knowledge Sharing Festival. He recently joined the International




Advisory Board of the City of Rotterdam in the Netherlands. Dr Cloete resides in Paarl, the pearl of the Cape Winelands and the region that has produced the most Springbok rugby players and officials. His academic philosophy aligns with the words of Prof. Bongani Mayosi: *“There is no point in publishing papers if they cannot be translated into better treatments, better survival, better quality of life, and longer life for the people of South Africa.”*

Stay in touch with Harlan Cloete

 <https://linkedin.com/in/dr-harlan-cloete-84908324>

 <https://x.com/DrHarlanGovZA?t=mWepcmK8D5QTJsU8Witfig&s=09>

 (HRD Governance): <https://www.facebook.com/groups/793463184423620/>

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Previous Books by Author

1. *South Africa Works: Everyone's Guide to Understanding Skills Development in South Africa* (2005)
2. *Guide to Effectively Manage Human Resource Development in South African Local Government* (2019)

“This is the true joy in life, being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one. Being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it what I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no brief candle to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.” – **George Bernard Shaw**

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the memory of three towering pillars in my life.

All three were dedicated educators and public servants who, after serving our beloved country in the classroom, continued to touch the lives of many through selfless service. They would have celebrated my third book with deep joy and pride.

My late aunt, Rev. Caroline Cloete Piedt, who, after retiring as a school principal, answered the call to ministry and served faithfully until her passing in September 2024. A prolific writer, she understood both her calling and her purpose and lived it with conviction and integrity.

My late father-in-law, Adam “Ampie” Wicomb, who believed in the best in everyone he met. Even at the age of 103, on his deathbed in August 2024, he asked for a pen, eager to record his final thoughts.

And finally, my dear mother, (Pretty) Belinda, who passed at the end of 2025. Mummy embodied the ethical principles reflected in Micah 6:8—what the Lord requires of us: to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God. I am proud to be your son.

Foreword 1

Prof. Bonang Mohale

*Chancellor of the University of the Free State,
Professor of Practice in the Johannesburg Business School and
Former President of Business Unity South Africa (BUSA)*

Dr Harlan Cloete's book, '101 Local Governance Lessons from the Great Governance ZA Podcast' arrives at an opportune moment from a social entrepreneur and engaged scholar deeply invested in governance systems, public sector reform, human resource development and community broadcasting.

Local governance is where the rubber meets the road, where citizens directly experience service delivery and where political leadership must prove itself. It deserves our best resources and highest regard. Given the brutal legacy of apartheid, violently enforced and deeply dehumanising, we must redouble our efforts, choosing discipline, sacrifice and long-term commitment over short-term gain. Local government operates within a hierarchy, with priorities shaped by provincial and national agendas, yet its impact is immediate and personal.

The preamble to South Africa's Constitution remains one of the most powerful articulations of national intent, acknowledging past injustices, honouring those who fought for freedom, and committing to a democratic, inclusive society rooted in social justice and human rights. It lays a foundation for improving lives, unlocking potential and building a united country that takes its rightful place in the world. This vision is echoed in the national anthem, which weaves together a liberation hymn with a painful past, symbolising both healing and contradiction. Its aspirational message reminds us that freedom remains incomplete. With the majority still confined to a small portion of land, the enduring link between racial injustice and economic inequality is undeniable. Addressing one without the other is impossible. Calls for redress, including programmes like Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment, are not about dependency but about creating fair access and opportunity in a historically unequal society.

South Africa's growth strategy rests on four pillars: macroeconomic stability, structural reform, state capability and infrastructure investment. While GDP growth remains modest, reforms in energy, logistics and regulatory systems show encouraging progress. Improvements in electricity supply, increased private sector participation and expanded rail and port capacity signal a slow but steady shift. Efforts to ease housing constraints, modernise immigration systems and address water management challenges further support development. Yet, structural challenges persist. Land remains central to production and dignity, particularly at the local level. Despite clear constitutional and historical mandates, land reform has faltered due to political failure, weak implementation and reluctance to confront historical realities. The absence of a comprehensive land audit, insecure tenure for many and slow progress in reform continue to undermine equality and justice.

The promise of a "New Dawn" must go beyond rhetoric. It demands accountability, ethical leadership and decisive action against corruption, factionalism and internal resistance. True renewal requires prioritising principle over loyalty, enforcing discipline fairly and rebuilding public trust through transparency. Political organisations must demonstrate integrity by addressing wrongdoing within their ranks rather than shielding it. Strengthening internal democracy and focusing on service delivery over patronage are essential to restoring credibility. Ultimately, citizens seek honesty, courage and consistency, not perfection. A genuine commitment to renewal can transform scepticism into trust and lay the groundwork for sustainable progress. We must continue to learn from our mistakes because a mistake that makes you humble is better than an achievement that makes you arrogant.

Dr Cloete's lifelong work reminds me of the song written as a dedication to good people who put love and kindness above all else by Canadian singer-songwriter, Johnny Reid (and famously covered to transcend genres by reggae artist Gramps Morgan in June 2020 during the pandemic to offer hope), 'People Like You':

Foreword 1

If you give a little more than you take
And if you try to fix more than you break
If you're the kind who takes the time
To help a stranger in the rain
There's a place for people like you
... If you stand up for those down on their knees
And lend a voice to those who cannot speak
If you shine a little light, give sight
To the ones who've lost their way
There's a place for people like you
... I've heard up there the streets are made of gold
And when you get there, there's a hand to hold
I believe when your days down here are through
There's a place up there for people like you
... If you walk around with your heart on your sleeve
And if you try to be the change you want to see
If you lay down your life for love
So someone could be saved
There's a place for people like you

'This book gives effect to what Maya Angelou reminds us that, 'when you learn, teach. When you get, give.' More than anything, it teaches that one's time on earth is limited. One should not try to age with grace but with mischief, audacity and a good story to tell! Dr Cloete tells a good story indeed.'

Foreword 2

Councillor Bheke Stofile

*President of the South African Local Government Association
(SALGA)*

Co-President of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

I am pleased to present this significant work, *101 Local Governance Lessons from the Great Governance ZA Podcast*, authored by Professor Harlan Cloete. This book arrives at a crucial juncture for our democracy, serving as a pertinent and valuable contribution to ongoing efforts aimed at enhancing governance, fortifying democratic practices, and revitalising local government in South Africa.

This year marks a pivotal moment for our democracy, as it commemorates 30 years since the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the establishment of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), and the initiation of developmental local government. Furthermore, our nation is currently reflecting on the White Paper on Local Government, a seminal policy document that actualised the concept of developmental local government in South Africa. These anniversaries transcend mere ceremonial observances; they compel us to reflect on our progress, confront the challenges that persist, and reaffirm our commitment to the transformative change that lies at the core of democratic local governance in our country.

The Constitution assigns local government a pivotal role in development. It transforms municipalities from mere administrative entities into democratically accountable institutions tasked with promoting social and economic development, ensuring a safe and healthy environment, and fostering civic engagement in governance. The White Paper on Local Government elaborates on this vision by delineating the principles, responsibilities, and growth objectives of the new local government framework. Local government is not peripheral to this constitutional and policy framework; rather, it occupies a

central position. Democracy must be actualised, dignity restored, and the material conditions of our citizenry improved at the municipal level.

Consequently, the quality of local government is of paramount importance. Local government represents the tier of governance closest to the populace and serves as the primary conduit between communities and the state. It is within this domain that essential services such as water supply, energy, infrastructure development, urban planning, and support for the local economy must be effectively managed. The credibility of democracy hinges on the efficacy of local governments; a failure in this regard undermines the legitimacy of the entire democratic experiment.

The examination of the White Paper is vital in this context. It offers an opportunity not only to revisit the foundational principles of the original framework but also to pose challenging yet critical questions regarding capacity, fiscal authority, institutional architecture, intergovernmental relations, and the emerging issues that municipalities are facing. This review prompts us to contemplate the true meaning of developing local governance in an era characterised by escalating inequality, rapid urbanisation, climate change, economic stagnation, and rising community expectations. We must approach this task with honesty, seriousness, and ambition.

Thus, Professor Cloete's work is of immense importance. This book serves as an invaluable resource for councillors, municipal officials, students, professionals, and anyone seeking to comprehend and enhance the functionality of local government. By distilling complex concepts related to governance into 101 accessible lessons and definitions, this text renders the subject matter clear and practical, particularly in a discipline often characterised by technical jargon and bureaucratic complexities.

This study underscores the notion that governance extends beyond mere abstraction; it encompasses ethical leadership, accountability, community engagement, institutional capacity, oversight, service delivery, and developmental impact. It pertains to the utilisation of power for the benefit of the populace and the capacity of democratic institutions to remain attuned to

Foreword 2

the aspirations of the citizenry. These considerations are both theoretical and practical.

As SALGA, we assert that the future of local government hinges on more than mere financial resources and legislative amendments. It must also cultivate a culture of professionalism, public accountability, and lifelong learning. This book significantly contributes to that objective by bridging academic research with principles of good governance in an engaging and practical manner.

I extend my gratitude to Professor Harlan Cloete for authoring this thoughtfully composed and accessible book. As we reflect on thirty years of democratic local government and prepare for the next phase of transformation, renewal, and community service, we hope this book proves to be a valuable asset.

Foreword 3

Emeritus Prof. Fanie Cloete

*Emeritus in Public Policy Management & Governance
Stellenbosch University & University of the Free State*

Public governance in South Africa is in crisis. This is openly acknowledged by the current coalition government as well as by its political opposition. This crisis encompasses all governmental spheres, from national to local community levels. The causes of these crises stem from the same roots. They comprise the cumulative negative impacts of a range of factors.

These main causal factors include:

- The lasting historical legacy of apartheid after its official demise in 1994. This legacy comprises a seriously skewed distribution of resources across racial communities of colour, as well as continuing resistance against the government's attempts at faster redress of such historical backlogs by a small activist minority of conservative South Africans who protest the loss of their racial privileges under apartheid.
- Political and administrative cadre deployment of office-bearers and officials at all levels of the public sector. These appointments are generally made based on rewards for partisan loyalty or pay-offs for services rendered to the party in power, rather than on proven individual merit and experience.
- Political decision-making prioritisation driven by ideological or personal interests rather than pragmatic, public interest and empirical, evidence-informed decision prioritisation.
- Weak cultures of commitment, dedication and integrity accompanied a much stronger culture of entitlement among many public office-bearers and officials who view public service resources as easily accessible, low-hanging fruit for personal enrichment, resulting in what had become known as illegal 'state capture', leading to

- much restricted resources to fund government infrastructure maintenance, renewal & creation as well as capacity-building and even routine operations and functioning.

The cumulative negative impact of these and other considerations have so far had an especially devastating effect on the effectiveness and efficiency of local governance at community levels in South Africa over the last four decades since the current post-apartheid system was created. These operational constraints are, however, in some sectors and institutions more serious than in other cases.

The South African local government system functions within a strong democratic Rule of Law constitution. This approach created a constitutionally-entrenched devolution of powers and functions to various local government institutions that can operate relatively autonomously under different provincial jurisdictions. There is therefore space for local community autonomy, experimentation and innovation. Not all appointments are negatively affected by cadre deployment, nor are all institutions necessarily illegally state captured. Some local government institutions function relatively well despite the different constraints within which they operate. There are therefore notable exceptions to the general dismal crisis perception identified above.

This book focusses on the manner in which different individual incumbents at different levels in different autonomous local government institutions in South Africa attempted to do the best that they could within the above constraints with their limited resources, to maximise the potential beneficial impact that they could have on the well-being of their respective communities. It is the culmination of an intensive series of interviews that Dr. Harlan Cloete, my probable relative a few generations back, conducted over 4 years with selected movers and shakers active in South African local government. The original interviews are available on his podcast site 'Great Governance hosted by Dr. Harlan' (<https://open.spotify.com/show/1nMhr1RyTQyouT3u9MGMgy>).

Dr. Cloete explains in his introduction how he selected these individuals. The bulk of the chapters in the book then summarise

his interviewees' self-assessments of what their local governance goals are, how they interpret their respective tasks to promote or achieve those goals and how they deal with the different constraints that they face. He concludes the book with a summary of a few selected analytical and interpretive frameworks that one can use to achieve good (or in his words 'great') public governance results.

Dr Cloete follows a new, innovative and open-ended inductive approach in this book. He allows his interviewees to define for themselves what their different visions are, how they try to achieve them, how they deal with the unique obstacles that they face in their respective communities or contexts and how resilient they try to be to deal with new or fast-changing circumstances.

This pragmatic, 'learn-as-you-go' approach should be of value in both the academic education or hands-on training on the intricacies of local governance as well as for practitioners in the field to learn from the experiences of seasoned industry experts.

Foreword 4

Ms Monei Seeho

*Head of Public Sector,
Nedbank Commercial Banking*

Nedbank acknowledges its purpose to use its financial expertise to do good for its stakeholders, thereby creating value for society.

That is why everything that Nedbank does is purpose-led to support sustainable development and deliver positive economic, societal and environmental outcomes that are aligned with national development priorities and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

We are therefore proud to sponsor the launch of this important publication, which addresses one of the most pressing issues facing South Africa today: building strong, ethical and effective local government.

As a bank deeply invested in the country's long-term development, we recognise that sustainable economic growth, social cohesion and improved quality of life for citizens are fundamentally anchored in good governance at the local level.

We recognise the importance of a well-functioning local government, given its critical role in fulfilling its mandate of ensuring efficient service delivery and supporting government efforts to decentralise development and uplift local economies.

Municipalities are the sphere of government closest to communities, and it is important that they function with integrity, accountability and competence. In so doing, they become powerful catalysts for inclusive development and service delivery.

Our involvement in this project reflects our commitment to supporting initiatives that strengthen institutional capacity, promote ethical leadership, and encourage active citizenship within local government.

This book offers practical insights, lived experiences and inspirational examples that challenge the prevailing negative

narrative and demonstrate that excellence in local governance is not only possible, but already happening.

We commend Dr. Harlan Cloete, for creating a platform that celebrates those who serve with purpose and integrity, and we trust that the lessons contained in this book will inform, inspire, and empower current and future leaders to build municipalities that truly work for the people they serve.

Introduction

The National Development Plan (NDP, 2012) identifies nine challenges, or rather problems, as Professor Frederick Uys reminded me: “*You are sugarcoating problems by calling them challenges. They are problems that must be addressed with a greater sense of urgency.*” I agree, Prof., and henceforth refer to governance problems, not to challenges.

At the same time, the NDP advocates for a comprehensive, coordinated, and multi-sectoral approach to tackling governance problems, one that fosters partnerships between academia, business, community, and government (ABCG). These problems are highlighted in the NDP (2012)¹. These are:

1. **Too few people work:** South Africa has a high unemployment rate, limiting economic growth and social mobility.
2. **Poor quality school education for Black people:** The quality of education, particularly for Black students, is a major concern, hindering future prospects and social advancement.
3. **Infrastructure is poorly located, inadequate, and under-maintained:** Inadequate infrastructure, including transportation, energy, and water infrastructure, hampers economic activity and social development.
4. **Spatial divides hobble inclusive development:** Inequitable spatial planning, with poor areas geographically isolated from resources and opportunities, limits social inclusion.
5. **The economy is unsustainably resource-intensive:** The economy’s reliance on non-renewable resources poses long-term sustainability challenges.
6. **The public health system cannot meet demand or sustain quality:** The healthcare system struggles to provide adequate services for all citizens, particularly in underserved areas.
7. **Public services are uneven and often of poor quality:** The quality of public services, such as sanitation, waste

1 National Planning Commission. (2012). *National Development Plan 2030: Our future – make it work*. The Presidency, Republic of South Africa. Retrieved from South African Government’s official NDP page.

management, and local governance, is often uneven and poor, impacting citizen well-being.

8. **High levels of corruption:** Corruption within the public sector undermines economic stability and social trust.
9. **South Africa remains a divided society:** Deep-seated historical inequalities continue to divide the country, creating social tensions and limiting opportunity.

The *South African Constitution* (1996)² enjoins municipalities to take on a developmental role by assigning specific responsibilities to the local sphere of government. A closer look at these nine NDP-identified problems highlights the critical role local government plays in addressing these “wicked” problems.

For me, democracy starts at the door of the local municipality. Before we can speak of a national dialogue, we should start with local dialogues. Since all development is ultimately local, local government has a direct influence on global decision-making and social well-being, as if we are to make a dent in the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), then we must appreciate that it is *local action*, *local conversations*, and *local solidarity* that make the difference. Author Peter Block (2009) argues that we can think of a community as essentially a conversation. If we want to change the community, we must change the conversation—from problems, fear, and retribution to possibility, generosity, and restoration.

In July 2021, in the midst of COVID-19, I was reading the *Sunday Times*, which carried an article on the Senqu Municipality and how they had managed to obtain consecutive clean audits for more than a decade (a leading light in the Eastern Cape province). My curiosity got the better of me. A month prior, I had attended a master class on podcasting, then it clicked. I should reach out to the municipality, record their story, and share it with the world. But what would I name this podcast? I’m not sure how the process unfolded, but I decided to call it Great Governance ZA. It should not be about “good governance” (the more familiar phrase), but rather about aiming higher, being great. I reckoned if

2 Republic of South Africa. (1996). *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*. Chapter 7: Local Government. Retrieved from South African Government’s official site.

Introduction

a small island like Great Britain—just a fraction of South Africa’s size—can call herself “Great,” then why should we not aspire to that level of excellence? To get out of our governance mess, we must strive not just for good but for *great*. Here was my chance to change the conversation, just as Peter Block advocates.

And that’s how *great* governance and the process of changing the conversation through this podcast was birthed. This is what it’s all about: celebrating the people who serve so selflessly. I set out to challenge the narrative that local government is all doom and gloom, and in the process I met some incredible South Africans. Thus began a journey to find and voice the hidden stories of excellence in local governance.

To date, 115 episodes have been produced and shared on various digital platforms. I wish to thank those who were so generous with their time and who shared their wisdom and insights. I have learned so much from every conversation. The golden thread running through all the conversations is the notion of selfless leadership and deep commitment. The aim of this book is to share knowledge and showcase those who are changing the negative narrative around local governance, so that more citizens are encouraged to become involved.

The book offers an easy-to-read overview of the salient points from each interview. At the end of each chapter, a QR code is provided that can be scanned to listen to the complete podcast. Some podcasts extend over two episodes.

The book begins with a glossary of 101 key concepts and definitions designed to enhance your understanding of local governance. It is then organized into four distinct sections.

- **Section A** introduces appointed and elected municipal officials and organisations who share their pearls of wisdom, knowledge, and experience.
- **Section B** highlights active citizens from the community.
- **Section C** showcases active citizens from the business sector and others.
- **Section D** presents governance frameworks that have been developed or adapted, including **King V, Governance5iQ**, the **5P Governance Model**, the **7C Implementation Protocols**,

and the **Futures Triangle** along with a discussion about why you need people on your team with high **GTSD** scores.

Finally, I am reminded of the words of St Augustine of Hippo, the African bishop, renowned theologian, and philosopher who served in Hippo Regius (now Annaba, Algeria) from 396 to 430 AD:

“Hope has two beautiful daughters.
Their names are Anger and Courage.
Anger at the way things are, and
Courage to see that they do not remain as they are.”

It is my hope and prayer that the stories and lessons shared in this book will galvanise you into action. South Africa, its municipalities, and the world need people who are both angry and courageous. Too often, the middle class are master moaners yet lack the moral courage to do something about their anger. They forget the anger and courage of those who birthed our democracy through blood, sweat, and tears.

I encourage you to get involved in defining South Africa—just like the men and women on these pages.

Harlan Courtenay Alva Cloete

June 2026

101 Local Governance Definitions

1. **Accountability and Transparency Framework:** Policies and practices that promote openness, accountability, and transparency in municipal governance.
2. **Audit Reports:** Official evaluations used to provide accountability and ensure compliance with statutes and regulations.
3. **Batho Pele Principles:** A set of principles aimed at improving public service delivery in South Africa, emphasizing accountability, transparency, and responsiveness.
4. **Civic Engagement:** The encouragement of the public to become involved in the design and planning of community services and projects.
5. **Civic Infrastructure:** The physical and organizational structures needed for the operation of a society, including transportation, communication systems, and public institutions.
6. **Civil Society:** The aggregate of non-governmental organizations and institutions that manifest the interests and will of citizens.
7. **Community Development Workers (CDWs):** Public servants who facilitate community development and improve service delivery at the local level.
8. **Community Policing Forums (CPFs):** Structures that facilitate cooperation between the police and communities to improve safety and security.
9. **Community:** A group of people residing in a common geographical location under the jurisdiction of a specific local government.
10. **Community-Based Planning (CBP):** A participatory approach to planning that involves community members in the development of local plans and the monitoring of their implementation.
11. **Compliance:** The act of meeting the rules and standards set out in laws or regulations.

12. **Constitution:** The supreme law of South Africa that sets out the structure of the state, the fundamental rights of citizens, and the powers and duties of the government.
13. **Constitutional Democracy:** A system of government based on democratic rules and institutions, where the powers of government are limited by a constitution.
14. **Cooperative Governance:** The collaboration between different spheres of government (national, provincial, and local) to achieve common goals.
15. **Councillor:** An elected representative in the municipal council, responsible for making decisions about local governance and community issues.
16. **Democracy:** A form of government in which power is held directly or indirectly by citizens under a free electoral system.
17. **Development:** The process of economic and social transformation that seeks to improve the quality of life for a community or region.
18. **Developmental local government:** Local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways of meeting their social, economic, and material needs and improving the quality of their lives.
19. **Disaster Management:** The planning and coordination of responses to emergencies and natural disasters by local governments.
20. **E-Governance:** The use of digital technologies to enhance the delivery of public services and the functioning of government.
21. **Electoral Systems:** The methods used to elect representatives to municipal councils, including ward-based and proportional representation systems.
22. **Environmental Protection:** Efforts by local government to preserve the natural environment against pollution and other threats.
23. **Equitable Share:** A financial allocation from the national government to municipalities to support basic services and administrative costs.

24. **Executive Committee:** In municipalities without an executive mayor, this committee performs executive functions, usually elected by the council from its members.
25. **Fiscal Responsibility:** The obligation of local governments to manage public funds in a responsible and efficient manner.
26. **Governance:** A behavioural framework that is defined by the relationship between the governors (elected or appointed officials) and those being governed (the end users of services). Encompassing both the process of governing (the how e.g. is it transparent, fair, accountable, procedural correctness, collaborative, responsiveness etc). As well as the outcomes of that processes (is it equitable, leading to development, growth, care and or sustainable).
27. **Government:** The organization through which state policy is enforced and public affairs are managed in South Africa.
28. **Heritage Conservation:** The preservation and protection of buildings, objects, landscapes, or other artefacts of historical significance.
29. **Innovation:** The introduction of new ideas and methods to improve local government services.
30. **Integrated Development Plan (IDP):** A strategic plan required by South African law for each municipality to guide its development and service delivery over a five-year period.
31. **Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act (2005):** Legislation that establishes a framework for cooperation and coordination between different spheres of government in South Africa.
32. **Local Economic Development (LED):** Strategies implemented by municipalities to promote economic growth and development within their jurisdictions.
33. **Local Government Finance:** The management of revenue, expenditure, and debt by local governments.
34. **Local Government:** The third tier of government in South Africa, responsible for providing services and managing local affairs within municipalities.
35. **Mayoral Committee:** A group of councillors appointed by the mayor in metropolitan, district, or local municipalities

to oversee specific portfolios such as finance, housing, or transport.

36. **Municipal Audit:** The examination of municipal financial records and practices to ensure compliance with regulations and standards.
37. **Municipal Bonds:** Debt securities issued by local governments to finance public projects such as roads, schools, and infrastructure.
38. **Municipal By-laws:** Local laws enacted by municipalities to regulate various aspects of community life.
39. **Municipal Demarcation:** The process of determining the boundaries of municipalities for administrative and electoral purposes.
40. **Municipal Environmental Management:** The processes and activities undertaken by municipalities to protect and enhance the natural environment.
41. **Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA):** Legislation that provides for the financial management of municipalities to ensure transparency, accountability, and sound management of municipal finances.
42. **Municipal Financial Oversight:** The monitoring and evaluation of municipal financial management practices to ensure accountability and sustainability.
43. **Municipal Health Services:** Public health services provided by municipalities, including water quality monitoring, waste management, and disease control.
44. **Municipal Human Resources Management:** The policies and practices related to the recruitment, development, performance, and management of municipal staff.
45. **Municipal Infrastructure Development:** The planning, construction, and maintenance of infrastructure by municipalities.
46. **Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG):** A funding mechanism to support infrastructure development in South African municipalities.
47. **Municipal Land Use Planning:** The regulation and management of land use within a municipality to promote sustainable development.

48. **Municipal Law Enforcement:** The enforcement of municipal by-laws and regulations to maintain order and safety within the community.
49. **Municipal Legislative Framework:** The body of laws and regulations that govern the functioning and responsibilities of municipalities.
50. **Municipal Manager:** The chief executive officer of a municipality responsible for implementing council policies and managing administrative operations.
51. **Municipal Performance Indicators:** Metrics used to measure and evaluate the performance of municipal services and operations.
52. **Municipal Public Accounts Committee (MPAC):** A committee in South African municipalities responsible for oversight of financial management and accountability.
53. **Municipal Risk Management:** The identification, assessment, and mitigation of risks that could impact municipal operations and services.
54. **Municipal Service Partnerships (MSPs):** Collaborations between municipalities and private or non-profit organizations to deliver public services.
55. **Municipal Staff Regulations:** The regulations that set out the organisational design principles, recruitment and selection of staff, performance management, and skills development.
56. **Municipal Services:** Services provided by local governments such as water supply, sanitation, waste management, and public safety.
57. **Municipal Spatial Development Framework (SDF):** A strategic plan that outlines the spatial development priorities and guidelines for a municipality.
58. **Municipal Stakeholder Engagement:** The process of involving various stakeholders in municipal decision-making and planning.
59. **Municipal Strategic Objectives:** The long-term goals and priorities set by a municipality to guide its development and service delivery.

60. **Municipal Structures Act:** Legislation that defines the structures of local government, including the composition and functions of municipal councils.
61. **Municipal Systems Act:** Legislation that provides the framework for the administration and management of municipalities, including the roles and responsibilities of municipal officials.
62. **Municipality:** A district or other administrative unit governed by a local government, which may include cities, towns, or rural areas.
63. **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** Private sector voluntary organizations that contribute to the management of local issues through various forms of service delivery and community development e.g. community radio, Hospice.
64. **Operational Efficiency:** The ability of a local government to deliver services in the most cost-effective manner without sacrificing quality.
65. **Oversight:** The monitoring and evaluation of municipal performance by oversight bodies such as Municipal Public Accounts Committees (MPAC).
66. **Participatory Budgeting:** A democratic process in which community members directly decide how to allocate part of a public budget.
67. **Participatory Democracy:** A democratic system where citizens have the power to participate directly in decision-making processes.
68. **Public Participation Processes:** The methods and activities used by municipalities to engage citizens in decision-making and planning.
69. **Performance Audits:** Evaluations conducted to assess the efficiency, effectiveness, and economy of municipal operations and services.
70. **Performance Indicators:** Metrics used to assess the ability of a government entity to achieve its goals and objectives.
71. **Policy:** The framework for decision-making and implementation, ensuring consistency, transparency, and accountability in areas such as urban planning, public safety, environmental management, and economic development.

72. **Private Sector:** The part of the economy that is run by private individuals or companies and not by the state, including businesses and corporations.
73. **Proportional Representative Councillor:** A councillor elected based on the proportion of votes received by their party during municipal elections, representing the party's interests in the council.
74. **Provincial Government:** The middle tier of government in South Africa, situated between the national and the local governments, responsible for regional issues and governance.
75. **Public Accountability:** The obligation of public officials, civil servants, and the government to be answerable for their actions and responsive to the entity from whom they derive their authority.
76. **Public Consultation:** The process by which the public's input on matters affecting them is sought by local government.
77. **Public Facilities:** Infrastructure provided by the government or by private entities but funded by the government such as sports facilities, parks, and libraries.
78. **Public Participation:** The involvement of citizens in the decision-making processes of local government.
79. **Public Policy:** The principles, actions, and regulations established by governments to address social issues and achieve specific goals. It encompasses laws, programs, and initiatives designed to guide decision-making and influence public affairs.
80. **Public Safety:** Local government services, including policing and fire services, provided to protect citizens from crime and disasters.
81. **Public Sector:** The part of the economy that is controlled by the government, including public services and enterprises.
82. **Public Transport Systems:** Systems provided by or on behalf of municipal authorities to offer shared transportation services to the public, e.g. the Go George bus service in the Southern Cape.
83. **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):** Collaborative arrangements between municipalities and private-sector entities to deliver public services or infrastructure.

84. **Reform:** Changes made to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of local government.
85. **Regulatory Framework:** The system of rules, practices, and processes used to direct and control a municipality.
86. **Representative Democracy:** A system of democracy in which citizens elect representatives to make decisions on their behalf.
87. **Revenue Collection:** The process by which local governments collect taxes, fees, and other income to fund public services.
88. **Risk Management:** The forecasting and evaluation of financial risks together with the identification of procedures to avoid or minimize their impact.
89. **Rural Development:** Efforts aimed by authorities at improving the standard of living and economic health of people living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas.
90. **Service Delivery:** The provision of public services by local governments to their constituents, such as water, electricity, sanitation, and public safety.
91. **Social Housing:** Housing provided by the government or non-profit organizations to assist people who cannot afford to rent or buy in the open market.
92. **Social Services:** Programs designed to help the poor, elderly, and disadvantaged in a community.
93. **Spatial Planning:** The methods used by local government to influence the distribution of people and activities in spaces of various scales.
94. **Stakeholder Engagement:** The process by which an organization involves people who may be affected by the decisions it makes or can influence the implementation of its decisions.
95. **State:** The organized political community governing South Africa, which includes national, provincial, and local levels of government.
96. **Sustainability:** The principle of ensuring that resource use does not permanently damage or deplete those resources and that environmental and cultural aspects of resources are preserved for future generations.

97. **Taxation:** The process by which local government collects financial contributions from citizens and businesses to fund public services and infrastructure.
98. **Urbanization:** The process by which rural areas become urban through population growth and infrastructure development.
99. **Ward:** A geographical subdivision within a municipality, each represented by a ward councillor, forming the basic unit of community representation in local government.
100. **Ward Committee:** A committee formed within a ward to enhance community participation; it advises the ward councillor and facilitates communication between the council and the community.
101. **Ward Councillor:** A councillor elected to represent a specific ward within a municipality, focusing on local issues pertinent to that ward.

Section A

Appointed and Elected Local Officials

This collection of governance lessons offers insights from various leaders and experts in South African local government, highlighting key themes such as leadership, ethical governance, financial management, performance accountability, and public participation. Each chapter presents a unique perspective, ranging from transformational leadership journeys, like those of municipal managers who rose from entry-level positions, to strategies for maintaining clean audits and ensuring ethical leadership. The lessons emphasize the importance of leadership, transparency, and continuous improvement in ensuring effective local government service delivery.

Chapter 1

Leadership and Service Delivery with Mayor Nomvuyo Mposelwa

Introduction

Rural governance in South Africa presents unique challenges and opportunities, as highlighted by Mayor Nomvuyo Mposelwa from the Senqu Municipality in the Eastern Cape. As one of only two municipalities in the province to achieve a consistently clean audit, Senqu Municipality stands out as a beacon of accountability and service delivery in a region often plagued by governance failures and ineptitude. With a background in education and over a decade of experience in local government, Mayor Mposelwa shared her journey of transitioning into politics, the value of clean audits, and the daily challenges of serving a rural community. This chapter explores key themes, including the role of leadership, the importance of oversight, the challenges faced by rural municipalities, and the governance lessons learned from her tenure.

The Role of Leadership in Governance

Mayor Nomvuyo Mposelwa's journey into local government was driven by a desire to serve her community and apply her skills as an educator. Reflecting on her decision to transition from teaching to politics, she stated, "I wanted to use my professional skills to improve the local government area and also ensure that people get the right service and that people's views are heard." Her leadership philosophy is rooted in accountability and accessibility, with an emphasis on putting the community first. "I treat the community as myself because I am living with them. I

put myself in the communities' shoes in whatever difficulties they encounter," she explained.

As a mayor, Mposelwa views her primary role as one of oversight, ensuring that council decisions and policies are implemented effectively. She emphasized the importance of adhering to the Municipal Systems Act, stating, "Our role as politicians is to do oversight, which involves monitoring and evaluating all decisions and programmes that have been decided by the council for the community." While acknowledging that politicians occasionally need to issue instructions, she stressed the value and importance of working collaboratively with the municipal manager and directors to achieve service delivery goals.

Challenges in Rural Governance

Senqu Municipality faces a multitude of challenges common to rural areas, including high unemployment, poverty, and limited infrastructure. Mayor Mposelwa identified youth unemployment as one of the most pressing issues, describing it as "a very big challenge ... It is not nice to see young people loitering in town." She also highlighted the issue of poverty, which she noted is closely linked to unemployment, as well as land grabbing, which hampers development in the municipality.

Another significant challenge is the strain on infrastructure caused by population growth and migration from neighbouring Lesotho. "The people of Lesotho are flooding into our area, especially the area of Sterkspruit," she explained, adding that this influx exacerbates existing issues with ageing infrastructure. Revenue generation is another hurdle for the municipality, as many residents are indigent and unable to pay rates. "It is only a few people that are able to pay rates in our municipality," she noted, emphasizing the need for provincial and national government support to address these challenges.

Water shortages further complicate service delivery, particularly in remote areas. Although water and sanitation are not the municipality's direct responsibility, illegal connections to water pipes frequently disrupt supply, leaving many residents without access to clean water. "Our people are suffering ... because of illegal connections," the mayor lamented.

The Value of a Clean Audit

Under Mayor Mposelwa’s leadership, Senqu Municipality has maintained a consistently clean audit for seven consecutive years, a remarkable achievement in a province where many municipalities struggle with financial mismanagement. She described the significance of this accomplishment, stating, “The value of a clean audit is to give hope to the people that as politicians we are able to account for the public purse.” While acknowledging that clean audits do not directly address issues like unemployment or service delivery, she emphasized their importance in building trust and demonstrating accountability. “It is important to celebrate a clean audit because it shows that we can account for every cent given by the national treasury,” she explained.

Challenges in Sustaining Progress

While Senqu Municipality has made significant strides, sustaining progress remains a challenge. Issues such as limited revenue, population growth, and infrastructure constraints require ongoing attention and innovative solutions. Additionally, the mayor acknowledged the difficulty of balancing community expectations with limited resources. “It is important to explain to the people that we are given so much from the national treasury ... It will be unethical for us to deliver all the wishes of each and every ward,” she explained.

Mayor Nomvuyo Mposelwa’s leadership of Senqu Municipality exemplifies the potential for excellence in rural governance, even in the face of significant challenges. Her commitment to accountability, collaboration, and service delivery has earned the municipality a reputation for good governance, as evidenced by its clean audit track record. However, her tenure also underscores the complexities of rural governance, from addressing unemployment and poverty to managing and making do with limited resources and infrastructure.

The lessons learned from her experience—particularly the importance of unity, transparency, and collaboration—offer valuable insights for other municipalities striving to improve governance and service delivery. As Mayor Mposelwa aptly

concluded, “My dream is to see people getting basic services ... access to housing, health, and education, and a society free from crime and hunger.” Her vision serves as a reminder of the transformative power of dedicated and ethical leadership in local government.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Unity and political stability in achieving service delivery goals** – “My biggest achievement is the unity and political stability that led to the implementation of service delivery for the people.”
2. **The need for transparency, humility, and accessibility** – as key leadership qualities, advising new councillors to “always know that they are the servants of the people.”
3. **The importance of collaboration and working with opposition parties** – “We do not have a problem taking their proposals if it is good and will not hamper us as the ANC.”

“We need to celebrate the clean audit because some of the municipalities are unable to account for the millions that have been pumped in by national treasury.” – **Mayor Nomvuyo Mposelwa**

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 10th August 2021

Chapter 2

Kenneth Fourie's Journey from Intern to CFO

Introduction

The Senqu Municipality has become a beacon of accountability and financial management in South Africa, achieving a clean audit status in a challenging environment. Kenneth Fourie, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of Senqu Municipality shared his journey from intern to CFO and provided a behind-the-scenes look at how systems, discipline, and commitment drive good governance in a rural municipality. This chapter explores Fourie's reflections on the challenges of governance, the importance of systems and leadership, and the lessons learned from his tenure.

Financial Governance in Rural Municipality

Operating in a predominantly rural municipality presents unique challenges, as Fourie highlighted throughout the interview. One of the most pressing difficulties is attracting and retaining competent staff in remote areas. "It's very difficult," he explained, noting that many young professionals leave rural areas for better opportunities in urban centers. Despite these challenges, Senqu Municipality's clean audit status has helped attract talent by enhancing the municipality's reputation as an employer that can be trusted. As Fourie remarked, "Through that exposure, people wanted to be associated with the municipality."

Another significant challenge lies in navigating the complexities of procurement and compliance. According to Fourie, procurement processes are often delayed due to "grey areas" in legislation and differing interpretations by auditors. He explained, "If the legislation was interpreted that there was not four senior

managers [on the bid adjudication committee], the process is seen as irregular, even though there could have been benefit to the municipality.” These delays can hinder service delivery and create frustration among stakeholders. Financial constraints also pose a challenge, particularly in a municipality with a high indigent population. Fourie emphasized the importance of balancing compliance with operational efficiency, stating, “If the systems are not accepted by people on the ground level, then the system is not worth the paper that it’s written on.”

The Role of Systems in Governance

For Fourie, robust systems are the cornerstone of good governance. He emphasized that “the best system is only as good as the people implementing it” and highlighted the importance of user acceptance in ensuring the success of governance processes. Preventative controls are a key feature of Senqu Municipality’s systems, designed to stop irregularities before they occur. “Our systems are geared to have a preventative approach,” he explained, adding that user education and acceptance are critical to maintaining these controls.

Although corruption remains a pervasive issue in local government, Fourie believes that strong systems and ethical leadership can keep it at bay. However, he acknowledged that systems alone are not enough; they must be supported by people who believe in and adhere to them. “The two go hand in hand,” he said, emphasizing the need for ongoing education and user acceptance.

Keeping Corruption at Bay

Fourie’s approach to corruption prevention is rooted in creating a culture of accountability and transparency. He described governance as “the contract that you have as an institution with the community,” with oversight structures ensuring that the municipality operates in a legally compliant and accountable manner. Fourie also underscored the participatory nature of system development at Senqu Municipality. Rather than imposing top-down directives, the finance department collaborates with other departments to design processes that are both compliant

and user-friendly. “We would take the lead in developing procedures that are legislatively compliant but then present it to top management and get inputs to see where we can reduce blockages,” he explained.

Challenges in Compliance and Procurement

One of the recurring themes in Fourie’s interview was the complexity of compliance and procurement processes. He explained that many delays stem from unclear legislation and varying interpretations by auditors. For example, a minor procedural oversight, such as advertising a bid for 13 days instead of the required 14, can result in the entire process being classified as irregular expenditure. “It gives a bit of perspective to the term irregular,” he noted, emphasizing the need for clarity and consistency in compliance requirements. Fourie also highlighted the importance of streamlining processes to reduce administrative burdens on user departments. By providing standard motivations and simplifying forms, the finance department aims to make compliance easier without compromising accountability.

Leadership and Mentorship

Fourie’s leadership philosophy is characterized by openness, collaboration, and a commitment to excellence. He maintains an open-door policy, encouraging staff at all levels to approach him with questions or concerns. “My door is open to anybody who wants to come and speak to me,” he said. His approach to leadership is also informed by his own experiences as an intern. Reflecting on his early career, he credited his mentor, former CFO Christof Venter, with providing him with valuable hands-on experience. “He took me and said, ‘I must go do meter readings.’ And I really appreciate that from him,” Fourie recalled, noting that this experience gave him a deeper understanding of the municipality’s operations.

Kenneth Fourie’s tenure as CFO of Senqu Municipality exemplifies the transformative power of strong systems, ethical leadership, and a commitment to continuous improvement. Despite the challenges of operating in a rural municipality, Senqu has achieved consistent success, including a clean audit

status that has become a point of pride for the community. As Fourie aptly concluded, “All is not lost in local government ... We are the government of the people, and we must ensure that we are doing what we are supposed to be doing in a compliant and accountable manner.”

Key Governance Lessons

1. **The value of institutional knowledge** – Having worked in nearly every role within the finance department, Fourie has gained a comprehensive understanding of the municipality’s operations. “Institutional knowledge is very important,” he noted, adding that such knowledge provides invaluable context for decision-making.
2. **Discipline and commitment in achieving good governance** – Fourie described the dedication of his team, stating, “There’s a lot of commitment from staff ... People are working late just to ensure that things are done in a timely manner and done correctly.”
3. **Continuous learning and capacity building** – Many staff members at Senqu Municipality pursue distance learning while working, a practice that Fourie strongly encourages. “If you want to better yourself, those skills can be incorporated into how the division is run,” he explained.

“The best system is only as good as the people implementing it.” – **Kenneth Fourie**

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 16th August 2021

Chapter 3

Driving Performance Management in Local Government with Edward Jantjies

Introduction

Performance management is a critical yet often misunderstood aspect of local governance. In this chapter, former Director: Corporate Services at the Mossel Bay Municipality unpacks the challenges, successes, and intricacies of implementing performance management in local government. With more than 26 years of experience in local government, Jantjies shared why performance management is essential, the obstacles municipalities face, and how Mossel Bay has become a model of excellence.

The Essence of Performance Management

Jantjies defines performance management as an ongoing process. He argues that performance management goes through 4 phases, namely, planning, implementing, monitoring, and measuring performance towards a set of common objectives of the municipality or of any organisation. He emphasizes its cyclical nature, noting that performance management relies on feedback to continuously improve and eliminate inefficiencies. For Jantjies, performance management is not just about processes but also about relationships. “It is about creating relationships with people and ensuring effective communication between the employer and the employee,” he explains.

Why Municipalities Struggle with Performance Management

Despite its importance, many municipalities fail to implement effective performance management systems. Jantjies attributes this to a lack of accountability and leadership. “The AG is not wrong in making such a statement,” he says, referring to the Auditor-General’s report on poor performance reporting. “People are not being held accountable. People are not doing what they’re supposed to do.” He identifies several reasons for these struggles, including leadership failures, poor communication, and a lack of strategy alignment. He also highlights the absence of employee engagement, stating, “Employees are not involved in the processes and they are unaware of what is needed from them to achieve that objective.” Jantjies does not mince words when addressing the shortcomings of municipal officials, asserting that some local government officials are “just bloody lazy.” “People are finding excuses not to implement performance management and not to make sure that the municipalities are performing to the best of their ability.”

The Role of Consequence Management

Mossel Bay Municipality stands out as a shining example of effective performance management. Jantjies attributes this success to leadership, commitment, and a collaborative approach. “Leadership must set the tone,” he asserts. “From the mayor to mayoral committee to the portfolio committees to the MM to the directors ... all of them had made that decision.” The municipality has implemented a range of initiatives to foster a culture of performance, including stakeholder involvement, training, workshops, and toolbox talks.

Consequence management is a critical component of performance management, according to Jantjies. “Consequence management bluntly states that you need to be held responsible for things you do and you need to be held responsible for things you are not doing,” he explains. While performance management evaluates objectives, consequence management remedies underperformance. “It spells out what are the consequences for not doing your work and what are the remedies and

corrective actions.” However, as stated by Jantjies, consequence management is not only about punishment but also about recognition. “It’s also about rewarding those good people, the great and outstanding performers.”

Moving Beyond Monetary Rewards

Jantjies stresses the importance of ethical leadership in driving performance management. “Leadership must set the tone,” he states. He believes that ethical leadership can be taught through training and workshops but must be reinforced by a culture of accountability. “If everyone sees that there are consequences to fraud, consequences to late coming, consequences to stealing ... that culture of ethics will be created,” he explains. For Jantjies, leadership is key to fostering this culture, as it ensures that ethical behaviour is modelled and enforced throughout the organization.

One of the misconceptions about performance management is its association with financial rewards. Jantjies challenges this notion, advocating for non-monetary recognition. “At Mossel Bay Municipality, staff members are not awarded a performance bonus ... they’re proud to be at this municipality and performance is not about the appraisal,” he explains. He provides examples of non-monetary rewards, such as recognition sessions, certificates, time off, and simple gestures like a thank-you email. “Some people say, if you can just send me an email to say thank you, those things inspire people to even be more loyal and committed,” he adds.

Challenges in Implementing Performance Management

Jantjies acknowledges that implementing performance management is not without its challenges. One of the most significant obstacles is resistance to accountability. “People don’t like to be held responsible,” he notes. This resistance often stems from a lack of understanding and engagement, as employees may feel performance management is being imposed on them rather than being a collaborative effort. Another challenge is the absence of a performance culture in many municipalities. “Performance is not linked to the culture of the organization,” Jantjies explains,

which leads to complacency and inefficiency. Leadership failures further exacerbate these issues, with senior officials often unwilling to take responsibility or enforce accountability. Additionally, many municipalities lack clear implementation plans and fail to review policies regularly, resulting in outdated practices and a lack of progress. For municipalities looking to improve their performance management, Jantjies offers practical advice. He recommends starting with benchmarking, “Engage with municipalities that have gone through this process already.” He also emphasizes the importance of identifying stakeholders, seeking help from organizations like SALGA and COGTA, and setting realistic milestones. “Make sure that you get the buy-in from management as well as the council,” he advises. Jantjies encourages municipalities to start small, even if they are not fully ready, and to build momentum over time.

The lessons learned from Mossel Bay provide a roadmap for overcoming these obstacles and achieving sustainable service delivery. As Jantjies aptly concludes, “We need to start doing what we are paid to do.”

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Leadership must set the tone** – From the mayor to the lowest levels, everyone must commit to the process.
- 2. Stakeholder engagement is critical** – Involving employees, unions, and other stakeholders from the outset ensures buy-in and fosters a sense of ownership.
- 3. Clear implementation plan** – with realistic milestones is crucial to creating a culture of performance through regular engagement and recognition.

“We need to start doing what we are paid to do.”

– **Edward Jantjies**

Chapter 3

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 24th August 2021

Chapter 4

Mxolisi Yawa one of South Africa's Longest- serving Municipal Managers

Introduction

Mxolisi Yawa is one of the longest-serving Municipal Managers (MM) in South Africa who, at the time of writing, has been leading the Senqu in the Eastern Cape municipality for more than two decades. In this chapter Yawa shares his journey in local government, the challenges of maintaining ethical leadership, and the systems that have enabled his municipality to achieve seven consecutive clean audits.

The Role of Systems and Controls

Yawa attributes much of Senqu Municipality's success to robust systems and internal controls. "Unless organisations put system controls in place, people are tempted to always give them access to the public purse," he noted. Preventative systems, combined with consistent consequence management, have helped the municipality identify and address problems early. "Once you've got systems, once you've got controls, you can easily pick it up that a problem has happened quite early and be able to deal with that," he explained. These systems are not just technical tools but also cultural practices that require buy-in from all stakeholders. Yawa emphasized that the effectiveness of systems depends on the leadership's commitment to ethical practices and transparency. "Municipal managers must walk the talk," he said, adding that leaders must set an example by adhering to the same standards they expect from others.

The Value of a Clean Audit

For Yawa, a clean audit is more than just a financial benchmark; it is a measure of a municipality's overall governance and service delivery. "A clean audit is very much of significant value," he emphasized, explaining that the Auditor-General now audits not only financial management but also service delivery objectives. "If the municipality has set for itself that it will be doing so much in a year or five years in terms of the IDP [Integrated Development Plan], AG comes in and assesses the extent to which those promises were given to communities." Despite resource constraints, Senqu Municipality has managed to maintain its clean audit status by building reserves and leveraging national government grants to accelerate service delivery. "We are able to take service delivery in a different way than a municipality who would not have such reserves available to them," Yawa explained. He acknowledged that while clean audits do not guarantee perfect service delivery, they reflect a culture of accountability and efficiency that benefits the community.

Balancing Accountability and Interference

One of the most challenging aspects of Yawa's role has been navigating the fine line between accountability and political interference. "The word interference can be loosely used when people are escaping accountability," he observed. While councillors are barred by law from participating in supply chain management processes, Yawa stressed the importance of constructive relationships between municipal managers and politicians. "Having a good relationship is in the interest of the community," he explained. This relationship must allow municipal managers to say "no" when necessary while maintaining transparency and open communication. "If your 'no' is perceived as wanting to build a wall in such a way that politicians cannot see what you're doing as an administration, then that creates conflicts," he noted. Yawa's ability to maintain this balance has been a key factor in his longevity as a municipal manager.

Challenges in Rural Governance

Yawa notes that operating in a rural municipality has its unique challenges, including high unemployment, poverty, and limited revenue generation. “The municipality would then have to use indigent policies to support the indigent people,” Yawa explained, highlighting the difficulty of creating a self-sufficient revenue base. With over 100 villages under its jurisdiction, Senqu Municipality receives only R38 million annually to address infrastructure needs, including waste management, electricity, and roads. “R38 million can only be consumed by one project a year,” he remarked, underscoring the mismatch between community expectations and available resources. Despite these constraints Yawa remains optimistic about the potential for local economic development. By improving infrastructure and creating a business-friendly environment, the municipality aims to attract investment and generate economic opportunities. “We are emphasizing our local economic development to ensure that the mileage that the municipality is putting in in terms of infrastructure is towards lobbying business to see it is necessary to invest in our area,” he explained. Mxolisi Yawa’s tenure as Municipal Manager of Senqu Municipality is a testament to the power of ethical leadership, robust systems, and a commitment to accountability. Despite the challenges of operating in a rural municipality, Yawa has successfully navigated political dynamics, resource constraints, and community expectations to build a culture of good governance. The lessons learned from his journey—from the value of a clean audit to the importance of balancing accountability and interference—offer a blueprint for other municipalities striving to improve governance and service delivery.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Ethical leadership** – “Ethical leadership is something that we come with from home,” he said, adding that institutions of higher learning can play a role in reinforcing these values.
2. **Discipline and efficiency** – The importance of discipline and efficiency in managing limited resources. “There are little resources, and these resources must be used in such a way

that we can demonstrate effectiveness, efficiency, and value for money,”

3. **Walk the talk as a leader** – Yawa also emphasized the importance of walking the talk as a leader. “Leaders like municipal managers must walk the talk,” he said, explaining that this involves setting an example of ethical behaviour and transparency.

“Our responsibility as public officials is to serve the communities, and that privilege is a privilege that is available to few of us.” – **Mxolisi Yawa**

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 6th September 2021

Chapter 5

From General Worker to Municipal Manager: Vish Govender's Story

Introduction

Acting Municipal Manager of Newcastle Municipality Vish Govender shares his remarkable journey from being a general worker to the head of a municipality. Govender's story is one of resilience, lifelong learning, and a commitment to ethical leadership. This chapter delves into key themes, including his early influences, the challenges of local government, the importance of education, and his approach to leadership and governance.

Early Influences and the Start of a Journey

Govender's passion for local government began at the age of 12 when he recognized the lack of basic facilities in his community. "We wanted to play soccer," he recalled, "but we realized we didn't even have a soccer ground. That's when I thought, we need a proper government in place to provide better communities." This realization, coupled with the transformative moment of South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, sparked his desire to join government and bring about change. "That was the light bulb moment for me," he explained, "when I decided I wanted to be responsible for providing services to communities." His journey into local government began as a student worker in the City of Durban. Despite graduating cum laude with a degree in horticulture, he started as a general worker earning a stipend of R953. "I wasn't looking at the money," he said. "I was looking at the opportunity to get my foot in the door." His enthusiasm and

innovative ideas quickly caught the attention of senior leaders, setting him on a path to leadership.

Challenges in Local Government

Operating within the bureaucratic environment of local government, Govender faced numerous challenges, including navigating red tape, limited resources, and the pressures of political interference. Reflecting on his early career, he noted, “21 years ago, things were not like they are now. There was less red tape, but also fewer opportunities for innovation.” One of the most pressing challenges Govender identified is the concentration of power in the office of the Municipal Manager (MM). “Too much power has been put in the MM’s hands,” he observed, citing the ability to override decisions of the bid adjudication committee as an example. This concentration of power, coupled with external pressures, creates a fertile ground for corruption. “Corruption is a pandemic,” he stated, emphasizing the need for municipal managers to make decisions based on legislation and ethical principles rather than external influences. Govender also highlighted the difficulty of balancing the complex tripartite relationship between the municipal administration, political leadership, and the community. “It’s like a three-legged stool,” he explained.

The Role of Education in Leadership

A relentless advocate for lifelong learning, Govender credits education as the foundation of his success. “Education is for improving the lives of others and leaving your community and the world better than you found it,” he said. Over the course of his career, he has pursued numerous qualifications, including a master’s degree in Public Administration and completed doctoral research on ethical and clean governance. Govender believes that education provides the tools to make sound, pragmatic decisions. Quoting Albert Einstein, he remarked, “Education is not the learning of facts but the training of the mind to think.” For him, education bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, enabling leaders to navigate complex governance challenges.

Leadership and Ethical Governance

Govender's leadership philosophy is rooted in participative management and the belief in enabling others to succeed. "The big brother or bully approach won't get you anywhere," he stated. Instead, he advocates for fostering teamwork, mutual respect, and intellectual growth among staff. "If you invest in your staff and create a culture of togetherness, you build an organization that can withstand challenges and thrive." He emphasized the importance of leaders demonstrating ethical behaviour and creating systems that promote accountability and transparency. "If there's a culture of maladministration and no consequence management, ethics will never succeed," he warned. Ethics must also be demonstrated and reinforced. Govender believes that ethical behaviour starts with leadership. "If we as leaders are ethical, it will rub off on others," he explained. "But ethics must also be supported by systems and a culture of accountability."

Vish Govender's journey from a twelve-year-old boy inspired by the promise of democracy to Acting Municipal Manager of Newcastle Municipality is a testament to the power of resilience, education, and ethical leadership. Despite the challenges of local government, he remains optimistic about its potential to drive meaningful change. "Nothing is lost in local government," he concluded. "With the right leadership, systems, and commitment, we can turn the corner and restore trust in public institutions."

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Starting small but dreaming big** is one of the most important lessons. Govender's rise from a general worker to municipal manager underscores the importance of starting wherever opportunities arise. "I wasn't afraid to start at the bottom," he said. "It gave me a deep understanding of the processes and systems in government."
2. **Lifelong learning** has also been central to Govender's success. "Education gives you a competitive edge," he emphasized. "It enables you to make decisions based on science and pragmatism rather than emotion."

3. Another key lesson is that leadership is about **enabling others**. Govender’s participative management style highlights the value of empowering staff and fostering collaboration. “If you fail to understand the value of human intellect, you ultimately create a Titanic effect,” he warned.

“Education is for improving the lives of others and leaving your community and world better than you found it.” – **Vish Govender**

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 14th September 2021

Chapter 6

From Medical Doctor to Mayor: Dr Ntuthuko Mahlaba on Ethical Leadership in Local Government

Introduction

Dr Ntuthuko Mahlaba, former Executive Mayor of Newcastle Municipality and a medical doctor by profession, shares his journey from medicine into politics and his approach to governance. Dr Mahlaba shared his motivation for entering politics, the challenges he faced, and his unwavering commitment to ethical leadership and accountability. This chapter delves into key themes such as balancing administrative and political roles, addressing corruption, restoring public confidence in local government, and the lessons learned from his tenure as mayor.

Motivation for Entering Politics

Dr Mahlaba's interest in politics was shaped by his early involvement in student politics during high school and university, as well as his participation in trade union activities while working at a government hospital. "Local government has long been neglected, where just anyone could be sent there because they are popular," he explained. "It needs people who can strengthen the interaction between communities and government." As a medical doctor, he draws parallels between medicine and politics, noting that both fields involve improving people's lives. "In medicine, you see a patient in pain, and after treatment, they leave smiling. In politics, the same principle applies—changing the living conditions of our people by providing houses, clean water, sanitation, and electrification brings smiles to their faces. That's my motivation to serve."

Challenges in Local Government

Dr Mahlaba acknowledged that local government is highly politicized and often fraught with challenges. One of the key issues he highlighted is the need to balance the roles of the Municipal Manager (MM) and the Executive Mayor. “The Structures Act and the Systems Act clearly define our roles,” he explained. “While the MM reports to me, they are responsible for administrative decisions. Respecting these roles ensures accountability and professionalism.” However, he admitted that frustrations arise when political expectations clash with administrative processes. “As politicians, we want things done immediately, but we sometimes forget that there are processes to follow. This can cause delays and frustrations, especially when officials are slow to act.” This perceived lack of urgency from officials can be very frustrating, because politicians have a short life span (5 years). Another challenge is managing the tension between the political caucus and the municipal administration. “You must stick to principles and speak the truth, even to caucuses and officials,” he said. Drawing on his experience as a former chairperson of the African National Congress (ANC) in the region, he emphasized the importance of maintaining balance and ensuring that decisions are in the best interest of the municipality and the community.

Ethical Leadership and Accountability

Ethical leadership and accountability are at the heart of Dr Mahlaba’s governance philosophy. He believes that accountability must be accompanied by consequence management. “We have intensified consequence management without fear or favour,” he stated. “Regardless of political affiliation, we take action against wrongdoing.” He shared examples of officials who were dismissed for fraud and other misconduct, including a municipal manager and a senior official from his own political party. “It’s all about ensuring that things are done procedurally and according to the law,” he added.

Dr Mahlaba also acknowledged the low levels of public confidence in local government and emphasized the need to restore trust through transparency and effective service delivery. “The challenge has been a lack of accountability and

low work ethic,” he explained. “Municipalities receive grants and equitable shares, and these funds must be used in the best interest of communities. Politicians must also be honest and avoid overpromising what cannot be delivered within the budget.” He highlighted the importance of proper communication with communities to manage expectations and avoid unrest.

Addressing Corruption

Dr Mahlaba acknowledged that corruption is a pervasive challenge in local government, however he has taken a firm stance against it. “To keep the corruption devil away, you must intensify consequence management,” he asserted. He provided examples of how his administration has dealt with corruption, including prosecuting an official who overpaid herself using multiple bank accounts and recovering the stolen funds. “Zero tolerance for corruption is the only way to ensure accountability and ethical leadership,” he emphasized.

D. Ntuthuko Mahlaba’s journey from medicine to politics is a testament to his commitment to improving the lives of ordinary citizens. Despite the challenges of local government, he remains optimistic about its potential to drive meaningful change. By prioritizing ethical leadership, accountability, and effective service delivery, Dr Mahlaba has worked to restore trust in local government and address the needs of communities. His reflections serve as a stark reminder that leadership is about service, integrity, and the relentless pursuit of better living conditions for all. As he aptly concluded, “With the right leadership, systems, and commitment, we can turn the corner and restore faith in local government.”

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Respecting roles and processes to ensure effective governance.** “Understanding each other’s roles and consulting regularly helps navigate challenges.”
2. The need for **strong consequence management** to address misconduct and foster accountability. “If you don’t act against wrongdoing, you destroy officials and create problems for politicians.”

3. **Proper communication with communities** to manage expectations and build trust. “The more you deliver, the higher the demand,” he observed. “Proper communication is essential to explain how and when projects will be delivered.”
4. **Monitor contractors** to ensure timely and cost-effective project completion.

“With the right leadership, systems, and commitment, we can turn the corner and restore faith in local government.” – **Dr Ntuthuko Mahlaba**

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Published: 20th September 2021

Chapter 7

Coalition Governments: Insights from City Manager, Johann Mettler, and Former Executive Mayor, Clarence Johnson

Introduction

Coalition governance has become a defining feature of local government in South Africa, particularly in municipalities where no single political party secures a majority. Johann Mettler, a seasoned municipal manager, and Clarence Johnson, a former mayor, delve into the intricacies of coalition governments. This chapter unpacks the dynamics of coalition governance, examining its challenges, the factors contributing to instability and the lessons learned from both successful and unstable coalitions. The insights shared by Mettler and Johnson underscore the importance of leadership, trust-building, and clear boundaries between political and administrative roles in fostering effective coalition governance.

The Nature of Coalition Governance

Coalition governments are formed when no single political party secures a majority, necessitating partnerships to form a governing majority. Johann Mettler explains, “Parties making up at least a majority of the seats on offer enter into an agreement to co-govern with other political parties. The purpose of such an arrangement is to share political power between the coalition partners.” However, he cautions that the assumption of shared principles and objectives among coalition partners is not always realized in practice. Clarence Johnson reflected on his experience

in the Cape Winelands, where a successful coalition was built on shared principles and a commitment to public service. “We were committed to serve our people and deliver to our citizens and were able to utilize tools to build a shared vision guided by principles between the coalition partners,” he recalls.

Challenges in Coalition Governance

Coalition governments often face significant challenges, particularly when instability arises among partners. Mettler recounts his experience in Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, describing it as “a rough ride” marked by public disputes and instability. He explains, “Unstable coalitions pose particular challenges to the municipal manager and the administration. Effective and efficient government is absolutely dependent upon a fair degree of stability at both political and administrative levels.”

One of the key challenges is the blurring of lines between political and administrative roles. Mettler explains, “For the smooth running of coalition government you do need strong and decisive leadership from both the mayor and the municipal manager in their respective areas. If the blurring of the lines occurs, it is up to them to ensure the lines become less blurred.” The relationship between the mayor and the municipal manager is identified as a cornerstone of successful governance. Mettler stresses that this relationship must be based on “mutual respect, professionalism, good faith, and integrity.” Johnson adds that there should be “social distancing” between the mayor and the municipal manager, with no socializing or political interference in order to maintain professionalism.

Another challenge lies in managing the expectations of coalition partners and the public. Mettler highlights the importance of focusing on “the art of the possible,” explaining, “The main job of a municipal manager is to manage expectations and pursue what can happen within these circumstances.” He adds that unstable coalitions often lead to poor planning, budgeting, and execution, resulting in bad service delivery.

The Role of Governance Systems

The discussion also explores the appropriateness of governance systems in coalition contexts. Mettler criticizes the current mayoral executive system, arguing that it is better suited to majority governments. He suggests that the proportional executive committee (EXCO) system, used in provinces like KwaZulu-Natal, would be more democratic in coalition settings. “A system like that would be much more democratic because suddenly you will have a party that will have 40% of the vote and another one that has 45%, together making up 85% of the electorate,” he explained.

Coalition governance is likely to remain a prominent feature of South African local government in the coming years. While it presents significant challenges, the insights shared by Johann Mettler and Clarence Johnson highlight the potential for success when coalition partners are guided by shared principles, strong leadership, and mutual respect. As Mettler aptly concludes, “Good faith cannot be legislated, but it will go a long way in dealing with the petty issues that some coalitions end up squabbling about.”

Ultimately, the success of coalition governments depends on the ability of leaders to navigate the complexities of governance while prioritizing the needs of the citizens they serve.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Strong leadership and clear boundaries** between political and administrative roles. Mettler explains, “A municipality is like a train running on two tracks: the political track and the administrative track. Should those two tracks either converge or diverge, that train will derail.”
2. **Coalition partners must share common principles** and a vision for the term of office. “If it’s not based on principles then it is going to fail. It cannot be a coalition partner that has not got similar principles and vision for the five-year term.”
3. **Building trust among coalition partners** is another critical factor. He emphasizes the need for relationship-building, understanding each partner’s “hot buttons,” and establishing processes for consultation, dispute resolution, and conflict management.

“The relationship between the mayor and the municipal manager is key to the success or the failure of a municipality.” – **Johann Mettler**

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Published: 12th October 2021

Chapter 8

Roderick Williams Unpacks How the Overstrand Municipality is Institutionalizing Public Participation

Introduction

Public participation is considered the cornerstone of good governance and democracy. Roderick Williams, Director of Community Services at the Overstrand Municipality, unpacks the intricacies of institutionalizing public participation through ward committees. Williams shared the Overstrand Municipality's structured approach to public engagement, the challenges of navigating political dynamics, and the lessons learned from years of experience in local government. This chapter highlights the importance of inclusivity and accountability in fostering meaningful community participation.

The Role of Ward Committees in Public Participation

Ward committees serve as a vital link between citizens and local government. Williams describes them as “the direct voice of citizens into local government,” offering an opportunity for residents to raise concerns, provide input on municipal matters, and engage with council officials. He explains, “It is seen as a vehicle to promote good governance at local government sphere in terms of planning, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation of programmes and projects.” The Overstrand Municipality has institutionalized ward committees by ensuring that they operate within a structured framework. Williams elaborates, “We have a fixed cycle when they meet, so they know they meet prior

to portfolio committees and council meetings. Their input is evaluated by the ward councillor, who must apply his or her mind in council.” This systematic approach ensures that community voices are heard and incorporated into municipal decision-making processes. “We promote structured participation to make sure that the ward committee has their space within council’s affairs in terms of decision-making.”

Structured Public Participation

The municipality’s approach to community engagement is structured and systematic, ensuring transparency and accountability. Regular meetings are a key component, with ward committees convening monthly, following formal agendas supported by the administration. To keep residents informed, councillors are required to provide quarterly feedback through public meetings, maintaining an open line of communication between the government and the community. Additionally, a monitoring system is in place, which uses electronic tracking to record attendance, recommendations, and notifications, ensuring accountability and follow-through on commitments.

Importantly, the municipality integrates ward committees’ inputs into the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and budget processes, ensuring that community needs and priorities are reflected in municipal planning and decision-making. Williams explains the rationale behind this approach: “The outcome is important for me. The short-term objectives of ward committees are basic service delivery, while medium-term goals involve influencing the IDP and budget processes. The long-term success is measured by the community’s ability to see their needs addressed over a five-year period.”

Overcoming Political Dynamics

A common challenge in ward committee systems is the potential for political interference, where councillors may prioritize their political affiliations over community interests. Williams acknowledges this issue, stating, “The success also lies in the establishment. We do not allow political parties to be involved. We advertise for nominations from organisations, sectors,

and geographical blocks.” To ensure diversity and inclusivity, the Overstrand Municipality has strict rules that guide the composition of ward committees. Williams explains, “Our rules make sure that we must have at least three women on the ward committee.” By prioritizing diversity and prohibiting direct political party affiliation, the municipality minimizes the risk of ward committees becoming politically biased. The nomination and election processes are designed to be transparent and fair. Williams details, “We follow a secret ballot voting process. People vote in a booth and the results are counted and prioritized based on criteria such as diversity and gender equity. This minimizes the influence of cronies and ensures that the committee represents the broader community.”

Challenges in Public Participation

Despite the municipality’s success, challenges remain. One significant issue is the potential for ward committee members to use their positions as stepping stones for political ambitions. Williams notes, “You may have ward committee members that aspire to become councillors. They start to flex their muscles and differ with the councillor to gain community support for the next elections.” Another challenge is managing the robust nature of discussions within ward committees. Williams explains, “A ward committee is a consultative body, so they actually take minimal decisions. However, debates can become heated, especially on budget prioritization or minor projects. The key is to promote consensus rather than voting, which can create factions.”

The Overstrand Municipality’s approach to public participation offers a blueprint for other municipalities seeking to strengthen community engagement. By prioritizing structure, inclusivity, and accountability, the municipality has created a system that ensures community voices are heard and reflected in decision-making processes. As Williams concludes, “If you are serious about public participation, you need to look at what the outcomes will be and the impact. The community must see that the system works for them.” A well-structured participation system leads to better governance, increased public trust, and a more harmonious society.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Start with the basics and understand the legal framework.** “Familiarise yourself with the legal framework, interpret it in the interest of your local community, and develop rules that work for them,”
2. **A one-size-fits-all approach does not work.** “You take the legal framework and tailor-make it with your local conditions in the interest of your local community,” he explains. This approach ensures that participation systems remain relevant and responsive.
3. **Inclusivity is also crucial in creating representative ward committees.** Ensuring broad representation allows different voices to be heard, fostering a more democratic and equitable governance process. “Our rules ensure gender equity, youth involvement, and representation of vulnerable groups.”
4. **Structured cycles, reporting mechanisms, and monitoring systems help maintain accountability and sustainability.** “All these aspects promote proper institutionalization,” Williams notes. By embedding participation into the municipal framework, governments can ensure continuity and effectiveness beyond political transitions.
5. **Effectiveness of public participation should be measured by its outcomes and impact.** “The outcome is basic service delivery, while the impact is improved service delivery and less civil intolerance or action,” he explains.

“If you are struggling, go back to the basics first. Familiarise yourself with the legal framework, interpret it in the interest of your local community, and then develop rules, develop a system in consultation with your community that will work for them.” – **Roderick Williams**

Chapter 8

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Published: 16th November 2021

Chapter 9

Nomcebo Serrah Mhlanga's Path from Clerk to Municipal Manager of the Year

Introduction

Local government in South Africa is often characterized by its challenges and opportunities, with leaders navigating complex systems to drive efficiency and service delivery. Nomcebo Serrah Mhlanga, former Municipal Manager of Midvaal Municipality and the 2020 Municipal Manager of the Year, shares her journey, experiences, and lessons in local governance. This chapter highlights her reflections on leadership, the importance of clean audits, the dynamics of municipal systems, and the challenges faced by women in leadership roles.

The Journey into Local Government

Mhlanga's decision to transition from the private sector to local government was driven by her passion for South Africa and its potential. "I believe in South Africa. I believe that indeed South Africa is alive with possibilities, and I'm very patriotic," she explains. While her career began in the private sector at Standard Bank, where she experienced rapid career growth, she was drawn to local government because of its structured environment and the opportunity to make a lasting impact.

Reflecting on her early days in local government, Mhlanga shares, "I started at the bottom of the food chain and had to work my way up." She immersed herself in various departments, gaining hands-on experience in treasury, reconciliations, credit control, and valuation rolls. This comprehensive understanding of municipal processes enabled her to significantly improve revenue

collection, increasing it from a 3% collection rate to 48% within 18 months. “It was critical that I understood the policies and how each section links with each other,” she notes, underscoring the importance of building a solid foundation.

Clean Audits: A Measure of Good Governance

Mhlanga emphasizes the importance of clean audits as a reflection of good governance and accountability. She explains the four types of audit opinions: (i) disclaimer, (ii) adverse, (iii) qualified, and (iv) unqualified, and stresses that a clean audit indicates adherence to legislation and effective systems. “It gives the public assurance that you are doing the right thing,” she states. However, she cautions against equating clean audits with service delivery, noting that they are more about compliance than performance.

“A clean audit is not a measure of service delivery but an indication of adherence to legislation,” Mhlanga clarifies. She highlights the systemic challenges faced by municipalities, particularly those established post-2000, which often lack the institutional knowledge and resources of older municipalities. “For you to get to that [clean audit], you need to have your house in order. You need to have the right people in the right positions with the right qualifications doing what they are paid to do,” she explains.

Mhlanga underscores the importance of active citizenry in governance. She calls for greater public involvement, stating, “Government is me. If I don’t understand that I am government, then we’ve got the whole notion incorrect.” She emphasizes that both residents and officials share responsibility for maintaining clean streets and efficient services. By fostering a culture of civic engagement, local governments can become more responsive and effective in serving their communities.

Challenges in Local Government

One of the challenges in local government is the perception of irregular expenditure, which is often misunderstood. Mhlanga provides an example: “If a road is built for 18 million instead of 20 million, but the bidder’s municipal account was in arrears,

the entire expenditure is considered irregular.” She argues that this narrow interpretation creates a negative perception of local government and calls for a more developmental approach to auditing. “We need to have a serious conversation about this because it affects the image of the country,” she asserts.

Other challenges in local government, according to Mhlanga, are the lack of skilled personnel and effective systems. “You inherit a workforce that doesn’t understand local government,” she observes, pointing to the historical context of South Africa’s transition to democracy. She explains that during the establishment of local government, the country faced a shortage of qualified professionals, with most individuals coming from professions like teaching, nursing, or policing.

Women in Leadership

As one of the few women in local government leadership, Mhlanga acknowledges the challenges but also celebrates the resilience of women. “Women are the strongest people that I know,” she says, reflecting on the competing demands of professional and personal life. She rejects the notion of achieving equality with men, arguing instead that women often exceed expectations. “We serve in the same space, make decisions, and lead at a strategic level, all while maintaining that feminine touch,” she asserts. Mhlanga’s profile picture, a cartoon depicting a woman athlete running a race while navigating obstacles like a washing machine and household chores, captures the additional challenges faced by women. Despite these barriers, she believes women are more than capable of succeeding in leadership roles. “We are living proof every day that we have done it, we are doing it, and we’re still going to do it,” she concludes.

For Mhlanga, leadership is fundamentally about people. She highlights the role of teamwork in achieving success, stating, “You are as good as the people that you lead.” Effective leadership, she believes, involves motivating teams and aligning them with the organization’s strategic objectives. By fostering a collaborative environment, leaders can drive meaningful change.

As Mhlanga transitions to new roles outside local government, her continued contributions, including her research

on participatory budgeting, promise to leave a lasting impact on governance in South Africa. Mhlanga's journey offers valuable lessons for leaders in local government, beginning with the importance of spending time at the bottom.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Understanding processes from the ground up is essential for effective leadership.** “Sit your time through the process; it’s never wasted because it equips you for the next level in life,” she advises.
2. **Improved systems and strong leadership are the real keys to progress.** “It’s not the competency that’s going to change things; it’s improved systems, controls, and governance,” she explains.
3. **Balancing compliance with service delivery.** While clean audits are important, Mhlanga stresses that they must not come at the expense of effective service provision. “At the core of clean audits is serious adherence to performance management,” she notes.

“If you don’t sit your time through the process, you might have the qualifications, you might have the acumen, but you will lack the intrinsic knowledge that is going to keep you at the top.”

– Nomceba Serrah Mhlanga

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Chapter 10

Navigating Skills Development in Local Government with Ineeleng Molete

Introduction

Local government in South Africa serves as the primary interface between citizens and the state, grappling with significant challenges such as poor financial governance, low public trust, and limited opportunities for the youth. This chapter delves into the insights of Ineeleng Molete, CEO of the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA), whose vision for capacitating municipalities, addressing systemic issues, and fostering meaningful partnerships offers valuable lessons for transforming local government.

The Role of Leadership in Governance

Ineeleng Molete's journey into local government is marked by a commitment to service and a desire to effect meaningful change. Reflecting on his role, he states, "I wanted to use my professional skills to improve the local government area and ensure that people receive the right services and that their voices are heard." His leadership philosophy is rooted in accountability and trust, emphasizing the importance of leading by example. He adds, "Trust is the foundation of effective governance. Without it, we cannot expect our teams to perform at their best."

Challenges in Local Government

One of the most significant challenges in local government is poor financial governance, as highlighted by the Auditor-General's repeated findings of irregularities and the lack of clean audits in

municipalities. Molete reflects on this issue, stating, “Not a single municipality in the Free State consistently receives a clean audit, yet we spend significant resources in this area.” He emphasizes the urgent need to address these shortcomings by reducing reliance on external consultants and improving internal capacity.

To tackle this issue, Molete proposes a comprehensive three-point approach. First, he stresses the importance of training both officials and councillors, noting that it is insufficient to focus solely on municipal officials. “Councillors must understand financial principles infused with ethics and good leadership practices,” he asserts. Second, engaging unemployed graduates through internships and learnerships in municipal finance at NQF level 6 is crucial to assisting with financial management and bringing fresh perspectives into the system. “We need new ideas and energy in our municipalities,” he states. Finally, Molete highlights the necessity of collaborating with national partners, stating that LGSETA’s proposal to improve financial governance is receiving attention from National Treasury and international stakeholders. “Local government cannot tackle these challenges alone; we must seek multi-faceted partnerships,” he emphasizes.

Limited Youth Access to Opportunities

Another pressing issue is the lack of awareness among unemployed youth about opportunities in local government. Molete acknowledges, “The man in the street doesn’t know what the SETA does or what it offers.” He highlights the need to reach rural and marginalized communities, where access to information is severely limited.

Molete shares insights from his visit to Kwa-Nongoma, where he realized that rural youth do not have the same access to opportunities as their urban counterparts, particularly with regards to data and information accessibility. “We must bridge this gap,” he insists. To address this, LGSETA is focusing on several strategies. Strengthening social media campaigns is vital, as Molete emphasizes the need to enhance digital outreach and engagement to raise awareness among young people. “If we don’t adapt to the digital age, we risk losing a generation,” he warns.

Additionally, enhancing community radio engagements is crucial. Molete notes that while community radios exist, he has not been invited to share information about opportunities such as bursaries and internships. “We need to utilize every platform available to reach our youth,” he asserts. He has requested a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with all community radios to ensure structured collaboration and communication of opportunities to a broader audience.

Innovative Approaches to Skills Development

Molete emphasizes the importance of integrating literacy and numeracy skills into occupationally directed qualifications. He questions why foundational skills such as numerical abilities, language, and communication cannot be incorporated into existing learnerships, particularly those addressing critical issues like water management. “Our learners need to be equipped with both technical and essential skills to thrive in their roles,” he asserts. This integration ensures that workers acquire both technical and foundational skills necessary for their roles.

LGSETA has adopted a district development model to maximize the impact of its resources. Molete explains that the organization aims to avoid isolated projects in different districts and instead take an integrated approach to learning. “If we do an integrated approach, we shall make sure that we respond to the various challenges faced by our municipalities,” he states. By focusing on specific districts, LGSETA can measure the long-term impact of its interventions, ensuring that resources are efficiently allocated where they are most needed. Ineeleng Molete’s leadership at LGSETA reflects a pragmatic and inclusive approach to addressing the challenges in local government.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Integration of Skills Development Programs:** Molete emphasizes, “By the time you complete this learning intervention, you should be a more encompassing learner.”
- 2. District-Based Approach:** The district development model ensures that resources are concentrated where they are most needed and that interventions have a meaningful

impact. “If we do an integrated approach, we shall make sure that we respond to the various challenges faced by our municipalities.”

3. **Professionalization of Skills Development Facilitators (SDFs):** Molete advocates for the professionalization of SDFs and their inclusion in municipal council resolutions. “The role of skills development facilitators needs to be elevated.”
4. **Measuring Impact:** LGSETA is committed to evaluating the success of its programs, with Molete stressing the importance of strategic spending. “Each and every spending or commitment must have a strategy underneath it,” he notes.
5. **Leveraging Partnerships:** Collaboration with government agencies, academic institutions, and international partners can provide additional resources and expertise. Molete highlights the importance of teamwork, referencing a Tswana idiom: “If you have a combination of two or three people with you, then your job is going to be very easy.”

“We tend to politicise matters that do not need politics. We tend to get embroiled in our egos as various public servants and we lose the essence of our very own existence.” – **Ineeleng Molete**

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



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Chapter 11

Speaker Anton Coetzee Shares the Secrets to and Complexities of Keeping Order in Council

Introduction

Anton Coetzee is the longest-serving Speaker in South Africa's Overstrand Municipality with more than three consecutive terms spanning 15 years. Anton has gained a profound understanding of the complexities of local government. In this chapter he reflects on leadership, community engagement, and stability, highlighting the importance of building trust through effective governance and collaboration.

The Journey into Municipal Leadership

Anton Coetzee's career began as an apprentice motor mechanic, a path that later led him to business ownership. A turning point came when he listened to a radio broadcast advising listeners to invest in themselves, as personal investment yields the highest return. Inspired by this message, Anton decided to pursue higher education, despite the demands of working full time. He recalled, "When I told my wife I wanted to study, everyone thought I had gone mad. But ten years later, I earned my degree, sold my business, and became an attorney. That decision changed my life."

His academic journey culminated in a Master's degree from the University of Pretoria, where he conducted research on Section 62 appeals and governance frameworks. Reflecting on this experience, Anton explained, "The research for my Master's taught me about the nuances of local government—how oversight works, whose responsibilities are whose, and how these roles intersect. It was invaluable."

Understanding the Role of a Speaker

Anton served as Speaker of the Overstrand Municipality for 15 years, a role that he described as “far more complex than what legislation outlines.” While the official responsibilities include maintaining discipline among councillors, chairing council meetings, and ensuring lawful decisions, Anton emphasized the practical challenges of balancing objectivity with political dynamics. He noted, “The legislation says the Speaker must be objective, but in practice, it’s nearly impossible. As a member of a political party, you’re bound by caucus decisions, even if you don’t participate in caucuses during council meetings.”

Effective oversight, Anton explained, requires not only a thorough understanding of legislation but also the ability to identify when something is amiss. He credited much of his success to working alongside brilliant municipal managers who taught him valuable lessons about governance. “I worked with some of the most brilliant municipal managers in South Africa, and they taught me a lot about governance,” he shared. The Speaker’s role, he emphasized, is critical in maintaining order, fostering trust, and ensuring that decisions comply with the law.

Community Engagement in Local Government

Anton underscored the importance of community involvement in local government, pointing to Section 152 of the Constitution, which mandates the inclusion of the public in municipal affairs. He stressed, “The word ‘object’ in Section 152 signifies the fundamental reason for the existence of local government, rather than an aspirational goal. Involving the community is not something to strive toward; it is the very reason local government exists.” However, he acknowledged that the reality on the ground shows there is still a long way to go.

Mechanisms such as ward committees, audit committees, and Section 62 appeals are designed to facilitate public participation, but many municipalities struggle to make these tools effective. Anton noted, “It’s scary how many municipalities still don’t have internal rules to allow public motions. These basic frameworks are essential for fostering trust and collaboration between government and communities.”

Challenges in Local Governance

Local governance in South Africa faces significant challenges, including service delivery protests, hidden agendas, and intergovernmental complexities. Anton highlighted the importance of political stability and effective communication in addressing these issues. “When there’s instability in council,” he explained, “it erodes public trust. People lose confidence when they see dysfunctionality—whether it’s potholes, broken streetlights, or stormwater systems that don’t work.”

How Did Overstrand Achieve Success?

Overstrand Municipality has been a pioneer in ward committee governance, with structured rules and practices that ensure functionality and public participation. Anton credited administrative champions like Director Roderick Williams for refining rules and driving success. “Roderick was the administrative champion of ward committees in Overstrand. Together, we tweaked the rules to ensure they worked effectively,” Anton said.

Key innovations included limiting meeting durations to two hours to maintain public interest, ensuring councillors chair meetings to carry community inputs forward, and implementing rules that improved efficiency. “We found that when meetings ran too long, attendance dropped. By limiting them to two hours, we improved participation and efficiency,” Anton explained.

“We need to find mechanisms to truly listen to the members of our public. This is how legislation was designed, and it’s what we must strive to achieve,” Anton concluded.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Stability is Key to Public Confidence:** Political and operational stability fosters trust in local government. When councils are stable, both councillors and municipal staff can focus on delivering services effectively, which builds confidence among residents.
2. **Community Engagement is Vital:** Genuine efforts to involve the public in decision-making processes, through

mechanisms like ward committees and public consultations, ensure that governance reflects the needs and aspirations of the community.

3. **Adaptability Enhances Governance:** Municipalities must constantly refine their processes to address emerging challenges. Adaptability also involves integrating innovative practices, such as leveraging technology for better communication and data management.
4. **Leadership Requires Openness:** Effective leaders embrace diverse perspectives and are willing to adapt their views. Leaders must also be willing to admit mistakes and learn from them, ensuring continuous improvement in governance practices.
5. **Knowledge Sharing is Essential:** Knowledge hubs like SALGA provide municipalities with valuable insights and tools for improving governance. Sharing best practices across municipalities ensures that successful interventions can be replicated, fostering systemic progress in local government across the country.

“Involving the community is not something to strive toward; it is the very reason local government exists.” – **Anton Coetzee**

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 2nd March 2022

Chapter 12

Bonisiwe Klaas's 10-year Journey to Transforming Municipal Finance and Restoring Public Trust

Introduction

Public trust in local government in South Africa has reached critically low levels, often due to corruption, financial mismanagement, and inadequate service delivery. In this chapter, Ms Bonisiwe Klaas, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of Moretele Local Municipality, offers a compelling example of what is possible through ethical leadership, financial discipline, and citizen-centered governance. In her role, Ms Klaas led Moretele's journey toward financial reform, resulting in the municipality's first-ever unqualified audit opinion since its establishment in 2000.

Combating Corruption with Robust Controls

As an auditor by profession, Ms Klaas understands that financial controls form the bedrock of sound governance. "Controls are important," she emphasizes. "We focus on both preventative and detective controls to ensure financial integrity. If we cannot prevent corruption, we must at least be able to detect it early enough to minimize the damage."

To this end, Moretele Local Municipality established a Financial Disciplinary Board, as required under the Financial Misconduct Act, to investigate irregular spending and enforce accountability. The municipality also introduced compliance monitoring systems and ethical conduct frameworks to ensure strict adherence to financial regulations and maintenance of a culture of integrity.

Ms Klaas is clear that non-compliance comes in two forms: negligence and intentional misconduct. “It’s about ensuring compliance at all times to avoid corruption or perceived corruption,” she states. Ethical behaviour, she adds, is essential, not just in action, but in perception. “Conducting ourselves in an ethical manner and being perceived as ethical has helped us ensure that corruption does not impact service delivery to the people.”

A Commitment to Lifelong Learning

Central to Klaas’s leadership style is her belief in continuous learning, not only for herself but for her team. “You can always learn something from everyone,” she says. “No matter their education level, people have insights you may not have considered.” She creates space for learning by encouraging her staff to propose solutions before offering her own, fostering critical thinking and professional growth. “That allows them to think and gives me an opportunity to learn from them.” Klaas also remains up to date with the latest research, legislation, and trends in local government. “Continuous learning allows me to improve and adapt to the environment I’m exposed to,” she notes. For her, education is not just a personal value but an institutional imperative, something that must be embedded in municipal culture to translate learning into action.

Restoring Confidence in Local Government

The erosion of public trust in local government is a major concern, but Klaas believes it can be reversed through basic principles of good governance. “We must go back to basics. We need to remind our communities that they matter and that we are here to serve them.”

She explains that transparency is key, particularly when it comes to service delivery expectations. “If people ask for street lights on a 25-kilometer road and we can only deliver on 10 kilometres, we must explain why and show them that their needs matter.” Accountability, responsiveness, and clear communication form the cornerstones of restoring credibility. Even seemingly small actions such as arriving to work early,

completing tasks, and following up on community inquiries—can make a significant impact on public perception.

Transforming the Audit Opinion

Perhaps one of Ms Klaas’s most significant achievements is leading Moretele Local Municipality to an unqualified audit opinion in 2021—a first in over two decades. “It took us a good ten years of watching processes and putting systems in place to move from disclaimers to an unqualified audit,” she shares.

However, she believes transformation can happen faster with unified commitment. “With collective desire and willingness from the top, this could happen in three years.” Through proactive auditing and rigorous oversight of procurement, the municipality reduced irregular expenditure by 80% during the 2019/2020 financial year. “We started with the bigger tenders, ensuring every process was followed to the letter before appointments,” she explains. “By doing this, we reduced irregular expenditure drastically.”

Motivating Teams and Leading Through Challenge

Effective leadership, according to Klaas, includes building confidence within teams and fostering a culture of growth. “I always tell my team that I don’t have a problem with people making mistakes because it means you’re working. You learn from your mistakes and don’t repeat them in the next cycle.” She also promotes self-recognition as a tool for motivation. “Sometimes I can’t say ‘well done,’ but you must give yourself a pat on the back and know you’ve done well.”

Her leadership has proven vital in a municipality facing deeply rooted challenges, including limited revenue generation in a predominantly rural area. “The deeply rural nature of the municipality poses unique challenges,” she admits. Many residents cannot afford to pay for services, leading to budget shortfalls and project delays. “Service delivery backlogs, particularly in areas like water access, remain a constant struggle.”

Compounding these issues is the complexity of navigating the political-administrative interface. “When there’s willingness and alignment from the top, transformation can happen much quicker. But without that collective desire, progress is slow,” she says. Ms Klaas’s journey offers insightful and practical lessons for leaders in local government seeking transformation.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Corruption Prevention Requires Strong Controls:** Preventative and detective control systems are critical for financial integrity. “If we cannot prevent corruption, we must at least be able to detect it early enough to minimize the damage.”
- 2. Lifelong Learning Builds Effective Leaders:** Continuous education empowers decision-makers and nurtures problem-solving. “You can always learn something from everyone. No matter their education level, people have insights you may not have considered.”
- 3. Trust is Earned Through Accountability:** Transparency, follow-through, and open communication build public confidence. “We must go back to basics. We need to remind our communities that they matter and that we are here to serve them.”
- 4. Transformation Demands Collective Willpower:** Systemic change is accelerated when political and administrative leadership are aligned. As Klaas notes, “With collective desire and willingness from the top, transformation can happen much quicker.”
- 5. Empower Teams Through Recognition and Responsibility:** Klaas fosters a culture of growth by encouraging her team to propose solutions and learn from experience. “Mistakes mean you’re working,” she reminds them.

“Local government exists to serve communities. If we fail in that role, we undermine democracy itself.”

– **Bonisiwe Klaas**

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Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



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Chapter 13

SALGA President Bheki Stofile's Journey from Private Sector to Public Sector

Introduction

Bheki Stofile, President of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), acquired over 30 years of experience in the private sector before transitioning to public service. His journey into local governance reflects a deep commitment to community engagement, leadership, and systemic reform. This chapter explores his early influences, the challenges facing local government, the importance of stakeholder collaboration, his leadership philosophy, and his vision for a more professionalized and transparent municipal sector.

Early Influences and the Start of a Journey

Bheki Stofile's passion for local government and community service emerged from a desire to bridge gaps between leadership and public needs. His experience in the mining sector shaped his approach to governance, as his advocacy for mine workers taught him the importance of listening, negotiation, and public representation. "Representation is more than leadership—it is about ensuring that the voices of the people are heard and acted upon." As he transitioned into municipal governance, Stofile recognized the need for strong leadership that was rooted in active community participation.

Transition from the Private Sector

Having spent over three decades in the mining industry, serving on various boards and representing labour interests, Stofile

developed a strategic understanding of corporate governance and stakeholder engagement. In 2011, he was encouraged to join local government, believing his private-sector experience could help reform public administration. “I was driven by the belief that I could use my experience to make a positive impact.” His transition, however, was met with scepticism, as many questioned why he would leave corporate leadership for a sector facing immense challenges. Stofile saw this as an opportunity to apply his skills where they mattered most, remarking, “Mess is what I always want to deal with,” in reference to his passion for solving deep-rooted municipal inefficiencies.

Addressing the Challenges of Local Government

Stofile acknowledges that South African local government is in crisis, with low confidence levels, political interference, and service delivery issues. He believes that transforming municipalities requires a systematic approach grounded in collaboration between political parties, civil society, and government institutions. “We need to work together to address the systemic issues that plague local government.”

His approach views municipal administration as a structured system, where councillors, administrators, and the community must collaborate effectively. Drawing on corporate governance principles, he insists that municipalities should operate with the same level of accountability, performance expectations, and financial oversight as private entities. “Political parties must take full responsibility for their councillors.” By fostering accountability and strengthening leadership structures, Stofile aims to ensure municipal officials are held to the highest standards of governance and ethical service delivery.

The Importance of Community Engagement

For Stofile, community involvement is non-negotiable. He views local government as a system where councillors, administrators, and the public must engage meaningfully. He advocates for partnerships with civil society organizations and modern technology tools to enhance transparency. “Community engagement is essential for effective service delivery. We need to

ensure that the community's voice is heard and acted upon." His vision includes leveraging community radio stations and public forums to disseminate key governance updates, ensuring more accessible and interactive communication. "If people do not feel involved in governance, they disengage—and that is when service delivery fails."

Building Capacity and Professionalism

Stofile strongly believes in professionalizing local government by investing in continuous training and skill development for councillors and municipal officials. He asserts that capacity-building initiatives must be tailored to the unique governance needs of each municipality. "Professional development is crucial for improving governance. We need to invest in our people to ensure they have the skills to deliver services effectively." To achieve this, he champions collaboration between SALGA, the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), and the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA). These partnerships aim to build structured training programs that equip municipal leaders with necessary governance tools. "Competency must be the foundation of our leadership training programs—without skilled officials, reform is impossible."

Vision for the Future

Stofile envisions a highly professionalized local government sector, with increased financial allocation from the national fiscus, stronger interdepartmental cooperation, and better resource distribution. He emphasizes that service delivery must be rooted in community-driven needs rather than political manoeuvring. "My vision is to see local government operate efficiently and effectively, providing basic services and improving the lives of our community members."

His vision also includes greater transparency and accountability, ensuring municipalities are held responsible for their actions. He argues that trust in governance is built through integrity, transparency, and direct engagement with the public. "We cannot rebuild trust in local government unless we hold

ourselves accountable to the highest standards of service and transparency.” Stofile’s reflections serve as a guide for current and future leaders, demonstrating that transformational leadership in municipalities requires strategic thinking, stakeholder engagement, and unwavering dedication to public service.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Community Engagement:** Actively involving the community in the business of local government is essential for effective service delivery. “If governance is disconnected from the people it serves, it fails. Engagement is not an option—it is a necessity.”
2. **Professionalization:** Continuous training and development of councillors and municipal officials are crucial for improving governance. “A skilled workforce leads to better service delivery. We must invest in the development of our municipal leaders.”
3. **Collaboration:** Working together with political parties, civil society, and government institutions can address the challenges faced by local government. “Local government is a collective effort—true transformation only happens when leaders work together across sectors.”
4. **Transparency:** Enhancing transparency through partnerships and technology fosters trust and accountability. “We must ensure that governance is open, accountable, and accessible. Transparency strengthens democracy.”
5. **Resource Allocation:** Prioritizing resource allocation to areas of greatest need improves service delivery and community satisfaction. “Funds must be spent where they are needed most. Smart resource management drives service efficiency.”

“Community engagement is essential for effective service delivery. We need to ensure that the community’s voice is heard and acted upon.”

– **Bheki Stofile**

Chapter 13

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Published: 23rd March 2022

Chapter 14

Trevor Fowler Shares his Journey from Activist to City Manager of Johannesburg

Introduction

Prof. Trevor Fowler, the former City Manager of Johannesburg, was a key figure in resisting apartheid and has had an extensive career spanning over 30 years in local governance, infrastructure development, and public policy. His work has focused on community integration, long-term urban planning, and navigating governance complexities to create efficient municipal structures. This chapter delves into Fowler's governance philosophy, covering his journey into local government, the implementation of the 2040 strategy, the importance of stakeholder engagement, and lessons learned from his tenure.

Journey into Local Government

Prof. Fowler's entry into local governance began in Botswana, where he oversaw municipal infrastructure development. His work there laid the foundation for his understanding of urban planning and community engagement. His career took him to the U.S. and Canada, where he worked on state institutions and emergency management, which further enriched his approach to governance. Upon returning to South Africa, Fowler played a crucial role in establishing subnational governments, leading negotiations with apartheid-era municipalities to create inclusive local governance structures. He later served as Speaker of the Gauteng Legislature and MEC for Local Government, where he influenced critical governance reforms. "I was fortunate to work across multiple governance systems. That experience shaped my

understanding of policy implementation and community-focused leadership. Local government is where democracy becomes real—it's the level closest to the people, where decisions directly impact lives.”

The 2040 Strategy

As the City Manager of Johannesburg, Fowler spearheaded the 2040 Strategy, a long-term urban development vision aimed at economic growth, social transformation, and sustainable city planning. This strategy breaks down a 30-year vision into ten-year segments and further into five-year cycles, ensuring short-term actions align with long-term goals. “We needed to ensure that our short-term actions are aligned with our long-term vision.”

The strategy focuses on developing integrated communities where children have safe spaces, sustainable infrastructure that supports diverse populations, and a well-connected transport system that fosters accessibility and mobility. To effectively implement the strategy, Fowler ensured that the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) remained linked to broader city objectives, guaranteeing that municipal decisions contributed to Johannesburg’s long-term sustainability. “Strategic planning cannot be done in isolation—it must be linked to actionable frameworks that guide decision-making. A city cannot thrive if its planning is only reactive—we must anticipate future needs and ensure development aligns with the vision we set today.”

Creating Integrated Communities

One of Fowler’s most ambitious projects was the “Corridors of Freedom,” designed to reverse apartheid-era spatial divisions and create unified, accessible urban spaces. These urban mobility corridors aimed to provide safe and efficient public transport, improve access to employment opportunities, and develop affordable housing near economic centers. “If we want lasting change, we must build solutions with the people they impact, not impose them from above.” Despite initial resistance from taxi owners and certain community groups, the project achieved partial success by incorporating stakeholder-led business models,

such as a transportation company run by taxi owners. Fowler emphasized the importance of stakeholder involvement, stating that “Involving stakeholders is crucial for the success of any project.” His ability to negotiate, mediate, and collaborate helped overcome resistance, ensuring that the Corridors of Freedom project served the community’s interests. “Infrastructure must serve social justice—it must connect, uplift, and create new opportunities for people.”

Balancing Regulation and Innovation

Fowler’s governance approach emphasized clear objectives and strategic navigation within regulatory constraints. His key governance initiatives included the introduction of free basic water and electricity to address inequality, revenue-generation models that balanced municipal funding with service delivery, and customer-centric municipal services, including open days for direct community engagement. “Customer service is a key aspect of effective governance. If municipalities fail to serve the people efficiently, trust erodes.” By prioritizing resident needs and fostering transparent service delivery, Fowler strengthened public trust in Johannesburg’s municipal governance. “People should not have to fight the system to receive basic services—government must be accessible and accountable to the people it serves.”

Leadership Style

Fowler’s leadership was collaborative rather than authoritative, focusing on empowering stakeholders and municipal employees. His principles of leadership centered on empowering team members to prioritize collective achievement, navigating political-administrative dynamics with sensitivity, and ensuring policies benefitted all constituents rather than favouring political supporters. “Leadership is about serving the community, not just the party. Good leadership is not about commanding—it is about inspiring, persuading, and guiding people toward a shared goal.” His ability to mediate political complexities while remaining focused on governance priorities was critical to his success. He emphasized that “A city manager must implement policy within

legal frameworks, ensuring governance remains unbiased and service-driven.”

Vision for the Future

Looking ahead, Fowler stresses the importance of elected officials serving communities rather than political agendas, fostering competition rather than adversarial politics, and focusing on outcomes rather than rivalries. He highlights the need to balance service provision with revenue collection, ensuring municipal sustainability without excluding poor communities. “My vision is to see local government operate efficiently and effectively, providing basic services and improving the lives of our community members. We must create cities that work not just for today’s residents but for future generations. That is the true test of sustainable governance.”

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Integrated Planning:** Long-term strategies must be broken into manageable short-term goals to ensure practical implementation. “A vision without actionable steps remains an idea. We must convert aspirations into structured plans.”
2. **Community Integration:** Projects like the “Corridors of Freedom” help integrate historically divided communities and improve access to services. “Urban spaces must be designed for inclusivity, ensuring everyone has access to opportunities.”
3. **Balancing Regulation with Innovation:** Clear governance objectives and stakeholder collaboration can drive innovation within regulatory constraints. “Working within regulations doesn’t mean abandoning innovation—it means being strategic.”
4. **Prioritizing Customer Service:** Municipal efficiency depends on resident satisfaction—transparent service delivery builds public trust. “Municipalities must serve the people effectively—that’s the foundation of good governance.”
5. **Collaborative Leadership:** Empowering teams and communities rather than imposing directives fosters inclusive governance.

Chapter 14

“Leadership succeeds when people feel heard, valued, and involved in shaping decisions.”

– **Prof. Trevor Fowler**

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Chapter 15

Implementing the Municipal Staff Regulations: Insights from Nokozuko Matolengwe and Mandisa Sibeko

Introduction

South Africa’s municipalities transitioned into a new era of governance following the enforcement of municipal staff regulations that standardized administrative procedures, recruitment processes, performance evaluations, and skills development. In this chapter, Nokozuko Matolengwe, Human Resource Manager at Drakenstein Municipality, and Mandisa Sibeko, Training Manager, share insights into how they tackled the change and the plans they put together to ensure broad stakeholder buy-in. As Matolengwe put it, “these regulations were not just about ticking boxes—they were about changing how municipalities operate and how employees grow within them.”

Understanding the New Municipal Staff Regulations

“These regulations clarify long-standing uncertainties and set clear expectations,” Matolengwe explained, adding that standardized processes would eliminate the unpredictability that had previously existed in municipal administration. One of the biggest structural shifts required municipalities to submit any changes in their organizational structures to the Municipal Council for approval, ensuring transparency and preventing unilateral staffing decisions.

Recruitment protocols were also redefined, with departmental heads, rather than HR, becoming responsible

for chairing selection panels, ensuring that those who work directly with new employees were involved in selecting the right candidates. Additionally, municipalities must now fill vacant positions within six months, an adjustment aimed at reducing operational disruptions and improving service delivery continuity. The regulations also introduced a revised five-point rating scale for performance management, replacing the previous three-point system, and set a standard weighting for Key Performance Indicators and core competencies, ensuring more precise employee evaluations. Coaching and mentorship, once secondary considerations, became essential components of leadership development. “We are working hard to ensure that every aspect of HR aligns with these new requirements,” Matolengwe emphasized, recognizing that this transition was not just about administrative changes—it was about strengthening professionalism and fostering accountability.

Preparing for Implementation

Knowing that compliance alone was not enough, Matolengwe and Sibeko focused on deep institutional preparation. Their approach was structured, involving internal learning, leadership engagement, and union collaboration to ensure a smooth transition.

Rather than approaching implementation separately, they initiated a peer learning strategy, ensuring that every HR manager studied all the chapters of the regulations in depth before moving forward. “We divided responsibilities, but we all studied the regulations in full,” Sibeko explained, acknowledging that this approach allowed them to refine their strategies collectively and identify potential gaps before presenting them to senior management.

When they finally engaged senior managers, they anticipated challenging discussions. Questions around workplace adjustments, recruitment autonomy, and leadership roles in training development were expected. “Our managers asked tough questions, and that helped us refine our approach,” Matolengwe recalled. “By the time we engaged unions, we were prepared for their concerns, and that made all the difference.”

Navigating Challenges in Implementation

Even with thorough preparation, obstacles emerged during implementation, requiring creative solutions and effective communication.

One of the most significant adjustments in the regulations was the shift in recruitment responsibilities, transferring the chairing of selection panels from HR to department heads. While some municipalities struggled with resistance, Drakenstein's managers embraced the transition. "We didn't face pushback—everyone was eager to understand their roles," Matolengwe noted, highlighting that this change ultimately improved ownership and engagement in hiring decisions. "Managers now feel more involved in recruitment, rather than seeing it as an HR function alone."

The regulations placed a strong emphasis on managers becoming coaches and mentors, rather than just supervisors of daily tasks. Recognizing the need to assess their readiness, Matolengwe and Sibeko led a municipality-wide survey, examining how well line managers understood and applied coaching methods. "The transition to coaching and mentorship is significant," Sibeko explained. "It's not just about oversight—it's about actively developing staff. Managers must step up as leaders in training and capacity-building."

Unions often approach municipal changes with caution, fearing hidden political motives. However, Matolengwe and Sibeko proactively engaged unions, ensuring early discussions, transparent communication, and clear answers. "The unions weren't hostile once we explained things properly," Matolengwe noted. "Their primary concern was making sure staff understood the changes before implementation, so we prioritized direct engagement."

To prevent misinformation, they developed staff communication summaries, providing plain-language breakdowns of the regulations, ensuring every employee had access to accurate details ahead of the implementation deadline. "We made sure employees received straightforward, precise information," Sibeko explained. "Clarity is key in managing transitions like this."

Matolengwe and Sibeko's strategic leadership ensured smooth compliance, integrating structured learning, senior management engagement, union trust, and talent development initiatives into their implementation plan. "This isn't just about following rules—it's about municipalities becoming more structured, more strategic, and better equipped to serve communities," Matolengwe emphasized.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Internal Collaboration Strengthens Implementation:** "We divided responsibilities, but we all studied the regulations in full. This helped us refine our compliance strategies together," Sibeko shared.
- 2. Transparency Builds Trust with Unions:** "The unions wanted reassurance that these regulations were not politically motivated. Our transparency made all the difference," Matolengwe said.
- 3. Managers Must Transition to Coaching and Mentorship:** "Managers need to stop just overseeing work—they must actively help employees grow. That's what the regulations require now," Sibeko explained. The shift from supervision to coaching and mentoring requires ongoing training and support.
- 4. Implementation Requires Continuous Follow-Up:** Regulatory compliance does not end at implementation. "We will continue monitoring departments to ensure coaching and mentoring aren't just theoretical—they must be fully implemented," Matolengwe affirmed.
- 5. Regulations Reinforce Long-Term Institutional Development:** "Our previous talent management strategies are now officially recognized, giving us a clear framework for ongoing leadership development," Sibeko concluded.

"Without a well-defined implementation plan, compliance becomes reactive rather than proactive.

Strategic preparation is the key to success."

– Nokozuko Matolengwe

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Chapter 16

Leadership and Work–Life Balance with Municipal Manager, Geraldine Mettler

Introduction

In this chapter Geraldine Mettler, Municipal Manager of Stellenbosch Municipality, shares her journey from being a legal advisor to becoming one of the few female municipal managers in South African local government. Her story highlights resilience, the importance of work–life balance, the complexities of navigating political–administrative relationships, and her steadfast commitment to ethical governance. Mettler’s reflections offer invaluable lessons on leadership, professionalism, and the transformative power of local government.

Early Influences and Pathway to Local Government

Mettler’s journey into local government began unexpectedly during her postgraduate studies in law, when she explored inter–governmental relations. This academic exposure ignited her passion for local government, as she recognized that “if you want to make a change in people’s lives, it has to happen at local government because that is where service delivery happens and that is where you can really change people’s lives.” Transitioning from her role as a legal advisor in the Premier’s Office, she embraced the opportunity to join local government during the early 2000s, a transformative period marked by the establishment of a new local government dispensation. Reflecting on her decision, Mettler emphasized she never regretted her choice despite the demanding nature of the role, as it provided “a sense

of achievement, a sense of purpose, and after all that is what one wants in life.”

Challenges in Local Government

Mettler candidly acknowledges the demanding nature of municipal management, especially as a woman balancing family and professional responsibilities. She identifies this as a significant barrier for women, noting the role “really requires you to be available 24 hours a day because crises, disasters happen any time of night and day.” She emphasizes the importance of self-care and maintaining balance, stressing that women “need to know how to strike the balance between family life and work life and that we need to look after ourselves as women.”

Navigating the political-administrative relationship has been another major challenge. Mettler emphasizes clear role clarification and mutual respect as essential components for success, stating that “it’s all about relationships, trust, and vision,” and highlighting the necessity of sharing “the same belief system, ethics, moral compass, and principles.” She stresses the importance of establishing clear boundaries early on, particularly regarding political interference versus legitimate oversight, firmly stating, “there can only be one administrative head ... interference is never good. I was very strict from the very beginning ... I’m not going to allow for political interference in my administration.” Stellenbosch, known for its significant wealth disparities, presents unique challenges. Mettler emphasizes the importance of delivering consistent, quality services to all demographics, balancing big business demands with community needs. She insists on “making sure that you deliver quality service no matter who it is and also making sure that you meet developmental goals underpinned by good governance and effective consultative processes.”

The Role of Education and Continuous Learning

Mettler’s educational background in law significantly shaped her approach to governance and ethical leadership. Both she and the executive mayor share legal training, reinforcing their commitment to lawful decision-making and ethical standards.

She notes: “both of us come from a legal background, we approach things from that point of view. You will never do something that is against the law, and that is the principle that works for us.” She emphasizes continuous learning as critical, particularly in understanding governance frameworks, role definitions, and compliance requirements.

Leadership and Ethical Governance

Mettler’s leadership philosophy is deeply rooted in integrity, professionalism, and ethical governance. She highlights several critical principles:

Integrity and Principle-Based Decision Making: Mettler underscores the importance of clearly defining non-negotiable principles early in her tenure, noting that “on your principles you never compromise; on issues you can compromise.”

Professionalism and Political Neutrality: Mettler emphasizes her role as a professional administrator, not a political employee, firmly stating, “I am a professional person foremost, and I implement the mandate of whoever is in power at any point in time.”

Clear Role Clarification and Accountability: She established strict guidelines to distinguish oversight from interference, ensuring accountability and efficiency within the municipality. She highlights the importance of this clarity, noting that “every single councillor commits to those principles, if you transgress those principles, it will lead to disciplinary charges against you.”

Future Directions and Personal Reflections

Reflecting on her tenure, Mettler expresses a strong preference for continuing her career within a category B municipality, emphasizing the direct impact such roles have on communities. She firmly believes that “ultimately this is where service delivery happens ... this is where the tyre hits the tar and where you can clearly see the impact.” She remains committed to fostering good governance, effective service delivery, and sustainable development, envisioning continued contributions at the local government level. Mettler’s journey from legal advisor to

successful municipal manager exemplifies the transformative potential of local government leadership. Her reflections provide invaluable insights for current and future leaders dedicated to making meaningful differences in their communities.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Establish Clear Boundaries Early:** Defining roles, responsibilities, and non-negotiable principles from the outset is essential. As Mettler emphasizes, on “issues you can compromise but never on principles.”
2. **Balance Personal and Professional Life:** Effective leadership requires maintaining a healthy balance between work demands and personal well-being. Mettler advises women to “strike the balance between family life and work life.”
3. **Professionalism and Ethical Governance are Paramount:** Upholding professionalism and ethical standards ensures credibility and effectiveness. As Mettler asserts, “once you compromise your ethics, it’s compromised for life, protect it like gold.”
4. **Political Neutrality and Role Clarity:** Maintaining neutrality and clearly defining political oversight versus interference safeguards administrative integrity. Mettler emphasizes, “I implement the mandate of whoever is in power at any point in time... interference is never good.”
5. **Responsive and Inclusive Service Delivery:** Delivering equitable, quality services to diverse communities fosters trust and sustainability. Mettler stresses the importance of “making sure that you deliver quality service no matter who it is,” alongside responsive governance.

“You can compromise on issues but never on principles.” – **Geraldine Mettler**

Chapter 16

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Chapter 17

Rethinking Development Agencies with Ashraf Adam

Introduction

In this chapter Ashraf Adam, former CEO of the Nelson Mandela Bay Development Agency (MBDA) and a seasoned expert in public administration, explores the role of development agencies in South African municipalities, their inherent contradictions, and their potential for addressing socio-economic challenges. Drawing from decades of experience in activism and local government, Adam provides a critical analysis of municipal inefficiencies, political dynamics, and the limitations of current economic development strategies.

Ashraf Adam's Journey in Local Government

Adam's passion for community development and governance reform began at the age of 13 when he became involved in activist movements. His journey into local government was shaped by a pivotal moment while in detention, where he first learned about town planning—a profession that would later define his career. "While in detention, I discovered town planning. I pursued a degree in it, completed a Master's, and eventually worked in consultancy. But I realized that true change could only happen within the state, not outside of it." In 2013, Adam formally joined local government, working with various municipalities before leading the MBDA. His career has been dedicated to integrating urban planning, governance, and economic development to create sustainable cities.

The Purpose and Value of Development Agencies

Development agencies exist to address municipal inefficiencies and create independent, agile governance structures. Their setup includes independent boards appointed by municipal councils rather than by mayors or city managers. They report directly to the council, ensuring political neutrality in their operations. Additionally, their procurement processes allow for greater flexibility, enabling faster implementation of development projects. “Municipalities are constrained by rigid bureaucracies. Development agencies, while also subject to procurement rules, can execute projects more efficiently.”

Key Advantages of Development Agencies

Adam highlights several major benefits of development agencies. First, they offer community-driven leadership by involving local business leaders, activists, and professionals, ensuring development aligns with real community needs. Second, their flexibility and agility allow them to fast-track projects without being hindered by lengthy municipal procurement delays. Finally, they integrate various development initiatives, combining social, economic, and environmental projects into holistic programs. The MBDA, for example, has worked to revitalize Helenvale, a community plagued by poverty and crime, using multi-sectoral development approaches to address its challenges.

Leadership at the Nelson Mandela Bay Development Agency

Adam’s tenure at the MBDA was marked by efforts to stabilize the institution, enhance strategic focus, and redefine its role beyond traditional construction projects. “The MBDA was stumbling when I joined. My goal was to provide stability and transform it into a real development agency—one that focuses on people, not just infrastructure.” Under his leadership, the agency expanded its focus to include psycho-social development initiatives, youth and women empowerment programs, sports infrastructure and community engagement projects and breaking cycles of violence through local interventions. Adam advocates for development

agencies as tools for integration, arguing that they can bridge municipal silos and foster long-term community engagement.

The Inherent Contradictions of Development Agencies

One of the biggest challenges is the power struggle between municipal managers and development agency CEOs. “Municipal instability translates into agency instability. The more unqualified municipal officials are, the more they feel threatened by agencies that actually deliver results.” Political interference often leads to hostile relationships between agency leadership and municipal executives, board instability as councils struggle to maintain coherence, and efforts to undermine agencies to protect municipal power structures.

Adam argues that municipalities opting for development agencies is an admission of their own governance failures. “If municipalities were functioning properly, would they need development agencies? Probably not.” Development agencies exist because municipalities struggle with integration, long-term planning, and service delivery. Rather than fixing municipal governance, cities often outsource development initiatives to agencies—a short-term solution that does not address systemic dysfunction.

Adam’s reflections on development agencies, LED units, and spatial economic policies offer a critical review of South African governance. While development agencies have proven effective, their existence signals municipal dysfunction. Likewise, LED strategies and township economy policies fail to address systemic economic exclusion. “We need to rethink what it means to be South African in the 21st century. If we fix our society, we fix our economy.” Adam remains committed to activism and governance reform, emphasizing that transforming local government will shape South Africa’s future.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Development Agencies Can Deliver Faster, But They are Not Conflict-Free:** Development agencies offer flexibility and integration, but political interference often undermines

their potential. Development agencies must navigate political tensions to succeed.

2. **LED Units are Ineffective and Should be Replaced:** Adam argues that economic growth stems from functional municipal governance, not from ineffective LED units. “Economic development happens when governance works—not when municipalities create more policies.”
3. **Public Trust is Built through Accountability:** When municipalities are transparent about resource allocation, track their progress, and actively engage with communities, public confidence is strengthened. “We must go back to basics. We need to remind our communities that they matter and that we are here to serve them.”
4. **Townships Must be Integrated into the Mainstream Economy:** Adam cautions against policies that isolate townships economically. “Treating townships as separate economies reinforces apartheid-era segregation. We must rethink our approach.”

“Development agencies are necessary in South Africa, but they are inherently flawed. We must ask ourselves: Are municipalities opting for them because they cannot fulfil their own mandates?”

– **Ashraf Adam**

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Chapter 18

Leading the Biggest District Municipality in South Africa with Municipal Manager, Chris Fortuin

Introduction

In this chapter the Municipal Manager of Namakwa District Municipality in South Africa's Northern Cape, Chris Fortuin explores his journey into local government, the unique characteristics of the Namakwa District, and the role of district municipalities in supporting local governance. Chris also shares insights into managing challenges like political-administrative dynamics, fostering economic development, and maintaining good governance practices.

Journey into Local Government

Chris Fortuin's journey into local government began in 2011 when he joined Namakwa District Municipality as a senior manager responsible for economic development and tourism. Before this, he worked for the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA), specializing in Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprise (SMME) development. Chris explained how his initial focus on SMMEs gave him a narrow view of development. However, joining the district municipality broadened his perspective, allowing him to explore the multifaceted role of local government in economic and social development. "When I got involved in local government, it opened up a whole new world for me," he said. "I realized that local government is not just about water and electricity services—it's also about playing a developmental role." Fortuin became the acting municipal manager in 2014 and was officially appointed to the position in 2015. His passion for development and his belief

in the transformative power of local government have kept him dedicated to this challenging yet rewarding field.

The Role of a District Municipality

Fortuin explained the distinction between district and local municipalities, emphasizing that district municipalities (Category C) primarily provide support to local municipalities (Category B). While local municipalities are responsible for delivering basic services like water, electricity, and land provision, district municipalities focus on shared services, capacity building, and strategic support. Key responsibilities of the Namakwa District Municipality include: environmental health services – managing public health issues across the district; tourism services – promoting the district’s unique attractions; support for financial management – assisting local municipalities with annual financial statements and improving audit outcomes; and shared services – establishing a municipal support unit to reduce reliance on external consultants.

Good Governance and Clean Audits

Fortuin highlighted the district’s clean audit and its efforts to help local municipalities improve their financial management. “We’ve established a municipal support unit to assist CFOs and financial units in local municipalities,” he said. “Our goal is to move municipalities from qualified to unqualified audit opinions and beyond.” He emphasized the importance of internal audits, qualified personnel, and robust systems in achieving clean audits. Namakwa District Municipality has invested in developing internal auditors through rigorous training programs and has encouraged local municipalities to adopt similar practices. However, he acknowledged the challenge of changing perceptions. “Sometimes municipalities see us as a ‘big brother’ coming in to monitor them,” he said. “We’ve worked hard to break down that perception and show that we’re here to assist, not to police.”

Managing Political-Administrative Dynamics

The relationship between political leadership and administrative management is a critical factor in local government. Fortuin

admitted that this dynamic can be challenging, especially when conflicts arise between municipal managers and councils. “The key is to have a stable council,” he explained. “A good speaker and mayor can make all the difference.” To foster stability, Namakwa District Municipality conducts orientation sessions for new councillors, focusing on the code of conduct, council policies, and the distinction between political and administrative roles. Fortuin highlighted the importance of diplomacy and communication. “I’m more of a diplomat,” he said. “That has helped me manage the political-administrative interface over the years.”

Fighting Poverty and Driving Economic Development

He acknowledged the criticism often directed at municipalities that achieve clean audits but fail to improve living conditions. “Clean audits don’t put food on the table,” he admitted. To address poverty and unemployment, Namakwa District Municipality has focused on: youth development – partnering with SETAs and mines to provide learnerships and apprenticeship programs; social labour plans – collaborating with mines to ensure they invest in the broader district, not just the immediate mining areas; job creation – using Expanded Public Works Program (EPWP) funds and other grants to create employment opportunities; and grant utilization – ensuring that allocated funds are fully spent on service delivery projects. Chris emphasized the long-term nature of these initiatives, particularly youth development. “Investing in our youth is not a one-day solution,” he said. “But we believe it will pay off in the long run.”

Chris Fortuin’s insights highlight the complexities and opportunities of local governance in South Africa.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Collaboration is Key:** Building strong relationships between district and local municipalities fosters trust and improves service delivery.
- 2. Invest in People:** Youth development and skills training are essential for long-term economic growth.

3. **Focus on Basics:** Robust systems, qualified personnel, and daily accountability prevent corruption and inefficiency.
4. **Leadership Matters:** Effective communication, compassion, and self-reflection are critical for navigating the challenges of local governance.
5. **Adaptability is Essential:** Flexibility and diplomacy help manage political-administrative dynamics and other challenges.

“Local government is a brutal space, but it’s also incredibly rewarding. If we focus on the basics, invest in our people, and work collaboratively, we can create meaningful change.” – **Chris Fortuin**

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Chapter 19

Municipal Manager, Luvuyo Mahlaka, on Achieving Excellence in Local Governance

Introduction

In this chapter, municipal manager of the Winnie Madikizela-Mandela Local Municipality in the Eastern Cape, Luvuyo Mahlaka, delves into the realities of governing a rural municipality in South Africa, where challenges such as service delivery backlogs, limited resources, and disinformation campaigns threaten the ability to build trust with communities. Mahlaka shares his personal journey into local government, reflects on the successes and challenges of his municipality, and offers valuable insights into the importance of ethical leadership and transparency in governance.

Early Life of Luvuyo Mahlaka

Luvuyo Mahlaka was born and raised in a rural village in the Eastern Cape, where he grew up as one of six children in a household deeply rooted in education and community values. “My parents always emphasized that education is the key to success,” Mahlaka shared. “They believed that knowledge was not just for personal advancement but also for uplifting the entire community.”

Growing up in a rural area, Mahlaka experienced firsthand the challenges of living without access to basic services such as clean water, electricity, and proper roads. These experiences instilled in him a desire to make a difference. “I knew from a young age that I wanted to contribute to changing these conditions,” he said. Mahlaka’s early exposure to the inequalities of apartheid South Africa also shaped his understanding of governance. “We

saw how decisions made at higher levels of government directly affected our daily lives,” he explained. “That realization stayed with me and ultimately guided my career choices.”

Mahlaka’s academic journey began at a local primary school and continued at a mission high school, where he excelled despite the limited resources available to rural schools during apartheid. After completing high school, he pursued a Bachelor’s degree in Public Administration at the University of Fort Hare, an institution renowned for producing some of South Africa’s most prominent leaders.

“Fort Hare was a transformative experience for me,” Mahlaka recalled. “It was there that I began to understand the broader implications of governance and the role of leadership in addressing inequality.” After graduating, Mahlaka initially embarked on a career in education, working as a teacher and later as a school principal. While he found fulfilment in shaping young minds, he felt a growing pull toward governance. “Education was my first love, but I realized that I could make a bigger impact by addressing the systemic issues affecting our communities,” he explained. This realization led him to local government, where he began his career as a part-time councillor in the late 1990s. Over time, he transitioned into a full-time role, eventually rising to the position of Municipal Manager.

Governance Challenges

The Winnie Madikizela-Mandela Local Municipality, located in the north-eastern part of the Eastern Cape, is a predominantly rural area with a rich history and significant challenges. The municipality was renamed in honour of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, a struggle icon and advocate for social justice, who was born and raised in the region. “Our municipality is unique in many ways,” Mahlaka explained. “We are dealing with the dual challenge of honouring our historical legacy while addressing the pressing needs of our community.”

Mahlaka identified several key challenges that his municipality faces:

- **Service Delivery Backlogs:** “Many of our communities still lack access to basic services like clean water, electricity, and

sanitation,” Mahlaka explained. “These are fundamental rights, and addressing these backlogs is our top priority.”

- **Disinformation Campaigns:** Mahlaka highlighted the growing issue of disinformation, which undermines trust in local government. “False narratives spread quickly, especially on social media, and they can erode the progress we’ve made,” he said.
- **Capacity Constraints:** Recruiting and retaining skilled professionals in rural areas is a persistent challenge. “We often lose talent to urban municipalities that can offer better salaries and career opportunities,” Mahlaka noted.
- **Financial Management:** Limited budgets and competing priorities make effective financial management a constant struggle. “We have to stretch every rand to ensure that we deliver services while remaining financially sustainable,” he added.
- **Community Expectations:** “People expect immediate results, and while we share their urgency, systemic change takes time,” Mahlaka said.

The Anti-Disinformation Project

One of the most innovative initiatives undertaken by Mahlaka’s municipality is the Anti-Disinformation Project, which aims to counter false narratives and rebuild trust between the municipality and its residents. “We realized that disinformation was not just a nuisance; it was a threat to governance,” Mahlaka explained. “We needed a proactive strategy to address it.”

The project includes several components:

- **Community Engagement:** Regular town hall meetings are held to address residents’ concerns and provide accurate information about municipal projects and policies.
- **Social Media Monitoring:** The municipality actively monitors online platforms to identify and respond to disinformation in real time.
- **Transparency Initiatives:** Detailed reports on municipal projects and expenditures are published to promote accountability and build trust.

- Educational Campaigns: Workshops and public awareness campaigns are conducted to educate residents about the dangers of disinformation and how to verify information. “The goal is to create an informed citizenry that can engage constructively with local government,” Mahlaka said.

Luvuyo Mahlaka’s story is a powerful reminder of the challenges and rewards of serving in local government. As the Municipal Manager of the Winnie Madikizela–Mandela Local Municipality, he has demonstrated resilience, innovation, and a deep commitment to his community.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **The Importance of Community Engagement:** “You cannot govern effectively without involving the people you serve,” he said.
2. **Resilience in Leadership:** “Leadership is about staying the course, even when the odds are against you,” Mahlaka noted.
3. **The Power of Collaboration:** Partnerships with NGOs, businesses, and other government entities are essential for success.
4. **Transparency and Accountability:** “Building trust requires openness and a commitment to ethical leadership,” he added.
5. **The Role of Information:** Countering disinformation is critical for maintaining public trust in local government

“Local government is the heartbeat of service delivery. It’s where real change happens, and I am proud to be part of that process.” – **Luvuyo Mahlaka**

Chapter 19

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Chapter 20

The Nexus between Clean Audits and Service Delivery with Chrissy Dube

Introduction

In this chapter, Chrissy Dube, Program Head of Governance at Good Governance Africa (GGA), shares her insights on the critical link between clean audits and effective service delivery, the tools used to measure governance performance, and the importance of ethical leadership in local government. Through her work, Chrissy emphasizes the need for accountability, transparency, and collaboration between the public and private sectors to improve governance outcomes.

The Journey into Governance

Chrissy Dube's journey into governance began with her passion for public policy. "I'm a strong advocate for public policy because I believe it shapes and frames the way states are governed," she explained. "The trickle-down effect of good public policy is seen in the day-to-day decisions that affect citizens. If we get policy right, then the everyday lives of citizens will improve." Her alignment with Good Governance Africa was a natural fit. "Good Governance Africa is a Pan-African organization that focuses on enhancing the state of governance in African countries."

Understanding Governance and its Building Blocks

Governance is a term often used but rarely understood in its entirety. At Good Governance Africa, we believe governance is about who gets what, when, and how. It's about the equitable distribution of resources in a transparent and accountable manner." Chrissy emphasized two fundamental building

blocks of governance:: “One of the core pillars of governance is accountability. It’s about ensuring that those in power are answerable for their actions and decisions,” she explained. “Equally significant is transparency. It’s one thing to be accountable, but it’s another to involve citizens and keep them informed about how things are being done. Transparency fosters trust and ensures that governance is inclusive,” she added.

Measuring Governance Performance: The Governance Performance Index (GPI)

Good Governance Africa produces an annual report that evaluates the performance of municipalities across South Africa. This flagship product, known as the Governance Performance Index (GPI), ranks municipalities based on their governance effectiveness. “The GPI is a tool for all stakeholders, including municipalities themselves, to assess how local government is performing,” Chrissy explained. “We use three key clusters to rank municipalities: administration, planning and monitoring, and service delivery.” Chrissy provided an overview of how Good Governance Africa collects and analyses data to evaluate municipal performance. “We use readily available data from sources like the Auditor General, National Treasury, and Statistics South Africa,” she explained. For specific research projects, GGA conducts on-the-ground investigations to address governance challenges. “

The Challenges in Local Government

Dube highlighted that while local government often has sufficient plans in place, the lack of implementation remains a critical issue. “The issue often boils down to inadequate capacity,” she explained. She elaborated on two major capacity challenges. Many municipalities struggle to function effectively due to vacant critical roles. “Many municipalities have critical administrative and financial positions that remain vacant,” she said. “Even when positions are filled, the individuals may lack the necessary skills to perform their duties effectively,” she added.

Ethical Leadership: The Key to Good Governance

Dube emphasized that good governance is not determined by which political party is in control but by the quality of leadership. “It all boils down to ethical and accountable leadership,” she said. She also addressed the rise of coalition governments in South Africa. “Coalitions are becoming more predominant, and they require parties to act in the public interest rather than self-interest. Governing parties—whether single or coalition—must learn from one another and prioritize the needs of citizens,” she explained.

Dube acknowledged the self-serving nature of many political parties but stressed the importance of advocacy. “Organizations like Good Governance Africa exist to enlighten political parties about their responsibility to serve the public. Without citizens, there would be no voters and no parties in power. It’s critical that authorities practice informed decision-making based on research and data,” she said.

Beyond Research: Practical Interventions

Good Governance Africa doesn’t stop at research. The organization also has an intervention arm that focuses on capacity building. She highlighted the importance of funding in enabling these interventions. “Our intervention and consultancy division relies on funding to carry out capacity-building initiatives. When we have the resources, we can make a tangible difference in improving governance outcomes,” she explained. Dube’s insights underscore the critical link between clean audits and effective service delivery. Through her work at Good Governance Africa, she emphasizes the importance of accountability, transparency, and ethical leadership in building a more equitable and functional governance system.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Governance is about People:** Governance ultimately revolves around ensuring that citizens’ needs are met through equitable resource distribution. “At its core, governance is about who gets what, when, and how. It’s about ensuring that

resources are distributed equitably and that citizens are at the centre of decision-making.”

2. **Accountability and Transparency Go Hand-in-Hand:** Accountability ensures responsibility, while transparency fosters trust and inclusivity in governance processes. “Accountability ensures that leaders answer for their actions, but transparency ensures that citizens are informed and involved in the process. Both are essential for trust and good governance.”
3. **Capacity Gaps Must Be Addressed:** Addressing unfilled roles and skill gaps is critical to improving the performance and effectiveness of municipalities. “Unfilled positions and skill gaps in municipalities hinder service delivery. Building capacity through training and support is critical to improving governance outcomes.”
4. **Research Drives Change:** “Data and research are powerful tools for advocacy and informed decision-making. They provide the foundation for interventions that improve governance and service delivery.”

“Good governance isn’t just about ticking boxes. It’s about creating systems that serve citizens and ensuring that resources are distributed fairly and transparently.” – **Chrissy Dube**

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Chapter 21

Municipal Manager, Advocate Hanlie Linde, and the Call to Serve Communities

Introduction

Advocate Hanlie Linde is the municipal manager of the Bergrivier Municipality on the west coast of South Africa. As one of a handful of female municipal managers, Linde shares her passion for local government, her journey into leadership, and her commitment to transforming communities through ethical leadership and participatory governance. This chapter highlights her vision for social cohesion, practical action, and the transformative power of partnerships in local government.

The Bergrivier Municipality is located on the west coast of the Western Cape, encompassing nine towns. Bergrivier Municipality has consistently ranked among the top 10 municipalities in South Africa in Good Governance Africa's performance audits. Linde remarked, "We've been number three before, and in the last 10 years, we've consistently been in the top 10. It's a testament to the passion and dedication of our three partners: the administration, elected officials, and the public." Linde likened these partners to the three legs of a potjie pot, stating, "If any one of those legs is missing, the food will land on the ground. In Bergrivier, we believe that where these three partners meet seamlessly, magic happens."

The Journey into Local Government

Advocate Hanlie Linde's career in local government spans over 25 years. "I learned my why early in life—to change communities. That's my purpose in life, and local government is the best place to

achieve that.” Reflecting on her journey, she shared, “I work in the administration of local government as a professional municipal manager registered by the Institute of Local Government Managers (ILGM). My purpose is to change communities for the better through social cohesion and practical action.”

Public Participation: A Core Strategy

Bergrivier Municipality’s success is rooted in its robust public participation strategy. Linde explained, “We divide the public into wards, each with an active ward committee consisting of representatives from various sectors. Twice a year, the mayor and I meet with leaders from different sectors, including churches, schools, sports councils, and youth organizations.” This participatory approach ensures that the community’s voice is integrated into the municipality’s vision and strategy. Linde added, “If the public comments on any council matter, it becomes an item in front of the full council. If the council cannot take the public’s input into consideration, they must provide a valid reason. This ensures transparency and accountability.”

Innovative Practices in Community Engagement

Advocate Hanlie Linde has implemented several innovative practices in Bergrivier Municipality to foster community engagement and strengthen the relationship between the municipality and the public. These practices go beyond traditional public participation methods and actively involve the community in shaping policies and addressing challenges. Linde emphasizes the importance of listening to the community and integrating their feedback into decision-making processes. She explained, “We don’t just take note; we actively listen and act on what the public tells us. Equal partners listen to one another, and the more voices involved, the better the solutions we create.” This approach ensures that community inputs are not merely acknowledged but are transformed into actionable policies and programs.

Ward Committees for Grassroots Participation

Each ward in the municipality has an active ward committee consisting of representatives from various community sectors.

These committees serve as a bridge between the municipality and the grassroots, facilitating communication and ensuring that local needs are prioritized. Linde explained, “Ward committees are essential for grassroots participation. They allow us to understand the unique challenges and opportunities in each ward and tailor our strategies accordingly.”

The municipality serves a diverse population with varying needs and interests. Linde shared, “Balancing the needs of different sectors—youth, elderly, cultural groups, and more—requires careful planning and inclusive strategies.” Ensuring accountability and transparency in municipal operations is critical but challenging. Linde emphasized, “We must constantly demonstrate that we are acting in the best interests of the community and that every decision is made with integrity.” To empower the community and encourage participation, Bergrevier Municipality conducts educational and awareness campaigns about the role of local government and the importance of public input. Linde explained, “Many people don’t understand how local government works or the impact their input can have. By educating the public, we empower them to take an active role in shaping their communities.” Advocate Hanlie Linde’s reflections provide valuable lessons for local government practitioners:

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Active Public Participation:** Engaging the community as equal partners fosters trust and accountability. Linde shared: “Listening actively and acting on public input strengthens the relationship between the municipality and the community.”
2. **Value-Driven Leadership:** Ethical and servant leadership rooted in clear values is essential for navigating challenges. Linde remarked, “Knowing your purpose allows you to handle any obstacle with resilience.”
3. **Innovative Resource Management:** Creativity and innovation in resource allocation can help overcome funding constraints. Linde stated, “We must find ways to do more with less while prioritizing community needs.”
4. **Transparency Builds Trust:** Demonstrating accountability and transparency in decision-making is crucial for gaining

public confidence. Linde explained, “The public must see that their input leads to tangible actions and outcomes.”

5. **Inclusive Strategies:** Addressing the diverse needs of communities requires inclusive planning and collaboration with leaders from various sectors. Linde shared, “Bringing everyone to the table ensures that no one is left behind.”

“Listening actively and acting on public input strengthens the relationship between the municipality and the community.”

– **Adv. Hanlie Linde**

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Chapter 22

Redefining Leadership with Municipal Manager, Mandla Mnguni

Introduction

Mandla Mnguni is the municipal manager of Steve Tshwete Local Municipality in Mpumalanga, South Africa. In this chapter Mnguni shares his unique leadership philosophy, which he describes as strategic leadership rather than traditional management. His journey into local government, spanning decades, highlights his resilience, institutional knowledge, and innovative thinking.

The Journey into Local Government

Mandla Mnguni's journey into local government began in his youth, driven by a curiosity about municipal operations. He recalls a formative meeting with the town secretary of Mkhuzi Local Municipality in 1989, which sparked his interest in governance. "I wanted to understand what municipalities actually do," he said, reflecting on his early fascination with local government structures during a time of segregation and inequality.

After completing high school, financial constraints delayed his studies, but he eventually earned a degree from the University of the North. Starting his career as a records clerk, Mnguni worked his way up through various administrative roles, gaining a deep understanding of municipal operations. By the early 2000s, he had transitioned into leadership roles, serving as a corporate services director and later as deputy municipal manager.

Reflecting on his career progression, Mnguni stated, "I started right at the bottom. That's why I know almost everything. This journey has given me a profound understanding of the inner workings of local government. Every step taught me something

valuable about how municipalities function and the challenges they face.” His experience of rising through the ranks gave him a unique perspective on the systemic issues within local government, including administrative inefficiencies, labour relations, and the importance of institutional memory in driving change. “Local government isn’t just about managing paperwork or enforcing policies; it’s about understanding the people you serve and making decisions that impact their daily lives,” he explained.

Steve Tshwete Municipality: Context and Challenges

Steve Tshwete Local Municipality, located in Mpumalanga, has faced significant challenges in recent years, including labour unrest, community protests, and service delivery disruptions. When Mnguni returned to the municipality in 2023, it was in a state of instability, with employees on strike and essential services halted. The unrest had eroded trust between the municipality, its employees, and the community, creating a volatile environment that required immediate intervention. “The council needed someone who understood the institution’s history, its strengths, and its weaknesses. I was appointed because of my long-term association with the municipality and my ability to bring people together.”

Innovative Practices in Leadership and Governance

Mnguni describes himself as a participatory leader who empowers his team to take ownership of their work. “I trust my team to continue meetings and make decisions even in my absence,” he said. “They understand the vision of the municipality and know what is expected of them.” By fostering a culture of trust and collaboration, Mnguni ensures that his team feels empowered to contribute to the municipality’s goals. This participatory approach not only improves efficiency but strengthens accountability and morale among employees. “When people feel part of the solution, they perform better and take pride in their contributions,” he explained.

Strategic over Managerial Focus

Distinguishing between management and leadership, Mnguni emphasized his role as a strategic leader. “I am not a manager. My focus is on long-term planning and aligning the municipality’s operations with its strategic goals,” he explained. This approach has allowed him to address immediate challenges while laying the groundwork for sustainable development. Mnguni’s emphasis on strategy reflects his belief that municipalities must move beyond day-to-day operations and focus on creating a vision for the future. “Managers implement tasks, but leaders envision tomorrow. Municipalities need both, but without leadership, they cannot evolve,” he noted.

Conflict Resolution and Labor Relations

Upon his return, Mnguni prioritized resolving labour disputes that had paralyzed the municipality. “When I arrived, the staff was on strike,” he recalled. “Through dialogue and understanding, we’ve resolved about 80% of the issues, including job grading and evaluations. The remaining challenges are being finalized with SALGA.” Mnguni’s ability to mediate and resolve conflicts highlights his interpersonal skills and commitment to fostering a positive work environment. “You cannot dictate peace; you must negotiate it. Labour relations are about mutual understanding, not authority,” he said.

Mandla Mnguni’s leadership at Steve Tshwete Local Municipality exemplifies the impact of strategic thinking, participatory governance, and institutional knowledge in local government.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Participatory Leadership is Key:** Mnguni’s leadership style emphasizes collaboration and trust. “I trust my team to continue meetings and make decisions even in my absence,” he said. “They understand the vision of the municipality and know what is expected of them.”
- 2. Strategic Thinking Drives Long-Term Success:** Mnguni’s focus on long-term planning has been instrumental in

addressing immediate challenges while preparing for sustainable growth. “I am not a manager. My focus is on long-term planning and aligning the municipality’s operations with its strategic goals,” he explained.

3. **Conflict Resolution Requires Dialogue and Understanding:** Mnguni’s ability to mediate labour disputes highlights the importance of open communication. “Through dialogue and understanding, we’ve resolved about 80% of the issues,” he noted.
4. **Service Delivery is the Backbone of Governance:** Restoring essential services has been central to Mnguni’s leadership philosophy. “Service delivery is the backbone of any municipality,” he emphasized.
5. **Transparency Builds Public Trust:** Mnguni believes that transparency is essential for restoring public confidence. “Transparency is everything. People need to see that we’re working for them, not against them,” he said.

“You don’t fix a municipality by reacting—you fix it by strategizing. You must be forward-thinking but grounded enough to deal with present challenges.”

– **Mandla Mnguni**

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 4th March 2023

Chapter 23

Sol Roets on Integrating Private Sector Efficiency in Local Government

Introduction

Sol Roets is the Learning and Development Manager at Emfuleni Municipality in the Gauteng Province. This chapter delves into the challenges of integrating private sector efficiency into the highly regulated environment of local government. Roets shares his insights on navigating bureaucracy, changing organizational culture, and the pivotal role of knowledge management and training in driving institutional success.

The Journey into Local Government

Sol Roets's career began in the private sector, where he worked as a business development consultant for various institutions. His exposure to international best practices in places like Australia, Germany, and the Far East shaped his understanding of effective organizational systems. "I saw how things are done overseas," Roets explained. "It gave me a sense of what could work and what might not work for us in South Africa."

However, the extensive travel required by his private sector role took a toll on his family life. "I was away for seven, sometimes eight months a year," he recalled. "I had to stop being selfish and consider my family." This shift led him to local government, where he was tasked with developing a learning and development structure for Emfuleni Municipality. "When I arrived, there was no cohesive approach to skills development," Roets stated. "Every department was doing its own thing, with no central reporting or strategy." Over time, Roets built Emfuleni's learning and

development framework from the ground up. “There was nothing when I started,” he said. “It took a bit of blood and sweat, but now we have a system that works.”

Challenges in Local Government

Transitioning from the private sector to local government presented significant challenges for Roets. He described the stark differences between the two environments as “like chocolate and cheese, day and night.” “In the private sector, the speed at which you can do things is incredible,” Roets remarked. “There’s no red tape. Creativity and innovation thrive because you can make decisions quickly.” In contrast, local government is heavily regulated, which often stifles innovation. “You have to jump through four or five tables just to start a small project,” he explained. “It’s frustrating, but you learn to navigate the system.”

Organizational Culture

Roets initially struggled to adapt to the laissez-faire culture of local government. “There’s no urgency, and results seem incidental rather than the purpose of any activity,” he observed. “When I first arrived, I called myself a change agent. I thought I could set the world on fire and inject some private sector mentality.” While he achieved significant progress, he also faced resistance. “I created a lot of enemies, but I was fine with that,” he said. “Over time, I adjusted my approach and learned to work within the system.”

Knowledge Management

Roets highlighted the lack of structured knowledge management in local government as a critical issue. “Knowledge management is still a foreign concept in most municipalities,” he said. “With the exception of metros like Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni, smaller municipalities don’t have dedicated knowledge management systems or departments.” At Emfuleni, knowledge management happens passively, if at all. “It’s something we need to address,” he emphasized.

Despite these challenges, Roets implemented several innovative practices to transform Emfuleni’s approach to learning and development:

Roets centralized all training budgets and processes, ensuring a cohesive and strategic approach to skills development. “I stopped all decentralized training and required managers to go through my department,” he explained. This allowed for better oversight, accountability, and alignment with the municipality’s goals.

To change the mindset of managers, Roets conducted workshops and outreach programs. “I spent the first year constantly communicating with managers,” he said. “I wanted to understand their views on upskilling employees and explain my vision for skills development.” These workshops fostered collaboration and helped managers see themselves as HR functionaries responsible for their teams’ growth.

Roets developed and implemented policies to guide learning and development across the municipality. “There were no policies when I arrived,” he noted. “Now we have a framework that ensures consistency and accountability.”

Sol Roets’s strategic approach to learning and development has transformed Emfuleni Municipality, creating a cohesive framework that supports capacity building and institutional growth. Roets’s experiences offer valuable insights for local government practitioners, especially in addressing systemic issues and fostering innovation:

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Adaptability is Key:** Roets emphasized that success in local government requires flexibility and the ability to adjust strategies to fit the unique challenges of a highly regulated environment. “You have to learn to navigate the jungle,” he said, referring to the complex layers of policies and approvals.
- 2. Collaboration Drives Change:** Roets highlighted the importance of building relationships with managers to foster a shared vision for skills development. “Managers don’t always see themselves as HR functionaries,” he explained. “By engaging with them, I helped them understand their role

in upskilling their teams and aligning with the municipality's broader goals.”

3. **Centralization Enhances Accountability:** By centralizing all training budgets and processes, Roets created a streamlined system that ensured accountability and strategic alignment. “When everything goes through one department, you can track spending, measure outcomes, and ensure consistency,” he noted.
4. **Knowledge Management is Critical:** “Without knowledge management, municipalities lose valuable insights and experience when employees leave,” he said. He called for dedicated knowledge management units to ensure continuity and innovation in local government.
5. **Leadership is About Influence, Not Authority:** Roets’s ability to influence managers and employees, despite initial resistance, highlights the importance of soft skills in leadership. “You can’t force people to change,” he explained. “You have to inspire them, show them the benefits, and bring them along on the journey.”

“Managers are HR functionaries. They play a critical role in upskilling their teams and driving organizational success.” – **Sol Roets**

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 9th March 2023

Chapter 24

Harvesting Knowledge in Municipalities with Pearl Maponya and Isaiah Engelbrecht

Introduction

This chapter delves into the challenges of implementing knowledge management strategies at the municipal level, the importance of organizational buy-in, and the innovative practices that Tshwane Municipality has adopted to ensure knowledge retention and sharing. Pearl Maponya and Isaiah Engelbrecht from the knowledge management directorate highlight the transformative potential of knowledge management in addressing systemic inefficiencies and driving sustainable development.

About Pearl Maponya and Isaiah Engelbrecht

Pearl Maponya serves as the Director for Knowledge Management in the City Strategy and Organizational Performance Department, while Isaiah Engelbrecht heads the Innovation and Knowledge Management Division in the same department. Both are deeply committed to leveraging knowledge as a strategic asset for enhancing municipal performance and service delivery. Pearl describes knowledge management as the lifeblood of municipal governance, emphasizing its role in preserving institutional memory and ensuring that valuable knowledge is shared across departments. She explains, “For us to plan and make decisions, we rely on the wealth of knowledge and information that the city creates and co-creates with its partners. This knowledge needs to be nurtured, managed, and preserved to ensure that we don’t lose our organizational intelligence.” Pearl emphasizes, “Knowledge management is not just about preserving information; it’s

about transforming our operations and creating value for the community.” Engelbrecht views knowledge management as a tool for preventing knowledge loss and frustration caused by the departure of experienced staff. He states, “With a workforce of over 20,000 people, the average length of experience in the city is about 15 years. It’s important to know what we have in the form of knowledge and ensure it’s not lost when people leave.”

What is Knowledge Management?

They define knowledge management as the systematic process of capturing, preserving, and sharing knowledge within an organization to achieve its goals. This includes managing both tacit knowledge (personal, experience-based knowledge) and explicit knowledge (documented information). Engelbrecht explains: “In any organization, there’s a wealth of knowledge—both tacit and explicit. If it’s not managed appropriately, organizations can’t leverage its value, leading to frustration and knowledge loss. That’s why we need strategies, frameworks, and processes to manage knowledge effectively.” Maponya adds, “Knowledge management is critical for planning, decision-making, and preserving our organizational intelligence. Without it, we lose our ability to serve citizens effectively and improve their quality of life. It’s not just about what we know internally but also about the knowledge we co-create with our partners.” Both Maponya and Engelbrecht emphasize that knowledge management is a foundational element of municipal governance. Maponya notes, “It’s about ensuring that the knowledge created gets shared so that the organization can achieve its goals and improve performance.”

The Five-Year Knowledge and Information Management Strategy

Tshwane Municipality has adopted a five-year Knowledge and Information Management Strategy and Implementation Roadmap to address the challenges of knowledge loss and inefficiency. However, they acknowledge that the real challenge lies in ensuring that the strategy is not just another document that collects dust. Engelbrecht explains, “When we developed the

strategy, we included a monitoring and evaluation plan to track progress and prioritize interventions annually. This ensures that the strategy is implemented effectively and remains relevant to the municipality's needs." Maponya emphasizes the importance of organizational buy-in, noting that the strategy was approved by the mayoral committee in 2021. She says, "We took a conscious decision to do roadshows with different departments to create awareness and demystify knowledge management. We wanted to show them how it adds value to their work and the organization as a whole."

Knowledge Harvesting and Sharing

One of the most critical aspects of Tshwane Municipality's knowledge management efforts is knowledge harvesting. Maponya explains, "By 2026, the municipality will lose over 1,240 employees to retirement, many of whom hold critical positions. It's essential to capture their knowledge before they leave to prevent disruption and knowledge gaps." The municipality has implemented several initiatives to address this challenge:

These projects focus on documenting the expertise and experiences of retiring employees to ensure continuity and institutional memory. Pearl notes, "We've partnered with departments to identify key knowledge areas and create systems for capturing and preserving this information. It's about ensuring that the knowledge doesn't walk out the door with the person."

Tshwane Municipality hosts regular webinars on critical topics such as waste management and service delivery. These webinars provide a platform for knowledge sharing among employees, community members, and external stakeholders. Isaiah explains, "We see innovation as the process of turning knowledge into value. The municipality collaborates with academic and research institutions, such as the National School of Government, to enhance its knowledge management capabilities. Pearl shares, "We've conducted capability assessments and participated in knowledge management conferences to learn from best practices and improve our interventions."

Challenges

Despite their successes, there have been several challenges in implementing knowledge management at the municipal level. Tshwane municipality's knowledge management team consists of only four members, making it difficult to implement all the interventions outlined in the strategy. Maponya notes: "Human capacity issues are a major challenge. We have to prioritize our efforts and focus on the most critical areas." While the municipality has made progress in creating awareness, some departments remain sceptical about the value of knowledge management. Engelbrecht explains: "It's a continuous effort to engage departments, demystify knowledge management, and demonstrate its impact on service delivery."

Improved Service Delivery

By leveraging knowledge as a strategic asset, Tshwane Municipality has addressed systemic inefficiencies and improved service delivery to citizens. Maponya explains: "For instance, our efforts in knowledge harvesting have ensured that critical expertise in areas like infrastructure maintenance and public health is retained and applied effectively. This has led to tangible improvements in service delivery and citizen satisfaction." Pearl Maponya and Isaiah Engelbrecht's work in Tshwane municipality highlights the transformative potential of knowledge management in municipal governance. The Tshwane journey offers valuable lessons for municipalities and organizations seeking to implement knowledge management.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Knowledge is a Strategic Asset:** "Knowledge is the foundation of everything we do. It drives our ability to plan, make decisions, and improve the quality of life for citizens. Without it, we lose our organizational intelligence," said Maponya
2. **Organizational Buy-In is Crucial:** Isaiah explains, "Creating awareness and demystifying knowledge management is essential for building support. We've seen that when departments understand its value, they are more willing to collaborate and contribute."

3. **Collaboration Enhances Impact:** Engelbrecht shares: “We’ve partnered with universities, research institutions, and community members to co-create solutions. These collaborations bring fresh perspectives and resources that enhance our knowledge management efforts.”
4. **Knowledge Harvesting Prevents Loss:** Maponya underscores: “With over 1,240 employees retiring by 2026, capturing their knowledge is urgent. We must ensure that critical expertise doesn’t walk out the door.”
5. **Innovation Turns Knowledge into Value:** Engelbrecht explains: “Innovation is about turning knowledge into value. By involving communities and stakeholders, we’ve piloted projects that address real challenges and deliver tangible results.”

“Knowledge management is not just about preserving information—it’s about transforming our operations and creating value for the community.”

– Pearl Maponya

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Published: 25th March 2023

Chapter 25

The Municipal Institute of Learning and the Annual Learning Exchange Conference with Fezile Njokweni

Introduction

The Municipal Institute of Learning (MILE), an initiative of the eThekweni Municipality, has emerged as a leading model in knowledge management and municipal capacity development. At its core, MILE fosters excellence in service delivery by promoting innovation, strategic partnerships, and continuous learning among local governments. This chapter brings together insights from Fezile Njokweni, Director at MILE, and reflections from the Annual Municipal Learning Exchange Conference, offering a holistic understanding of how learning and collaboration can transform local governance in South Africa.

About Fezile Njokweni

Fezile Njokweni, Senior Manager at MILE, has been a committed public servant in the local government sphere since 1999. Raised in Harding, KwaZulu-Natal and trained in social sciences and town planning, his journey began as a community development officer and progressed to Director of Technical Services before joining MILE. “Being in local government means you’re hands-on with the community, making a real difference,” he explains. Now leading MILE’s knowledge management and innovation efforts, Njokweni plays a pivotal role in shaping how municipalities learn and improve.

The Municipal Institute of Learning (MILE)

Established in 2009, MILE was conceived as a platform to showcase eThekweni Municipality's achievements and share best practices in key service areas such as water, sanitation, and waste management. "Our goal is to position eThekweni as a centre of learning and sharing, fostering excellence in service delivery," Njokweni asserts. Drawing inspiration from international models, MILE set out to create a dynamic space where municipalities can learn from each other through capacity building, strategic planning, academic partnerships, and global collaboration. Its five core pillars are:

- **Capacity Enhancement:** Through targeted training, workshops, and seminars, MILE builds the skills of municipal staff and leadership. "We are not just training for the sake of it; we are preparing people to tackle complex governance challenges head-on," Njokweni explains.
- **Strategic Planning:** MILE supports municipalities in developing practical, goal-driven strategic plans. "When municipalities have a clear vision and roadmap, the impact on communities is transformative," he emphasizes.
- **Academic Collaboration:** Working closely with universities, MILE integrates research into governance practices. "Our academic partners ground us in evidence-based solutions. It's not just theory; it's knowledge translated into impact," he adds.
- **Global Partnerships:** MILE's connections to international bodies enable the exchange of innovative ideas. "We adapt global practices to fit our South African realities," says Njokweni.
- **Knowledge Management:** At the heart of MILE's approach is the organization and dissemination of data to enhance governance. "Knowledge, when accessible and actionable, becomes a powerful tool for transparency and accountability," he affirms.

Challenges in Implementing Knowledge Management

Despite its successes, MILE's journey has not been without hurdles. A significant initial challenge was staff resistance to change, especially regarding new technologies. "Change can be intimidating, especially when it involves new systems," Njokweni notes. To overcome this, MILE focused on extensive training and mentorship. "We had to equip staff not just technically but psychologically, helping them see technology as an ally, not a threat," he shares. Technological adaptation demanded a shift in organizational culture. "Fostering a culture of innovation is not automatic; you must create it deliberately," Njokweni says. Communication played a critical role. "We communicated clearly and consistently about what the changes entailed and how they would benefit both the staff and the community." Community engagement was also crucial. "Our initiatives had to be inclusive and accessible to all demographics," he states, highlighting MILE's commitment to testing and feedback mechanisms to ensure relevance.

The Annual Municipal Learning Exchange Conference

Since 2013, the Annual Municipal Learning Exchange Conference has stood as a key instrument in MILE's knowledge-sharing mission. "We have been having knowledge management learning exchanges since 2013," explained a MILE representative. This annual gathering brings together officials, academics, and civic actors to exchange experiences, foster innovation, and collectively tackle challenges in local governance.

The conference promotes knowledge management as a people-focused discipline. "Our bias is towards sharing knowledge, focusing on people," the spokesperson said. From its origins as a municipality-only platform, the conference has expanded to include universities, civil society, and the private sector. "We've since included academia, business, and organized civil society to enrich the conversation," they added. Strategic collaborations have been instrumental. MILE is an active member of the knowledge management reference group coordinated by

the South African Cities Network. “These partnerships expand our reach and amplify our message,” they noted. Yet, the conference also faces familiar constraints: limited flexibility within municipal systems and challenges with funding. “There’s a need for flexibility within the municipal system to allow for innovation,” said the representative, adding, “Continuous investment in resources and skills development is essential.” From MILE’s decade-long work and the rich exchanges at the Annual Conference, several governance lessons emerge.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Training and Communication:** Clear, consistent communication and extensive training are essential. “Change can be daunting, but with proper training and open communication, we can ease the transition,” Njokweni states. Investing in people builds institutional resilience.
- 2. Community Feedback:** Listening to the community leads to responsive and adaptive governance. “This feedback loop ensures our programs remain relevant and effective,” he emphasizes. MILE incorporates feedback into planning to keep initiatives grounded in real needs.
- 3. Adaptability and Resilience:** Municipalities must cultivate a mindset of flexibility. “Building resilience is about being prepared for whatever comes our way,” Njokweni remarks. MILE encourages a learning orientation within governance structures.
- 4. Communities of Practice:** Creating spaces for ongoing learning accelerates innovation. “Communities of practice are where you learn what other cities are doing,” said Njokweni, adding that peer learning drives real-world results.
- 5. Leadership and Vision:** A culture of innovation starts at the top. “With the right leadership, systems, and commitment, we can turn the corner and restore trust in public institutions,” affirmed the MILE representative.

“It’s about embracing change and investing in the future of local governance.” – **Fezile Njokweni**

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Chapter 26

Annette Potgieter Unpacks the Service Charter and Citizen App

Introduction

In this chapter Annette Potgieter from the Mossel Bay Municipality highlights the municipality's forward-thinking initiatives aimed at enhancing accountability and service delivery through digital innovation. Annette shares her insights on the Municipal App and the Service Charter, both designed to foster transparency and improve citizen engagement in local governance.

About Annette Potgieter

Annette Potgieter, the Director of Corporate Services at Mossel Bay Municipality, embarked on her journey in local government in December 2022. With a background that includes experience in national departments and a stint with the United Nations, Annette brings a wealth of knowledge and a fresh perspective to her role. She emphasizes the unique nature of local government work, which involves direct interaction with the community, allowing for a tangible impact on citizens' lives. "Being in local government means you're hands-on with the community, making a real difference," she notes.

The Municipal App

The Mossel Bay Municipality has taken a significant step towards modernizing its service delivery with the launch of the Collab Citizen Smartphone Application. Annette explains that the app is designed to enhance communication and citizen involvement, providing a convenient platform for residents to interact with the municipality. "With the app, you have the municipality at your

fingertips. It's all about convenience and making sure that no one is left behind," she explains.

The app includes features such as push notifications for road closures, service requests, and access to municipal accounts and newsletters. It allows citizens to log service requests for issues like electricity, waste management, and water services, ensuring that these are addressed promptly. Annette highlights the app's role in improving responsiveness and transparency, noting, "It enables us to communicate important information in real-time, keeping the community informed and engaged."

Service Charter

In addition to the app, the Mossel Bay Municipality has introduced a service charter, which outlines the standards and commitments for service delivery. Annette describes the charter as a tool for holding the municipality accountable, providing clear expectations for both the community and the municipal staff. "The service charter informs the community about what we're committed to doing and helps keep us on our toes," she explains. The charter sets out specific timelines for addressing service requests and outlines the municipality's commitment to transparency and communication. Annette emphasizes that the charter is closely linked to the app, as it provides automated updates on service requests, ensuring that citizens are kept informed about the progress of their queries.

Challenges and Feedback

Implementing digital innovations like the Municipal App and Service Charter in the Mossel Bay Municipality has not been without its challenges. These initiatives required a significant shift in how the municipality operates, leading to several obstacles that had to be addressed. One of the primary challenges was overcoming resistance to change among staff and management. Annette notes: "Change can be intimidating, especially when it involves new technology. Some staff were hesitant at first, worried about adapting to new systems." To address this, the municipality prioritized comprehensive training programs, ensuring that all

employees were equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to use the new tools effectively.

Technological Adaptation

Adapting to new technology posed another challenge. The transition required not only technical adjustments but also a cultural shift within the organization. Annette explains: “We needed to foster a culture of innovation, encouraging staff to embrace technology as a tool for improving service delivery.” This involved ongoing support and mentorship, allowing staff to become comfortable with the new systems at their own pace. Effective communication was crucial for mitigating misunderstandings and ensuring a smooth implementation process. Annette highlights: “We had to communicate clearly and consistently about what the changes entailed and how they would benefit both the staff and the community.” This involved regular meetings, workshops, and feedback sessions to keep everyone informed and engaged.

Community Engagement

Engaging the community in the adoption of new technologies was also a challenge. Annette states, “We needed to ensure that the app was user-friendly and accessible to all demographics in our community.” This required extensive testing and community outreach to gather feedback and make necessary adjustments. The municipality conducted marketing campaigns and public participation events to raise awareness and encourage adoption. Finally, the need for continuous improvement and adaptation was a challenge. Annette remarks: “Technology is always evolving, and we must evolve with it. We’re committed to refining our systems based on user feedback and technological advancements.” This commitment to ongoing development ensures that the tools remain effective and relevant to the community’s needs.

Community Engagement

The Mossel Bay Municipality has made concerted efforts to engage the community and promote the app. Through marketing campaigns on radio stations and public participation events, the

municipality has successfully reached a wide audience. With over 1,000 subscribers, the community's response has been overwhelmingly positive, offering valuable input for further development. Annette highlights, "We've received inputs from the community to enhance the app, and we're accommodating those inputs." The app also serves as a platform whereby ward councillors can communicate directly with their constituents, facilitating better engagement and responsiveness to community needs.

Key Governance Lessons

Annette Potgieter's experience with the Mossel Bay Municipality provides valuable insights into the implementation of innovative governance tools. Here are some key lessons learned:

1. **Community Involvement:** Engaging the community is crucial to ensuring that technological solutions meet their needs. Annette emphasizes: "Involving citizens from the outset helps foster a sense of ownership and collaboration. It's about making sure everyone feels included and heard."
2. **Training and Communication:** Extensive training and clear communication are essential for successful implementation. Annette notes: "Change can be daunting, but with proper training and open communication, we can ease the transition and address resistance effectively. It's about preparing our staff to embrace new ways of working."
3. **Feedback Integration:** Listening to community feedback is vital for continuous improvement. Annette shares: "We've received inputs from the community to enhance the app, and we're accommodating those inputs. This feedback loop ensures the app remains relevant and effective."
4. **Accountability and Transparency:** Using tools like the service charter helps maintain open communication and accountability. Annette explains: "The service charter informs the community about what we're committed to doing and helps keep us on our toes. It sets clear expectations for service delivery."
5. **Adaptability and Resilience:** Encouraging a culture of adaptability and resilience within the organization is

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important for embracing change and innovation. Annette remarks: “People realize that the future is changing, and we all need to change along with it. Building resilience is about being prepared for whatever comes our way.”

“Being in local government means you’re hands-on with the community, making a real difference.”

– **Annette Potgieter**

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Chapter 27

How the Hantam Municipality Overcame Financial Challenges through Leadership and Strategic Planning

Introduction

In this chapter Acting Municipal Manager, Samantha Titus, and Chief Financial Officer, Werner Jonker, share their experiences and strategies for reversing the municipality's financial troubles and establishing a culture of good governance. Despite its small size and significant socio-economic challenges, Hantam Municipality has become a model of financial management, earning widespread recognition and praise from the Auditor-General.

The Journey into Local Government

Samantha Titus has built an extensive career in local government, beginning in 2008 as a housing manager at a district municipality. Over the years, she has been seconded to various municipalities to address critical challenges, often stepping into roles as Acting Municipal Manager. Reflecting on her career, Titus shares: "I've been at a lot of problematic municipalities. The MEC keeps sending me to help." Werner Jonker's journey into local government began in 2003 as an intern under the Financial Management Grant program at Z. F. Mgcawu District Municipality, formerly known as Siyanda District Municipality. His desire to deepen his expertise led him to work at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC), where he completed his Chartered Accountant articles. However, his passion for local government drew him back, and in 2017, he became the CFO of Hantam Municipality. Reflecting on his

journey, Jonker remarks: “It’s been quite a journey, from intern to CFO. Hard work and continuous learning got me here.”

Understanding Hantam Municipality

Hantam Municipality serves approximately 20,000 residents across a vast area of 36,128 km², including Calvinia, Loeriesfontein, Brandvlei, Nieuwoudtville, and smaller villages like Middelpos. The municipality faces significant challenges, such as limited economic opportunities, a reliance on agriculture, which has been under strain, and a population approximately 60% of which are classified as indigent. Jonker explains: “Tourism, especially during the flower season, is one of our key attractions, but our farmers and economy are struggling.” Despite these obstacles, Hantam Municipality has managed to achieve financial stability and improve service delivery, making it a beacon of hope for other struggling municipalities.

Challenges Faced Along the Way

Hantam Municipality’s journey to financial recovery was not without significant hurdles. One of the most pressing challenges was the economic hardship faced by the community. As stated, the majority are indigent, and the municipality struggled to generate sufficient revenue from service delivery. Jonker recalls: “We had to find ways to do more with less. Our revenue base was limited, so we had to prioritize every cent we spent.” This meant making tough decisions about resource allocation while ensuring that critical services were not compromised.

Another challenge was the lack of infrastructure in some areas. Many of the smaller villages within the municipality lacked basic services, and the cost of extending infrastructure to these remote areas was prohibitive. “The vast geographic area we serve makes service delivery exceptionally challenging,” says Titus. The team had to balance the needs of urban centers like Calvinia with the demands of rural and isolated communities, often with limited resources at their disposal.

Political dynamics also posed challenges. While the coalition between the ANC and DA provided stability, managing differing political priorities required careful negotiation and

collaboration. “It’s not always easy to get everyone on the same page, but we’ve learned that open communication and trust are key,” Jonker explains. Building a unified vision for the municipality was essential to ensuring that political differences did not derail progress.

Finally, the municipality had to overcome historical financial mismanagement. Years of poor record-keeping, weak internal controls, and a lack of accountability had left the municipality in a precarious position. “We had to rebuild trust—not just with the community, but also with oversight bodies like the Auditor-General,” says Jonker. This required implementing strict financial controls, improving transparency, and demonstrating a commitment to ethical governance. Despite these challenges, the leadership team at Hantam Municipality remained resolute. Their ability to adapt, innovate, and prioritize long-term sustainability over short-term gains was critical to their success. “Every challenge we faced was an opportunity to learn and grow,” Titus reflects. “It wasn’t easy, but we knew that the future of our municipality depended on our ability to rise to the occasion.”

The Financial Turnaround: Secrets of Success

Both Titus and Jonker emphasize that stable leadership (political and administrative) was fundamental to their success. Jonker explains, “If the council doesn’t trust the management team, it’s hard to move forward. Political maturity and collaboration are essential.” Over the past five years, Hantam Municipality benefited from a stable council, with the ANC and DA working together in a coalition. This political stability allowed the management team to focus on service delivery and financial governance, fostering an environment of trust and cooperation.

Strategic Planning and Hard Work: Jonker highlights the importance of having a clear plan and working diligently to achieve it. “We set a goal to improve our audit outcomes, and every year, we worked hard to get there. It’s about having a vision and sticking to it,” he explains. This strategic focus, combined with the dedication of the management team and employees, was a key driver of their success.

Investing in People: One of Hantam Municipality’s standout strategies was its investment in employees. The municipality supported staff in pursuing advanced diplomas and degrees, ensuring they had the skills and knowledge to excel. “We pride ourselves on appointing qualified people and giving them opportunities to grow. Education and training have been key drivers of our success,” Jonker notes. Titus adds, “The recognition workers received from the council and community inspired them to do better.” This focus on professional development created a skilled and motivated workforce capable of driving meaningful change.

Systems and Oversight: Titus highlighted the importance of robust systems of operation, including performance management and risk management frameworks. “Hantam has excellent systems in place. There are checks and balances for everything, ensuring that mistakes are caught and corrected,” she explains. These systems not only ensured compliance but also fostered a culture of accountability and continuous improvement within the municipality.

The story of Hantam Municipality is a testament to the transformative power of leadership, planning, and investment in people. By fostering stable governance, implementing robust systems, and prioritizing education and oversight, the municipality achieved sustainable success.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Leadership Matters:** Stable leadership, both political and administrative, is the foundation of effective governance. Jonker explains, “Political maturity and collaboration are essential at the local level to ensure service delivery.”
- 2. Invest in People:** Hantam Municipality built a skilled workforce capable of driving change. Titus adds, “The recognition workers receive from the council and community inspires them to do better.”
- 3. Plan for Success:** Having a clear plan and sticking to it is critical for achieving long-term goals. “We set a goal to improve our audit outcomes, and every year, we worked hard to get there,” Jonker shares.

4. **Systems and Oversight are Critical:** Robust systems ensure accountability and continuous improvement. Titus emphasizes: “Hantam has excellent systems in place. There are checks and balances for everything, ensuring that mistakes are caught and corrected.”
5. **Recognition Inspires Excellence:** Creating a positive work environment where staff feel valued motivates them to achieve excellence. “Recognition from the community and council inspires employees to do better,” Titus remarked.

“Every challenge we faced was an opportunity to learn and grow.” – **Samantha Titus**

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Published: 2nd July 2023

Chapter 28

Blueprint for Ethical Governance for South Africa with Dr Vish Govender

Introduction

South Africa's municipalities continues to wrestle with entrenched unethical conduct, maladministration, and systemic corruption. Despite the existence of robust legislation such as the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) and the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), the gap between policy and practice remains wide. Dr Vish Govender's doctoral research offers a bold intervention, a conceptual model for ethical governance tailored to the South African context.

In this chapter we explore his model that serves as a practical blueprint for transformation. As Dr Govender explains, "We have sound legislation, we have a solid policy framework... but the facts out there don't speak to the systems we have." His work challenges municipalities to confront the ethical crisis head-on, and to operationalize integrity through leadership, accountability, and structural reform.

The Ethical Governance Model

Context, Consensus, and Conceptual Clarity

The first phase of the model emphasizes the importance of grounding ethical governance in the South African context. Rather than importing frameworks from first-world countries, which often fail to resonate locally, Dr Govender advocates for a philosophical and disciplinary foundation rooted in public administration and local government. This involves aligning the

three spheres of government – local, provincial, and national around a shared ethical vision and mandate.

Defining Ethical Constructs and Governance Principles

In the second phase, the model identifies and elaborates on the core concepts that influence ethical governance. These include ethics, morals, norms, values, and professionalism. Dr Govender emphasizes, “these elements are deeply interrelated and must be understood not just theoretically, but through lived experience and practical application”. He argues that professionalism and moral clarity are essential to cultivating ethical behaviour in government institutions.

The model then turns to the principles of responsibility, accountability, effectiveness, efficiency, and economy. Dr Govender insists that “accountability should be the foundation of all decision-making no matter which position you occupy.” He warns against the culture of impunity where decisions are made without consequence, leading to long-term dysfunction such as observed in the Eskom crisis.

Equity and inclusivity are also central to this phase. The model calls for the full participation of all demographic groups. Dr Govender stresses that corruption is not confined to any one province or group, and that ethical reform must be inclusive and representative. He also highlights the importance of learning from municipalities that demonstrate good practices, particularly in balancing political and administrative relationships.

Dr Govender critiques superficial community engagement practices, such as roadshows that serve as mere tick-box exercises. Instead, he advocates for genuine participation, where communities contribute expertise and shape decisions. “Harness the experts that are within that community,” he urges, noting that even informal settlements may house engineers or professionals whose insights are invaluable.

The sixth phase of the model translates theory into practice through a series of strategic interventions. First and foremost, it calls for strong and effective political and administrative leadership that is grounded in ethical principles. Dr Govender calls for a collaborative and harmonious relationship between political

office bearers, administrative officials, and the community. “This relationship must be proactive, positive and dynamic, with a shared vision of service delivery, values, and strategies.” Dr Govender warns that a lack of trust and understanding among these role-players undermines ethical governance and impedes implementation.

The model also emphasizes the need for knowledgeable, skilled, and qualified personnel. “Ethical governance cannot be achieved without competent officials who understand and apply legislative frameworks”. Dr Govender critiques the superficial display of Batho Pele principles, noting that many officials cannot articulate or apply them. “Municipal managers and chief financial officers, in particular, play a pivotal role in shaping outcomes and decisions “, he said.

The model calls for strict enforcement and monitoring, with adherence to codes of conduct for both officials and political role-players. He notes that “Many officials lack a basic understanding of codes of conduct, which hinders compliance”. The model advocates for ongoing education to build ethical capacity across all levels of government.

Finally, the model calls for improved communication channels and stronger whistleblower protections. “Violations must be reported and managed effectively, with disciplinary codes that prevent unethical officials from evading accountability through resignation”, said Govender. “Ethics must be embedded in every aspect of governance, from procurement to performance management in order to ensure systemic integrity.”

Challenges in Implementation

Despite its clarity and practicality, the model faces significant implementation challenges. Political interference remains a major obstacle, with ethical decisions often overridden by partisan agendas. “A culture of impunity allows officials to evade consequences, resign before disciplinary action, and reappear in other departments” said Govender. As Dr Govender laments, “We live in a lawlessness country... people do as they please and the repercussions are very little.”

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Ethics Must Be Integrated into Performance Systems:** “We tend to leave ethics out completely when it comes to performance appraisals.” Govender’s model demands that ethical behaviour be measured, monitored, and rewarded. Ethics is not a side issue, it’s a core metric of institutional health.
2. **Appoint the Right People in the Right Roles:** Competence is non-negotiable. Ethical governance demands that appointments be based on skill, not patronage. Misplaced leadership leads to systemic failure. “Put bus drivers in busses, train drivers in trains, and pilots in aeroplanes.”
3. **Accountability Must Be Embedded, Not Assumed:** Without consequence management, unethical behaviour thrives. “Accountability should be the foundation of all decision-making, no matter which position you occupy.”
4. **Community Participation Must Be Genuine, Not Performative:** Ethical governance requires authentic engagement. Citizens must be co-creators of policy, not passive recipients of pre-packaged decisions. “Gone are the days of tick-box roadshows... harness the experts within the community.”
5. **Stewardship Is a Leadership Imperative:** Municipal managers must act as stewards of public trust. Excuses like “I was told to do it” erode accountability. Ethical leadership means standing firm, even under pressure.

“Appoint the right people in the right position. Put bus drivers in busses, train drivers in trains and pilots in aeroplanes.” - **Dr Vish Govender**

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Published: 9th July 2023

Chapter 29

Integrating Development and Budgeting with Faith Qebenya from Buffalo City

Introduction

In this chapter, Faith Qebenya, Senior Manager at Buffalo City Municipality, shares her journey into local government, her passion for community development, and her current role in Integrated Development Planning (IDP) and budget integration. With over two decades of experience in local governance, Faith provides an in-depth view of the challenges municipalities face, the innovative strategies they are employing, and the opportunities to create meaningful change.

Faith Qebenya's Journey to Local Government

Faith Qebenya was born in King William's Town, a small town in the Eastern Cape, before moving to the Western Cape at the age of 11. Her academic journey began at the University of the Western Cape, where she pursued law, followed by postgraduate studies in public administration at Stellenbosch University. Reflecting on her early years, Faith shares, "Growing up in the Eastern Cape, I always felt a deep connection to the community. Moving to the Western Cape broadened my perspective and helped me understand the challenges and opportunities that exist across different regions of South Africa."

Qebenya's career began at the Department of Social Services (now the Department of Social Development) as a social development officer. However, her passion for community development planning was sparked during her volunteer work at an NGO in Paarl. "It was during my time at the Koinonia

Community Centre that the community development bug bit me,” she recalls. Her journey in local government began 20 years ago when she joined the Cape Winelands District Municipality. Within two years, she transitioned to the IDP department, eventually rising to the position of Director of IDP. Qebenya later worked at Stellenbosch Municipality and Drakenstein Municipality, where she gained valuable experience in performance management systems and municipal governance. Today, Qebenya leads Buffalo City Municipality’s efforts in integrated development planning and budget interfacing.

Understanding Integrated Development Planning (IDP)

Integrated Development Planning (IDP) was formalized in the 1998 *White Paper on Local Government* and the *Municipal Systems Act* of 2000. It is a strategic tool designed to help municipalities achieve developmental local governance. As Qebenya explains: “Integrated Development Planning is not just a document or a process—it’s the heart of developmental local government. It’s about ensuring that every voice, every need, and every commitment is translated into measurable action.” She elaborates: “The IDP is not just an institutional plan; it’s a strategic, inclusive, and dynamic framework that aligns resources, capacity, and priorities across all spheres of government. It’s about creating liveable cities, vibrant economies, and empowered communities.”

Challenges in IDP Implementation

Qebenya acknowledges that while the IDP is a powerful tool, its implementation is often hindered by systemic challenges. “Municipalities are under immense pressure to account for every action, every cent, and every outcome,” she says. “This heavy reporting burden leaves little room for focused and intentional planning.” She also points out the issue of resource mismanagement. “We’ve seen cases where resources are wasted, and commitments are not fulfilled. This erodes public trust and undermines the very purpose of the IDP,” she laments.

Innovations in Public Participation

The COVID-19 pandemic forced municipalities to rethink their approach to public participation. Buffalo City Municipality embraced digital tools, including:

- **Radio Broadcasts:** “Radio remains a powerful medium, especially in rural areas where internet access is limited,” Qebenya noted.
- **Social Media and Live Streaming:** These platforms allowed for real-time engagement with communities.
- **Email and WhatsApp Channels:** Dedicated channels were created for communities to submit inputs directly.

Qebenya reflects, “During COVID-19, we noticed a shift in the quality of inputs. People were more development-focused, thinking about the future of their communities rather than just individual needs.”

Combining Traditional and Digital Methods

Since COVID, Qebenya has advocated for a hybrid approach. “We’ve recommended to council that we combine traditional public meetings with digital platforms. It’s about reaching more people and collecting richer, actionable data,” she explains. Qebenya emphasizes the importance of consistent community engagement. “Ward committees are a vital platform for public participation, but they must be functional and accountable. Communities also need to be consistent in their participation; it’s not enough to attend one meeting and then disappear,” she advises.

Performance Management Systems

Qebenya believes that accountability starts with measurable commitments. “If it doesn’t get measured, it won’t get done,” she asserts. She advocates for layered performance systems, which should address organizational, operational, and technical levels, and performance agreements for councillors, insisting that “Senior councillors must be held accountable for their portfolios and commitments.” She adds, “Accountability isn’t just about ticking boxes; it’s about delivering on promises and

building trust with communities.” Qebenya’s insights provide a lens through which to view the challenges and opportunities in local governance. Her experiences in Integrated Development Planning (IDP) and budget integration demonstrate the potential for municipalities to act as catalysts for sustainable development when accountability, innovation, and community engagement are prioritized.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. IDP as a Transformational Development Tool:** The Integrated Development Plan must evolve from a compliance-driven exercise into a transformational tool that drives real, measurable change. The “IDP is not about ticking boxes; it’s about creating a shared vision for development and ensuring that every step we take is aligned with that vision.”
- 2. Strengthening Accountability Mechanisms:** Accountability remains a cornerstone of good governance: “If it doesn’t get measured, it won’t get done.” She highlights the need for performance management systems that hold both administrators and politicians accountable for their commitments.
- 3. Consistent Community Engagement:** Qebenya stresses the importance of communities taking an active and consistent role in governance. “Engagement is not a one-time event; it’s a continuous process,” she explains.
- 4. Collaborative Governance across Spheres:** Collaboration between local, provincial, and national governments is essential for achieving a unified vision for development. Qebenya points out that “Municipalities cannot work in isolation. We need alignment across all spheres of government to ensure that resources and priorities are effectively coordinated.”
- 5. Monitoring and Evaluation for Continuous Improvement:** Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are critical for ensuring that IDPs deliver measurable outcomes. “M&E is not just about checking boxes; it’s about learning, adapting, and improving.”

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“Integrated Development Planning is not just a document or a process; it’s the heart of developmental local government.” – **Faith Qebonya**

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Published: 16th July 2023

Chapter 30

Advocating for Disability Rights with Luvuyo Zondani

Introduction

In this chapter, Luvuyo Zondani, former city councillor, disability activist, academic, and businessman, shares his story. With a career spanning activism, governance, and academia, Zondani's voice has become a crucial part of South Africa's push for inclusivity in public service. His work focuses on ensuring that people with disabilities are not merely acknowledged but actively included in governance, policymaking, and community development.

Early Influences and the Start of a Journey

Zondani's activism did not start with disability rights; it began in his youth during South Africa's turbulent late 80s and early 90s. "I was an activist in the days of the Blue Duke and Crossroads." His early involvement in student movements, particularly at the University of the Western Cape, shaped his commitment to social justice. He recalls the stark disparities in higher education during apartheid: "UCT's white students marched for extra parking space while Black students marched for basic housing." However, his advocacy shifted dramatically on June 26, 2014, when he became a victim of violent crime. Shot by criminals attempting to steal his phone, he was left with an incomplete spinal cord injury. "That's how I met my new identity," he says, choosing to frame the life-changing event not as a loss but as a new chapter in his activism. Adjusting to his disability was a traumatic experience. He describes the initial months of rehabilitation as mentally and physically gruelling but having a strong support system made the

journey more manageable. “I was married at the time, and my wife played an enormous role in helping me cope. Having a strong family is everything.”

Challenges in Local Government and Society

Despite his deep ties to the community, Zondani faced scepticism after his injury. As a sitting councillor at the time, he had to convince his constituency that he could still serve effectively. “I had to prove that a wheelchair doesn’t stop you from thinking, leading, and delivering services. Leadership is about intelligence, strategy, and commitment, not physical ability.” Beyond personal challenges, Zondani began identifying systemic barriers for people with disabilities across local governance structures.

Access and Representation in Governance

A significant issue within municipalities is the lack of direct representation for people with disabilities. “You look at IDPs (Integrated Development Plans) across municipalities, and there is almost no mention of disability-specific programs. The word ‘inclusive’ is there, but it’s vague and rarely leads to meaningful action.” He argues that without specific funding, policies remain performative. “Inclusivity is meaningless if there is no money attached to it. We need budget allocations for accessibility projects, disability inclusion programs, and leadership pipelines for disabled individuals in government.”

The Lack of Disability-Focused Policies

Although South Africa has frameworks like the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2016), Zondani highlights that implementation is sorely lacking. “We have great policies on paper, but they sit in archives. SALGA (South African Local Government Association) hasn’t updated its disability framework since 2014. That means municipalities are working with outdated guidelines that don’t align with today’s needs.”

Overlooked Needs in Communities

Municipal structures often lack basic accessibility, making public participation nearly impossible for disabled residents. “Government must stop treating disability as an afterthought. People with disabilities want to participate in municipal activities, but basic access barriers prevent them from doing so.” He points to simple but necessary changes municipalities must implement:

- Wheelchair-accessible entrances at all government buildings
- Braille and sign language resources in public communication
- Dedicated funding for assistive devices for municipal workers with disabilities

Education, Leadership and Ethical Governance

Zondani’s academic work at the University of Cape Town focuses on disability research, specifically how rehabilitation programs impact young people with disabilities. His study examines community rehabilitation workers in historically marginalized areas like Philippi, Gugulethu, and Nyanga. “UCT has trained rehabilitation workers for years, but we don’t know if they’ve made a difference. This study will assess their impact and identify gaps in service delivery.” His involvement with UCT extends beyond research: he chairs the Disability Affinity Group, advocating for students with disabilities and advising faculty members on inclusivity measures. “Education institutions must actively invest in disability inclusion, not just provide accommodations when students ask for them.”

Zondani believes ethical leadership in governance requires deliberate inclusivity efforts. “If you are a councillor, read the documents, understand your role, and ensure your ward budget is actually spent on improving lives.” He argues that local government officials must go beyond symbolic gestures and commit to systemic change.

He also calls for stronger partnerships between policymakers and disability activists. “Municipalities need to stop using ‘inclusive governance’ as a buzzword and start implementing real changes in infrastructure, accessibility, and program funding.” Zondani’s reflections challenge the status

quo, calling for government action and community engagement to ensure people with disabilities are included in South Africa's governance structures. "Disability rights are human rights. We must create opportunities for full participation, not just empty promises." While the fight for disability inclusion remains uphill, Zondani remains optimistic that transformation is possible through activism, education, and political pressure. "We need leadership that sees disability not as a burden but as a call for transformation in governance."

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Disability Rights Must Be Prioritized:** Local government policies must actively address the needs of people with disabilities instead of treating inclusivity as an afterthought. "We need to see disability budgets in IDPs, not just vague promises of inclusivity."
2. **Leadership Requires Action, Not Words:** Elected officials must engage with communities and ensure service delivery. "People don't need marathon runners as councillors; they need thinkers who can get things done."
3. **Government Must Provide Accessible Infrastructure:** Many community spaces remain inaccessible, preventing meaningful participation. "Public facilities should not exclude people with disabilities—it's time for municipalities to take accessibility seriously."
4. **Academic Research Drives Policy Change:** Understanding the challenges facing young people with disabilities is essential for effective policymaking. "We need data-driven solutions, not assumptions."
5. **Activists Must Keep Pushing for Change:** People with disabilities cannot wait for government to act; they must actively advocate for their rights. "If policies exist but aren't implemented, we must challenge the system."

"Disability rights are human rights. We must create opportunities for full participation, not just empty promises." – **Luvuyo Zondani**

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Chapter 31

What It's Like for Women in Local Government with Jacqui Samson

Introduction

In this chapter, Jacqui Samson, a seasoned public service professional with nearly three decades of experience in urban planning, town planning, and human settlements, shares her journey into local government, the challenges she has faced as a woman in a senior leadership position, and how she has had to navigate male-dominated spaces. Samson's experience reflects the realities of many professional women: while racial barriers exist, it is often sexism that dictates workplace power dynamics. Her reflections provide an insightful look at leadership, inclusivity, and the importance of mentorship in shaping equitable workspaces.

Early Influences and the Start of a Journey

Samson's entry into local government was unexpected but aligned with her expertise. "There was an opportunity presented that combined my 28 years of experience in town planning, development, and human settlements, and I thought, this position is suitable for me." Her extensive background in provincial government gave her a strong foundation in oversight and policy development, but moving into the municipal space introduced new complexities. "The biggest adjustment was the interface with the communities on the ground. You see the real impact of your resource allocation and decision-making." She describes local government as fast-paced and highly rewarding because of its direct influence on people's lives. "You can see the difference you make, which is far more tangible than at a provincial level." Yet,

despite the promise of change and impact, Samson soon realized that local government came with deeply ingrained gender biases.

Challenges in Local Government and Society

While her career has been filled with accomplishments, Samson acknowledges that local government remains a male-dominated environment, especially at the senior level. While discussions about gender equality have become more prominent, local government has yet to fully shift away from patriarchal structures. Samson reflects on how women in leadership are often scrutinized differently than men. “There are certain expectations placed on women. If men are outspoken and dominant, it is accepted, but if women display these traits, they are labelled as ‘strong’ or ‘intimidating’.”

This double standard is deeply rooted in cultural perceptions of leadership. “The expectation is that women must be nurturing, patient, and careful in how they speak. Meanwhile, men can be abrupt, assertive, even rude, and it is seen as normal.” Even subtle biases, such as how women’s leadership styles are perceived, contribute to exclusionary workplace dynamics. “If a woman leads confidently, she is called aggressive. If she disagrees with a male colleague, she is called difficult. Meanwhile, men exhibiting the same behaviour are just ‘good leaders’.”

Cultural Norms and the “Boys Club” Mentality

In male-dominated sectors like urban planning and construction, Samson noted that the environment is not necessarily hostile to women, but it is unwelcoming. “The built environment sector is still very much male-dominated. Even after three decades, it has barely shifted.” She describes the culture as exclusionary, with men often oblivious to their own behaviour. “Men make comments about women’s dress codes, but never about each other’s. They make jokes about women needing more bathroom breaks—these were actual remarks made in council meetings.” She explains that these behaviours persist because male colleagues rarely challenge them. “If men do not call each other out, then it falls on women to challenge these perceptions.” This “boys club” mentality affects career progression as well. Women

in senior roles often have to prove their worth repeatedly, despite holding the same qualifications as their male counterparts. “Men receive automatic trust, while women must continuously prove themselves.”

Women’s Role in Workplace Culture

While sexism remains a pervasive issue, Samson acknowledges that women can also reinforce toxic workplace environments. “Some women have had to fight for their positions in male-dominated industries, and instead of making it easier for others, they become gatekeepers.” She describes instances where women in leadership intentionally made things harder for female colleagues. “There’s a quote that says there’s a special place in hell for women who bully other women in the workplace. That dynamic definitely exists. “Instead of fostering collaboration, some female leaders protect their positions by withholding support. “If a woman pushes an idea forward, some will make sure it doesn’t succeed unless they claim ownership of it themselves.”

The Role of Mentorship and Coaching

While qualifications and technical expertise are critical, Samson argues that workplace success is heavily dependent on cultural adaptation. “You can be the most decorated person academically, but if you don’t fit into the work culture, it can undermine your ability to thrive.” She advocates for mentorship and coaching instead of relying solely on formal training programs. “You don’t have to be in a leadership position to help create an enabling environment for others. Helping new employees adjust is just as important as technical knowledge.” Adjusting workplace dynamics starts with education, both in academic settings and professional environments. “Women should not have to learn workplace survival strategies alone. Companies must invest in leadership programs that focus on inclusivity and cultural adaptation.”

For Samson, leadership is about fostering inclusivity and providing support for colleagues to succeed. “A strong workplace is one where mentorship is valued, where people feel comfortable adjusting to the work culture, and where there is mutual respect

between employees.” She encourages women in leadership positions to take an active role in guiding and supporting others. “We must embrace and uplift women, not compete against each other. We must be intentional about mentorship.”

Samson’s reflections highlight the necessity of breaking gender biases in the workplace and creating environments that foster inclusivity. “Women should not feel obligated to accept workplace sexism as normal. We must challenge it and create spaces where we feel empowered to lead.” She believes that change must happen within workplaces, rather than forming separate forums that isolate women. “We need to infiltrate these environments, challenge stereotypes, and ensure that inclusivity is embedded in leadership structures.”

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Sexism is More Pervasive Than Racism in the Workplace:** Women in leadership often experience subtle and overt discrimination based on gender. “Cultural biases define how women are perceived: assertiveness in men is expected, but in women, it is scrutinized.”
- 2. Workplace Culture Must Shift to Become Inclusive:** Male-dominated industries often reinforce exclusionary behaviours, making it difficult for women to thrive. “Inclusivity requires a change in mindset, not just formal policies.”
- 3. Women Must Support Other Women:** Some women reinforce workplace toxicity rather than breaking barriers. “We need to uplift each other instead of gatekeeping opportunities.”
- 4. Mentorship and Coaching Are Essential for Growth:** Creating an enabling environment for new employees is just as important as formal qualifications. “We must make workplaces more accessible by fostering mentorship and guidance.”
- 5. Challenge Biases in Professional Spaces:** Sexist comments and behaviours in the workplace must be addressed openly. “If we don’t call it out, it remains acceptable.”

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“Women should not feel obligated to accept workplace sexism as normal. We must challenge it and create spaces where we feel empowered to lead.”

– **Jacqui Samson**

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Published: 1st October 2023

Chapter 32

From Meter Reader to President of IMPSA: Meet Siphosiso Sibuyi

Introduction

In this chapter Siphosiso Sibuyi, president of the Institute of Municipal People Practitioners South Africa (IMPSA) explores the critical role of HR practitioners in municipal governance, the challenges facing local government, and the urgent need for a mindset shift to ensure ethical leadership, accountability, and professional excellence. His call to action highlights HR professionals as central figures in reforming local government, ensuring municipalities adopt best practices, transparency, and a culture of accountability.

A Journey into Local Government

Sibuyi's career in municipal government spans over four decades, reflecting the transformations South Africa has undergone in local governance. "I started as a meter reader in 1984 under the Kangwane homeland government," he recalls, describing the early days of municipal administration before the transition to democratic governance. By 1987, his dedication earned him a promotion to clerk, managing administrative processes that were essential for municipal operations. "It wasn't glamorous work, but it taught me the value of efficiency and structure in local government."

Navigating Municipal Transition and Integration

The 1990s ushered in a new era for local government. The amalgamation of Kangwane with White River's Transitional Local Authority in 1993 was a pivotal moment, merging former

homeland structures into South Africa's unified governance system. "I was part of the integration process, ensuring that HR frameworks aligned with the new governance model," says Sibuyi. "It was an opportunity to lay the foundation for a more professional and structured approach to municipal HR."

Academic Growth and Leadership Development

Recognizing the need for formal education, Sibuyi pursued further studies. "The government sent us to the University of the North, now Limpopo, to complete a diploma in public administration in 1995." This included courses on municipal administration, equipping him with specialized knowledge in governance, human resources, and public sector leadership. Upon returning, he secured a role as HR admin officer at White River TLC, marking his entry into municipal HR leadership. "From then on, HR was my field, and I realized that if we don't get HR right, we don't get governance right."

IMPSA's Role in Strengthening Municipal HR Practices

IMPSA evolved from an early town clerk initiative, initially serving as a forum for municipal leaders to discuss HR challenges. "It started as a space for town clerks to meet and share insights," Sibuyi explains. However, recognizing the critical role of HR professionals, the organization expanded to include personnel practitioners, ensuring that HR-related governance discussions were prioritized. Today, IMPSA serves as a professional body dedicated to advancing HR practices in municipalities, ensuring that human resource management aligns with strategic governance goals.

Professionalizing Municipal HR Functions

One of IMPSA's key objectives is to ensure municipal HR is not viewed as just an administrative function but as a strategic pillar of governance. "Our theme for the 2023 conference was Working Towards an Ideal Municipality: Moving Beyond Limits," says Sibuyi. The idea was inspired by the Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA),

who emphasized the need to professionalize local government structures.

IMPISA plays a crucial role in municipal transformation by standardising HR policies across municipalities to ensure consistency and efficiency in workforce management. It promotes ethical leadership in hiring and employment practices, fostering integrity and transparency within local government. Additionally, IMPISA provides HR analytics to support better workforce planning, enabling municipalities to make informed decisions based on data-driven insights. Furthermore, it advocates for ongoing professional development and certification, ensuring that municipal employees have access to continuous learning opportunities to enhance their skills and expertise. Sibuyi highlights three important factors that will ensure municipalities perform. “Without proper data, we don’t know how many staff we have, what they do, or how effective they are.”

Data-driven HR is critical. “Effective planning means knowing where we need skilled employees and ensuring talent retention and finally, the importance of talent management. ... Municipalities must attract, retain, and recognize talented professionals; it’s how we build effective governance.”

IMPISA’s Partnerships with Key Stakeholders

IMPISA works closely with COGTA, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), and the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA) to ensure HR functions align with governance objectives. “LGCETA provides training funds, SALGA supports municipalities, and COGTA oversees governance structures,” Sibuyi explains. These partnerships enable IMPISA to influence municipal HR policy development, engage in staff capacity-building initiatives and advocate for ethical hiring and employment practices.

Challenges Facing Municipal HR Management

Despite efforts to improve municipal HR practices, corruption, nepotism, and a lack of accountability remain major obstacles. “The mindset must change,” insists Sibuyi. “Every leader today was once a child. Someone taught them values. I don’t believe

anyone was raised to be corrupt, we need to return to ethical leadership.” Many municipalities struggle with high staff turnover and poor workforce planning. “We must not only attract talent but also retain it,” Sibuyi says, emphasizing the need for structured career progression in municipal employment. Municipal HR is often viewed as an administrative function rather than a governance tool. “HR should drive governance improvements,” says Sibuyi. “It should ensure leadership accountability, ethical hiring, and professional development.”

Sibuyi’s leadership at IMPSA demonstrates the critical need for strong HR practices in South Africa’s municipalities. “We are the mouthpiece for municipal employees,” he explains. “If there are HR concerns, we take them to the Minister.” Through training, ethical leadership, and institutional partnerships, IMPSA aims to bridge gaps in municipal governance, ensuring professional accountability and compliance.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **HR Must Drive Municipal Governance Improvements:** “HR should not just be seen as administrative; it should be at the heart of municipal accountability.”
2. **Ethical Leadership is Non-Negotiable:** “Everyone is taught values as a child; we need leaders who uphold them.”
3. **Data-Driven Workforce Planning is Essential:** “Without data, municipalities don’t know how many staff they have or what they do.”
4. **Mindset Shifts Will Drive Local Government Transformation:** “We will win, but only if we rethink leadership and governance.”
5. **HR Must Be Professionalized Across Municipalities:** “Standardized policies, training, and ethical hiring will prevent corruption and inefficiencies.”

“Mindsets must change. If we continue doing things the way we’ve always done them, we will keep getting the same results. We need leadership that is ethical, competent, and willing to evolve.”

– Siphosibuyi

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Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 20th November 2023

Chapter 33

Advancing Youth Employability through Collaborative Partnerships with Reggie Salmons

Introduction

In this chapter, Reggie Salmons, Manager at the Garden Route District Municipality, delves into skills development initiatives, strategies municipalities can use to create economic opportunities for young people, and the importance of cooperation between local government, the private sector, and educational institutions.

Early Influences and the Start of a Journey

Salmons's path into local government began with his background in human resources, having studied at CPUT (formerly Pentech). Initially focused on labour relations and employment law, his practical training during his studies shifted his focus toward municipal HR functions, where he discovered a deep passion for skills development. "My strongest subjects were labour law and employment relations," he recalls, "but once I entered the workforce, I realized the immense impact that skills development and training could have on people's livelihoods." This revelation led him to transition from traditional HR to training facilitation, a field he has dedicated his career to since 2000. Salmons began his municipal career at Drakenstein Municipality, gaining extensive experience in municipal training strategies. In 2007, he moved to the Garden Route District Municipality.

The Garden Route Skills Mecca Initiative

The Garden Route Skills Mecca initiative has positioned the district as a hub for learning and career development, integrating

education with economic growth. “We want the Garden Route to be a place where people don’t just visit for tourism,” Salmons explains. “We want them to learn while they are here, benefiting our economy and boosting employability.” The Skills Mecca concept aims to make the Garden Route a premier destination for education and training—a place where individuals gain skills, qualifications, and career opportunities while boosting the local economy. “We know people come here for the scenery, the beaches, and the lifestyle. But we also want to be known as a region that offers learning opportunities, skills training, and career pathways.”

Disaster Recovery Leading to Skills Development Expansion

The Skills Mecca officially launched in response to the devastating fires of 2017, which wiped out much of Knysna’s infrastructure and economy. To help rebuild the region, national and provincial governments initiated a multi-sector intervention, focusing on eight work streams. Salmons was tasked with leading Work Stream 7, focusing on skills development and workforce reskilling. Together with Dr Floris Prinsloo he created a plan to upskill and reskill Knysna residents, ensuring employment opportunities beyond disaster recovery. Although initially focused on Knysna’s rehabilitation, the initiative expanded to municipalities across the Garden Route, including Oudtshoorn, Kannaland, and George, ensuring broader access to employment resources.

Annual Skills Summits and Strategic Resolutions

The initiative formally launched at the 2018 Garden Route Skills Summit, attended by officials including Premier Helen Zille and several MECs. Each year, the summit brings together municipal leaders, business representatives, and training providers, setting ten key resolutions to drive skills development strategies forward. “We set ten resolutions, focused on integration, collaboration, and expanding learning opportunities,” Salmons explains. “We don’t want too many goals that lose focus; we keep it structured and strategic.”

How the Skills Mecca Operates

Unlike conventional municipal training programs, the Garden Route program does not rely on internal funds. Instead, it actively secures funding from national organizations, such as the National Skills Fund, Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), private sector investment, and international donors like the International Labour Organization (ILO). “We don’t have our own funding,” Salmons explains. “So, we write proposals, engage with businesses, and apply for grants to fund our programs.”

Targeting Youth Employment and Rural Inclusivity

The initiative’s primary target group is unemployed youth, especially those in rural areas with limited career opportunities.

- Candidates register in municipal databases, ensuring recruitment prioritizes disadvantaged communities.
- Advertisements reach marginalized areas, ensuring inclusion.
- The household impact model distributes stipends to ensure income benefits entire families.
- Training programs include home-based care, patrol officers, and renewable energy learners.

Challenges Facing the Skills Mecca Initiative

Despite its success, the Skills Mecca faces several challenges that must be addressed to ensure sustainability and broader impact. While the initiative has received substantial financial backing, including a R36 million grant from the National Skills Fund, funding remains an ongoing hurdle. “The funding is there, but securing multi-year investment and ensuring administrative efficiency takes significant effort,” Salmons explains. “Proposals require ongoing engagement and documentation, which takes time and resources.” Scaling the Skills Mecca model to other municipalities has proven challenging due to political barriers, administrative bottlenecks, and local implementation limitations. “If the Free State or KwaZulu-Natal wants to adopt this model, we’re ready to assist,” Salmons says. “But municipalities must be proactive in creating their own structures.”

Overcoming Rural Accessibility Barriers

While major urban centers like George and Mossel Bay have established training infrastructure, rural municipalities like Kannaland struggle with access to learning facilities. Salmons emphasizes that “transport, connectivity, and infrastructure gaps slow down progress.” There is an inherent scepticism toward government-led programs, often seen as bureaucratic and ineffective. To counter this, the Garden Route engages business chambers to lead local training projects. “We let businesses lead, while municipalities provide support,” Salmons explains. “This builds trust and increases impact.”

The Garden Route District Municipality’s Skills Mecca Initiative has emerged as a national model for youth employability—leveraging collaborative partnerships, targeted training programs, and sustainable funding mechanisms. Through public-private cooperation, strategic recruitment, and innovative use of EPWP, the initiative has helped 500 young people gain employment while supporting 2,000 household members. “We hope this model spreads across the country,” Salmons states. “The more municipalities adopt this, the more young people we can empower.”

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Skills Development Must Align with Economic Strategy:** “Youth must gain skills while contributing to the economy, not just earning certificates.”
- 2. Municipal Training Programs Must Target Rural Communities:** “Big cities have opportunities, but rural youth need structured interventions.”
- 3. EPWP Can Fund Skilled Graduates, Not Just Low-Level Jobs:** “We’re proving EPWP can finance graduate employment, not just labour work.”
- 4. Public-Private Partnerships Build Trust and Improve Impact:** “Businesses take the lead, municipalities provide support: it works.”
- 5. Scaling the Model Nationwide Requires Municipal Leadership:** “Any municipality can adopt this framework, but commitment is key.”

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“Our focus is ensuring rural youth have equal opportunities.” – **Reggie Salmans**

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Published: 27th November 2023

Chapter 34

Restoring Public Confidence through Results-Based Management in Oudtshoorn Municipality with Municipal Manager, Walter Hendricks

Introduction

Oudtshoorn Municipality has endured years of political instability, financial mismanagement, and deteriorating infrastructure, making effective governance a necessity rather than an option. In this chapter, Walter Hendricks, Municipal Manager of Oudtshoorn Municipality, discusses how the municipality is working to restore public confidence through results-based management.

Walter Hendricks' Journey in Local Government

With a career in local government spanning over 30 years, Walter Hendricks has worked in various municipalities across the Western Cape, including Drakenstein, the West Coast, Overberg, and the Garden Route District. His journey has provided him with a deep understanding of governance, infrastructure management, and community development. His vast experience enables him to diagnose municipal failures and implement strategies that drive sustainable change.

Understanding Oudtshoorn's Challenges

For years, Oudtshoorn Municipality faced serious governance challenges, particularly political instability, which led to administrative failures and poor service delivery. This instability

resulted in unqualified personnel holding critical managerial positions, leading to inefficiencies in financial planning, procurement, and infrastructure development. The effects of this instability were felt most in road maintenance, service delivery, and financial accountability, creating a lack of public trust in the municipality's ability to manage taxpayer money responsibly. "If there's political instability, you're always going to have a lack of leadership at both the political and administrative levels. In Oudtshoorn, interference in appointments led to people sitting in managerial positions without the knowledge or skills required to expedite services."

Despite these setbacks, the municipality has taken bold steps to correct its course, starting with clean governance and strategic financial planning.

Achieving a Clean Audit

In 2023, Oudtshoorn Municipality received its first clean audit in 20 years, marking a significant achievement in financial accountability. A clean audit confirms that a municipality has managed public funds with integrity, complied with financial regulations, and improved operational efficiencies. For local residents, this translates to greater trust in their municipality, reassurance that tax money is spent responsibly, and confidence that services will improve. "A clean audit means our residents can trust the municipality with public funds. It's proof that there is now a responsible administration in place that complies with legislation, policies, and regulations."

To achieve this milestone, the municipality developed an Operational Clean Audit Plan, addressing 16 key issues flagged by the Auditor-General. Some of these included: Improving performance management systems, Ensuring compliance with municipal staff regulations and correct appointments, addressing errors in procurement processes and conditional grant allocations and strengthening contract management, financial reporting, and consequence management. By meticulously tracking progress month-by-month, the municipality managed to correct financial misstatements and eliminate weak oversight structures.

The Role of Consequence Management in Accountability

One of the key drivers for securing a clean audit was the enforcement of consequence management, ensuring that municipal leaders and managers were held accountable for their decisions. “We must hold directors and managers accountable for any misstatements or administrative deficiencies under their jurisdiction. Without consequence management, the entire accountability chain collapses,” said Hendricks.

Consequence management was applied by issuing formal warnings for non-compliance, tracking progress on financial and operational issues, and ensuring managerial oversight in service delivery departments. The result is that municipal employees now understand that failure to meet compliance standards carries direct consequences, reinforcing a culture of responsibility throughout the municipality.

Challenges in Municipal Management

Despite achieving a clean audit, Oudtshoorn Municipality continues to face structural challenges in governance and service delivery. First, there is a lack of management expertise in critical departments, particularly in infrastructure and financial planning. Many municipal officials struggle to understand budgets, procurement laws, and operational efficiency, leading to delays in service delivery. Second, political interference continues to hinder merit-based appointments, allowing unqualified individuals to hold managerial positions based on political affiliations rather than expertise. Third, excessive regulation slows down municipal efficiency, with Treasury requiring three quotes even for purchases as small as R2,000. This creates unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles and slows down urgent service-delivery projects. “Overregulation is becoming a problem. If you need three quotes just to buy a single lightbulb, service delivery suffers. We should be expediting services, not slowing them down.” Finally, there is a need for better leadership training, particularly for finance and infrastructure managers. Municipal leaders often lack human resource management skills, making it difficult to effectively supervise and motivate teams.

Under Hendricks' guidance, the municipality has already achieved a clean audit for the first time in 20 years, signalling a commitment to responsible governance. However, ongoing challenges such as political interference, excessive regulation, and managerial inefficiencies have been a challenge, as stated by Hendricks: "We must ensure that people in leadership positions understand their role. If you appoint the wrong person, service delivery suffers. We can no longer afford to be complacent in how municipalities are run." "I've worked in almost every major district in the Western Cape, and I've learned that political instability is the biggest threat to local government efficiency. Without stability, you cannot govern effectively."

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Political Stability is Key to Municipal Success:** Without political stability, municipalities struggle with leadership vacuums, service disruptions, and financial mismanagement. "Political interference leads to service disruptions."
2. **Clean Audits Boost Public Trust:** Achieving a clean audit after two decades signals effective financial management and reassures residents that public funds are managed responsibly. "We didn't just aim for a clean audit. We aimed for transparency, accountability, and financial integrity."
3. **Consequence Management is Essential for Accountability:** Without enforcement, governance collapses. "Holding people accountable is non-negotiable. If managers don't take responsibility for their departments, services will decline."
4. **Leadership Training Must Include People Management Skills:** Many managers in local government excel in technical fields but lack human-resource-management skills, leading to inefficiencies. "Municipal management isn't just about knowing budgets and procurement rules. You need to manage people, emotions, and change. That's what drives performance."

"Political interference leads to service disruptions. When politicians overstep their boundaries, municipalities suffer. Leaders need to respect governance processes." – **Walter Hendricks**

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Chapter 35

Enforcing Consequence Management with Patrick Pilane

Introduction

In this chapter, Patrick Pilane, Assistant Director of Labour Relations at Midvaal Municipality, discusses the importance of consequence management, ethical leadership, and labour relations in local government. This chapter highlights the need for proactive labour policies, ongoing managerial training, and adherence to legal frameworks and collective agreements to ensure stability in local government.

Journey Into Local Government

Pilane's journey into local government began in 1993, when he started working at Meyerton Council. At the time, South Africa was undergoing major political changes, and Pilane witnessed firsthand how municipalities merged and evolved during the democratic transition. "I started in local government on the ground, in lower-level positions," he recalls. "From there, I pursued studies in municipal administration at Technical SA, which laid the foundation for my career." As municipalities merged and restructured, Pilane gained experience in various local councils, including Meyerton Town Council and Vereeniging, before eventually being absorbed into Emfuleni Local Municipality. "With time, I continued studying public administration, moving from a generalist HR role to specialized functions like training and labour relations," he explains. His passion for dispute resolution and labour law led him to transition into labour relations, where he now oversees compliance with

collective agreements and disciplinary procedures at Midvaal Municipality.

Understanding Labor Relations in Local Government

Labor relations in local government focus on ensuring harmonious workplace dynamics, overseeing collective agreements, and upholding disciplinary processes when misconduct arises. “Some might call it industrial relations, but in local government, we prefer labour relations,” Pilane states. “Our role is to enhance sound employer-employee relationships while ensuring compliance with legal frameworks.” Labor relations practitioners are responsible for training managers on collective agreements and disciplinary procedures, processing requests for disciplinary action from department heads, and ensuring procedural fairness in cases of misconduct or disputes.

The Challenge of Enforcing Consequence Management in Municipalities

Despite existing legal frameworks, many municipalities struggle with implementing consequence management, a gap that often leads to financial losses, inefficiencies, and corruption. “Local government has a poor record when it comes to consequence management,” Pilane acknowledges. “Even the Auditor-General repeatedly highlights this issue in reports year after year.” However, Midvaal Municipality has taken a proactive approach to enforcing labour discipline, ensuring that accountability remains a key pillar of governance. “Since I joined Midvaal in 2006, we’ve built a strong framework that ensures discipline is taken seriously,” Pilane says. “Managers are trained, employees understand the policies, and we uphold fairness in all procedures.”

How Midvaal Municipality Strengthens Disciplinary Action

One of the main challenges in labour relations is managerial resistance to enforcing discipline, as many supervisors shy away from handling misconduct cases. “Managers often don’t like

this part of the job,” Pilane explains. “They say it’s not their responsibility, but discipline falls squarely within their scope of work.” To address this, Midvaal Municipality conducts quarterly roadshows and advocacy sessions, where labour relations practitioners train supervisors and line managers on disciplinary procedures and collective agreements. “We teach managers that sweeping problems under the carpet creates precedents that will catch up with them later,” Pilane says. “If you don’t enforce discipline, you create an environment where misconduct thrives.”

Training and Support for Supervisors

Midvaal Municipality ensures that supervisors are equipped to handle disciplinary cases by offering annual training programs on presiding and prosecuting procedures. “If you’re appointed as a presiding officer, you must be trained and knowledgeable about what’s expected of you,” Pilane explains. “We also provide procedural guidance to ensure fairness in all cases.” Labour relations practitioners play a supportive role, advising managers on procedural fairness and ensuring compliance with legal frameworks. “Our core responsibility is to ensure procedural fairness,” Pilane says. “If a fair procedure isn’t followed, it could lead to adverse rulings against the municipality.”

Balancing Ethics and Fairness in Labour Relations

Labor relations practitioners often face accusations of bias, with unions claiming they favour employers and employers claiming they favour unions. “Ethics is the key to maintaining balance,” Pilane asserts. “Wrong is wrong, and right is right, irrespective of who is doing it.” He emphasizes the importance of advising both employers and employees on the consequences of their actions, ensuring that each case is handled according to its nature. “If an employee pleads guilty to theft, they can’t expect the same treatment as someone who absconded for a day,” Pilane explains. “Sanctions must match the nature of the misconduct.”

Progressive Discipline and Rehabilitation

Pilane advocates for progressive discipline, where employees are given opportunities to rehabilitate their behaviour before facing

harsher sanctions. “Discipline isn’t about punishment; it’s about correcting behaviour,” he says. “You don’t kill a child for making a mistake; you guide them toward improvement.” Patrick Pilane’s leadership in labour relations at Midvaal Municipality highlights the importance of consequence management, ethical leadership, and procedural fairness in strengthening local government. “If consequence management isn’t enforced, institutions become banana republics where everyone does as they please,” Pilane warns. “But when employees understand their purpose, they wake up every morning ready to serve their communities.” His commitment to advocacy, training, and ethical governance serves as a model for municipalities seeking to improve disciplinary processes and labour relations.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Consequence Management is Essential for Institutional Stability:** Without enforcement of discipline, municipalities risk becoming dysfunctional. “Most institutions go down because managers are not prepared to enforce consequence management.”
- 2. Advocacy and Training Empower Managers to Handle Discipline:** Regular training sessions ensure supervisors understand their roles in disciplinary processes. “If you don’t enforce discipline, you create an environment where misconduct thrives.”
- 3. Procedural Fairness Prevents Financial Losses:** Labour relations practitioners must ensure compliance with legal frameworks to avoid disputes. “If a fair procedure isn’t followed, it could lead to adverse rulings against the municipality.”
- 4. Ethics and Integrity are Non-Negotiable:** Labour relations practitioners must remain impartial, handling each case according to its nature. “Wrong is wrong, and right is right, irrespective of who is doing it.”
- 5. Progressive Discipline Encourages Rehabilitation:** Employees must be given opportunities to improve before facing harsher sanctions. “Discipline isn’t about punishment; it’s about correcting behaviour.”

Chapter 35

“If consequence management isn’t enforced, institutions become banana republics where everyone does as they please.” – **Patrick Pilane**

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



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Chapter 36

Consultants in Local Government: Blessing or Curse?

Introduction

In this chapter we explore the ongoing debate around consultants in local government. This episode features an experienced consultant who has worked in local government, provincial departments, and public entities for over 15 years. The conversation sheds light on the role of consultants in financial governance, challenges in municipal recruitment, and why municipalities often struggle to attract skilled professionals. The consultant chose to remain anonymous.

The Consultant's Journey in Local Government

With more than 15 years of experience, the consultant has worked with various municipalities and government departments, focusing on audit readiness and financial statement preparation, providing advisory services for internal controls and compliance, and supporting municipalities in financial management strategies. Despite providing advisory services, the consultant has never worked as a full-time municipal employee. "I've always worked in an advisory capacity, helping municipalities navigate financial challenges." The consultant believes South Africa should corporatize its government entities, ensuring municipalities operate with business-like efficiency. "Although municipalities are not profit-driven, running them professionally can prevent wasteful expenditure and financial mismanagement."

Why Municipalities Rely on Consultants

One of the primary reasons municipalities heavily rely on consultants is the lack of highly skilled personnel in local government. “There is a serious shortage of skills in municipalities, especially in financial management. Highly skilled professionals avoid working in local government due to instability and political interference.” These challenges include failure to attract and retain chartered accountants and financial experts, high staff turnover due to political instability and lack of structured talent development programs.

Legacy Issues and Overworked Officials

Many municipalities struggle with deep-rooted financial issues, requiring extensive resources and additional personnel to resolve them. “If a municipality has unresolved financial issues from previous years, existing employees may not have the time or skills to fix them while managing daily operations.” In some cases, employees resist taking on additional workloads, arguing over whether tasks fall within their job descriptions. “I’ve seen cases where financial managers spend more time debating overtime policies than actually fixing accounting backlogs.”

Is Recruitment the Root of the Problem?

While better recruitment strategies could help municipalities reduce consultant dependency, the local government sector often struggles to create attractive working environments for financial professionals. “Even when municipalities hire the right people, they often leave after a year due to the unstable political environment.”

Political instability and poor leadership result in high vacancy rates and staff turnover, loss of trained employees, requiring municipalities to start over, and limited career growth opportunities for financial professionals. Municipal employees often lack formal qualifications and rely heavily on on-the-job learning. “Many finance officials start as interns and work their way up, but without proper coaching, they struggle to grasp complex financial management systems.” Even when training is

provided, municipalities often lose skilled employees, creating a cycle of continuous retraining without lasting improvement.

Challenges Affecting Financial Governance in Local Government

Political instability within municipalities has far-reaching consequences, particularly in financial governance. “The instability starts at the top, frequent leadership changes, political interference in appointments, and a lack of continuity in financial decision-making.” When financial professionals feel their positions are insecure, they often leave after a short period, leading to continuous recruitment cycles.

Many financial challenges in local government are not purely technical but deeply behavioural. “Municipal finance is a structural issue, a leadership issue, and an attitude problem; it’s more than just recruitment.” Some municipalities struggle with low staff morale, resistance to additional work, and a lack of accountability, further contributing to inefficiencies.

Municipalities often hire employees who lack the qualifications or experience needed for key financial roles. “We’ve seen cases where an outgoing finance officer wasn’t formally qualified, so the incoming intern learns ineffective practices rather than structured financial management.” Without proper leadership and skills development, financial governance in municipalities remains.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Skills Shortages Drive Consultant Dependency:** Many municipalities fail to attract and retain skilled professionals, forcing them to outsource financial expertise. “There is a serious shortage of skills in municipalities, especially in financial management. Highly skilled professionals avoid working in local government due to instability and political interference.”
- 2. Leadership and Governance Impact Municipal Stability:** Municipal structures must support professionalization and ethical leadership to reduce financial mismanagement. “The

fish rots from the head: without strong leadership, financial mismanagement trickles down to every department.”

3. **Recruitment Alone Won't Solve Capacity Issues:** Without an attractive work environment, municipalities struggle to sustain financial expertise internally. “Even when municipalities hire the right people, they often leave after a year due to the unstable political environment.”
4. **Consultants Play a Crucial Role in Audit Outcomes:** Skilled consultants help municipalities transition from disclaimer audits to unqualified audits, creating financial stability. “When we arrived, the municipality was in a disclaimer audit position. Within a year, we helped them achieve a qualified audit and later sustained unqualified outcomes.”
5. **Municipalities Must Audit Skills Development:** Without tracking workforce growth, municipalities risk maintaining cycles of dependency on consultants. “After 22 years of the *Skills Development Act*, we still don't measure workforce growth effectively. Municipalities must start auditing financial skills development.”

“There is a serious shortage of skills in municipalities, especially in financial management. Highly skilled professionals avoid working in local government due to instability and political interference.”

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Chapter 37

GOYA Management with Dr Johan Leibbrandt, City Manager of the Drakenstein Municipality

Introduction

In this chapter, Dr Johan Leibbrandt, City Manager at Drakenstein Municipality, discusses his GOYA management and leadership philosophy that emphasizes action, execution, and accountability in local government. This chapter highlights how Drakenstein Municipality has improved governance structures, streamlined operations, and built an efficient local government model.

What Is GOYA Management?

GOYA management is a leadership framework focused on execution, accountability, and result-driven governance. The acronym GOYA stands for “Get Off Your Ass,” meaning that leaders must take initiative, problem-solve efficiently, and ensure tangible outcomes for the communities they serve. “In local government, the biggest obstacle to success is inaction,” Leibbrandt explains. “If we wait for perfect conditions, nothing will ever get done. GOYA management ensures that we focus on execution.” Municipal leadership must avoid delayed decision-making, excessive consultation cycles, and unnecessary red tape, all of which slow down service delivery and compromise efficiency.

Key elements of GOYA management include decisive leadership and problem-solving, clear communication and alignment between municipal departments, fast-tracking infrastructure projects and community programs, and eliminating bureaucratic bottlenecks. This philosophy emphasizes the

importance of taking action and ensuring that leaders focus on tangible outcomes for the communities they serve. Instead of waiting for perfect conditions, GOYA management encourages municipal leaders to make timely decisions that drive results.

Breaking the Cycle of Slow Governance

Many municipalities struggle with lengthy decision-making processes, ineffective leadership structures, and rigid bureaucratic frameworks that slow down service delivery and economic development. “One of the greatest failures in local government is the inability to make timely decisions,” Leibbrandt argues. “We must balance governance structures with speed and efficiency.” Drakenstein Municipality has focused on optimizing municipal operations, strengthening leadership accountability, and ensuring that key projects are completed on time and within budget.

The Transformation of Drakenstein Municipality

Drakenstein Municipality has become a benchmark for effective governance by focusing on infrastructure expansion to improve urban development, financial discipline that ensures sustainable growth, service delivery optimization to meet community needs, and proactive citizen engagement to foster transparency. “Drakenstein Municipality consistently receives clean audits because we enforce accountability at every level,” Leibbrandt explains. “We track our progress, measure results, and ensure financial discipline.”

Strengthening Municipal Financial Stability

Fiscal responsibility is at the heart of Drakenstein’s governance model. The municipality ensures that every financial decision aligns with long-term development goals, prioritizing: Transparent budgeting and financial oversight, Eliminating wasteful expenditure and Ensuring proper allocation of municipal resources.” Every cent spent must align with long-term municipal goals,” Leibbrandt states. “We cannot afford financial mismanagement when service delivery depends on responsible governance.” By carefully managing municipal finances, Drakenstein has avoided the common pitfalls of budget deficits,

excessive consultant reliance, and inefficient public spending—challenges that often weaken municipal performance across South Africa.

Balancing Political and Administrative Leadership

Local government requires a delicate balance between political oversight and professional execution. GOYA management ensures that operational strategies remain independent of political interference, allowing for stable decision-making and long-term development planning. “We must always act in the best interest of the community, not political agendas,” Leibbrandt emphasizes. “Good governance is about service, not politics.”

Ensuring Leadership Accountability

GOYA management demands strong leadership accountability at every municipal level. Challenges arise when, departments lack execution capacity, municipal teams avoid responsibility or pass blame, and budget constraints slow down implementation. “Accountability means owning every decision and ensuring teams follow through,” Leibbrandt explains. “If mistakes happen, we address them, refine processes, and improve execution.”

Drakenstein Municipality holds regular performance assessments, ensuring that department heads provide clear execution timelines, public projects remain fully transparent and measurable, resources are optimized, and teams are held accountable.

Drakenstein Municipality’s approach to management showcases the power of action-driven leadership in local government. By focusing on execution, accountability, and fiscal discipline, municipalities can overcome bureaucratic inertia and enhance service delivery. “Governance must be about action, results, and responsibility,” Leibbrandt asserts. “We cannot afford delays when communities depend on efficient municipal management.” The management principles serve as a blueprint for municipalities striving to improve governance, demonstrating that strategic leadership, financial accountability, and service excellence can create a well-functioning local government.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Leadership Must Be Proactive, Not Reactive:** Waiting for perfect conditions delays progress; action must be prioritized. Municipal leadership must create solutions, not just analyse problems. “If we wait for perfect conditions, nothing will ever get done.”
2. **Fiscal Discipline Ensures Long-Term Sustainability:** Municipal budgets must align with strategic service delivery goals. Irresponsible spending leads to financial instability and reduces public trust. “Every cent spent must align with long-term municipal goals.”
3. **Accountability Must Be Embedded at Every Level:** Municipal teams must own responsibilities and ensure execution. Leadership must address inefficiencies swiftly instead of tolerating them. “Accountability means owning every decision and ensuring teams follow through.”
4. **Bureaucracy Should Serve Efficiency, Not Hinder It:** Government processes must support speed and results, not delays. Administrative structures must evolve to meet service delivery needs. “We must balance governance structures with speed and efficiency.”
5. **Community Engagement Strengthens Municipal Performance:** Municipalities must listen to and collaborate with residents for effective governance. Transparent communication builds trust and fosters civic involvement. “We don’t govern from boardrooms—we work with the people we serve.”

“If we wait for perfect conditions, nothing will ever get done.” – **Dr Johan Leibbrandt**

Chapter 37

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 7th April 2024

Chapter 38

Localising the Sustainable Development Goals: A Trialogue with Buffalo City

Introduction

With municipalities playing a crucial role in sustainable development, Buffalo City has taken proactive steps to ensure that global SDGs align with its local planning frameworks, including the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), budget performance management, and infrastructure projects. In this chapter, Buffalo City's voluntary review process, the challenges of political and administrative buy-in, the importance of data-driven decision-making, and how multi-stakeholder collaborations can strengthen governance and service delivery are unpacked. The conversation was conducted between Faith Qebenya, Dabhi Gounden, and Siam Tlaela.

The Global Context and Local Impact

The United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, replacing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and establishing 17 interconnected objectives to address poverty, inequality, environmental sustainability, and economic development. The SDGs serve as guidelines for action, offering a shared framework for governments, businesses, civil society, and local stakeholders to collaborate in creating a sustainable, prosperous, and equitable future. In Buffalo City's approach, SDGs have been integrated into local governance, ensuring that municipal projects and strategic planning align with long-term sustainability objectives.

Adopting a Voluntary Local Review (VLR) Framework

Buffalo City is one of five municipalities in South Africa that voluntarily participated in the localization of SDGs. This process involved extensive stakeholder engagement, coordination with national and international partners, and aligning existing municipal programs with SDG targets. Faith Qebanya stated: “We needed to align global objectives with local realities. The VLR process helps us track our impact and fine-tune our strategies to meet SDG goals.” The municipality’s localization process included:

- Strategic mapping to align SDGs with municipal priorities
- Multi-sector engagement, including government, business, and civil society
- Data verification and baseline assessment, ensuring accuracy in reporting

Selecting the Most Relevant SDGs for Buffalo City

Not all 17 SDGs are directly applicable to local municipalities, so Buffalo City identified key focus areas based on economic, social, and environmental priorities. “We selected goals that speak directly to local government responsibilities: water security, infrastructure development, economic enablement, and community partnerships.” Buffalo City prioritized six SDGs:

1. Goal 1 – No Poverty
2. Goal 5 – Gender Equality
3. Goal 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation
4. Goal 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities
5. Goal 13 – Climate Action
6. Goal 17 – Partnerships for the Goals

Challenges in Localizing SDGs

Despite Buffalo City’s success in advancing SDG localization, the municipality faced several institutional and operational challenges. Getting political and administrative buy-in proved difficult, as some leaders viewed the SDGs as additional work rather than integrated governance. Dabhi Gounden mentions,

“The challenge was making decision-makers understand that SDGs don’t create more work—they help us refine and track what we are already doing.” Different municipal departments operate independently, leading to fragmented planning and overlapping mandates. The SDG localization process forced departments to integrate their data, share resources, and coordinate efforts. Siam Tlaela stated, “We realized we had so much valuable information sitting in different departments, but nobody was talking to each other. SDG localization helped us break silos and think collectively.”

Municipal reports often lack comprehensive, verified data, making it difficult to track progress and impact effectively. Buffalo City partnered with Stats SA to validate existing municipal data and ensure that reports reflect real-world conditions. Furthermore, Siam Tlaela explains that, “Without verified data, you can’t measure impact. If you can’t measure impact, you don’t know where to improve.”

Buffalo City engaged external and internal stakeholders, including businesses, universities, NGOs, and local community representatives. However, balancing competing interests and ensuring long-term engagement remains an ongoing challenge.

Buffalo City’s approach to localizing SDGs presents a progressive model for other municipalities aiming to integrate sustainability objectives into governance structures. By aligning budget priorities, infrastructure planning, and stakeholder engagement with global sustainability goals, the municipality has enhanced service delivery, planning efficiency, and impact measurement. “We need to see sustainability as a governance principle, not just an international commitment,” says Qebonya.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Political and Administrative Buy-in is Essential:** Securing support from municipal leaders ensures SDGs become a strategic priority rather than an afterthought. “The challenge was making decision-makers understand that SDGs don’t create more work; they help us refine and track what we are already doing.”

2. **Breaking Down Silos Improves Efficiency:** Cross-sector engagement enhances data accessibility, strategic planning, and service delivery. “We realized we had so much valuable information sitting in different departments, but nobody was talking to each other. SDG localization helped us break down silos and think collectively.”
3. **Data Validation Strengthens Decision-Making:** Reliable data ensures that municipalities track impact effectively, refine budgeting priorities, and measure progress accurately. “Without verified data, you can’t measure impact. If you can’t measure impact, you don’t know where to improve.”
4. **Stakeholder Collaboration Drives Sustainability:** Partnering with businesses, universities, and civil society creates a stronger foundation for sustainable municipal planning. “We are not an island. Sustainability requires collective action.”

“We need to see sustainability as a governance principle, not just an international commitment.”

– Faith Qebonya

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



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Chapter 39

Navigating Challenges and Innovations in Zimbabwean Local Governance: Insights from Dr Kenneth Maragere

Introduction

Dr Kenneth Maragere, Zimbabwean local government and academic, shares his journey, which is marked by extensive experience in both practical governance and academic research. This chapter delves into key themes from the interview, including his journey into local government, the structure and functioning of Zimbabwe's local government system, the factors influencing service delivery, and the governance lessons learned from his tenure.

Journey into Local Government

Dr Kenneth Maragere's journey into local government began at the Zimbabwe Institute of Public Administration and Management, where he was assigned the local government portfolio. His early work involved developing handbooks for local councillors and mayors, which laid the groundwork for effective governance practices. He played a crucial role in training councillors for the 2013 local government elections, supervising training sessions, and developing conflict management programs for local authorities. Currently, he serves as the chairman of Sakubva Urban Renewal Company, focusing on urban renewal and infrastructure development, while also lecturing in public administration at the university. Reflecting on his journey, he

states, “I was driven by the belief that I could use my experience to make a positive impact.”

Structure and Functioning of Zimbabwe’s Local Government

Zimbabwe’s local government system has a dual structure comprising urban and rural local governments, which are administered under separate acts. The Minister of Local Government oversees both urban and rural councils, approving their budgets and resolutions. The system includes 92 councils, encompassing metropolitan cities, towns, and local boards. However, Maragere points out that the existing acts are not yet aligned with the constitution, which creates governance challenges. He explains, “The current structure requires a balance between professionalism and political alignment.” This misalignment often leads to inefficiencies and conflicts in governance, highlighting the need for reform.

Factors Influencing Service Delivery

Maragere’s research on service delivery in Zimbabwe highlights several key factors affecting local authorities. One major issue is the political environment, where urban local authorities, often controlled by opposition parties, struggle to get their plans and resolutions approved by the governing party. Additionally, the concentration of power in the Minister of Local Government creates imbalances and opens the door to potential corruption. Economic decline further exacerbates the situation, as challenges such as currency fluctuations and inflation hinder local authorities’ ability to maintain infrastructure and pay employees. Another significant factor is human resource development, where politicking and regional dynamics influence hiring and development processes, leading to inefficiencies and the underutilization of talent.

Enhancing Human Resource Development

Maragere highlighted the importance of addressing human resource challenges in local government. He emphasized the need for training and development programs that equip local

authorities with skills in areas like HR management, asset management, and finance stewardship. He also stressed the importance of monitoring and supervision to ensure that training is effectively implemented. “Training and development are crucial for improving governance,” he stated. “We need to invest in our people to ensure they have the skills to deliver services effectively.”

Leadership and Management Culture

Maragere described the leadership culture in Zimbabwe’s local government as professional but operating within a politically charged environment. Appointed leaders must balance professionalism with political alignment, often navigating complex political dynamics. Effective leaders must communicate diplomatically and advise councillors on legal and ethical issues without alienating political stakeholders. “Leadership in local government requires a delicate balance between professionalism and political sensitivity.”

Public Participation and Confidence

Public participation in Zimbabwe’s local government is real but often divided along party lines. Budget consultations and community meetings are frequently dominated by supporters of the ruling party, leading to a lack of broad-based participation. This division has contributed to a general dissatisfaction with local government services and a decline in public confidence. Maragere emphasizes the importance of broad-based public participation to improve service delivery and enhance public confidence. “We need to ensure that all community members have a voice in local governance.”

Challenges in Local Governance

Despite significant efforts, Maragere identified several challenges in Zimbabwe’s local governance. Political interference remains a major issue, as the influence of political dynamics affects local government operations and decision-making. Economic constraints also pose a challenge, with limited financial resources and economic instability hindering service delivery

and infrastructure maintenance. Additionally, inefficiencies in human resource management arise due to political and regional biases in hiring, training, and development. Public confidence has also declined, as many perceive local governance as ineffective and lacking broad-based participation. Furthermore, there is a pressing need for regulatory alignment, ensuring that existing acts conform to the constitution to enhance governance and accountability.

Vision for the Future

Looking ahead, Maragere emphasized the need for political stability and external investment to improve local government services. He believes that with the right support and resources, local authorities can deliver quality services and enhance public confidence. Dr Kenneth Maragere's tenure in local government exemplifies the potential for transformation and innovation, even in challenging environments, and shows his commitment to improving service delivery, enhancing human resource development, and fostering ethical leadership. His experience underscores the complexities of balancing professionalism with political realities and the importance of broad-based public participation. "My vision is to see local government operate efficiently and effectively, providing basic services and improving the lives of our community members," he concluded.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Political Sensitivity:** Navigating the political-administrative interface requires balancing professionalism with political realities.
2. **Economic Stability:** Addressing economic constraints is crucial for effective service delivery and infrastructure maintenance.
3. **Human Resource Development:** Training and development programs can enhance the capacity of local authorities, but they must be supported by effective monitoring and supervision.

4. **Public Participation:** Encouraging broad-based public participation can improve service delivery and enhance public confidence.
5. **Regulatory Alignment:** Aligning existing acts with the constitution is essential for improving governance and accountability.

“Training and development are crucial for improving governance. We need to invest in our people to ensure they have the skills to deliver services effectively.” – **Dr Kenneth Maragere**

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



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Chapter 40

Assessing Municipal Skills and Capacity: Insights from the Human Science Research Council

Introduction

Local governance in South Africa is marked by both unique challenges and significant opportunities, as underscored by Dr Kombi Sausi and Ms Diana Sanchez, researchers from the Human Science Research Council. This chapter delves into the critical themes that emerge from their research, the Municipal Skills and Capacity Assessment and the governance lessons that can be extracted from their findings.

The Importance of Skills and Capacity in Municipal Governance

Dr Kombi Sausi and Ms Diana Sanchez's research emphasizes the crucial role that skills and capacity play in ensuring effective municipal governance. Dr Sausi explains that the primary goal of their study was to "get a clear picture of what is happening in municipalities at the moment and to specifically look at issues of skills and capacity."

The research identifies three key aspects essential for effective governance: individual skills, organizational capacity, and the regulatory environment. Individual skills refer to the proficiency of municipal officials in carrying out their duties competently. Organizational capacity highlights the municipalities' ability to effectively integrate these skills within their operational frameworks. Lastly, the regulatory environment examines how laws and regulations shape the decision-making processes and performance within municipalities.

Together, these elements form the foundation for improving municipal governance.

Challenges in Municipal Governance

The research identifies several key challenges faced by municipalities in South Africa that hinder their ability to effectively serve their communities. One major challenge is the over-regulated environment in which municipalities operate. Sausi points out: “The municipal space is very regulated, and sometimes even simple tasks require multiple layers of approval. This can delay service delivery and create inefficiencies.” The bureaucratic nature of municipal operations further compounds the issue. Sanchez explains, “The institutional setup and the organizational culture make it challenging for even skilled officials to effectively use their skills. There is often a lack of coordination between departments, which can further complicate matters.”

Another significant challenge is the political influence within municipalities, which can impact the ability of officials to implement policies and deliver services. “Political appearance often affects the basic capacities of officials to act. This can lead to situations where officials are unable to make decisions that are in the best interest of the community due to political pressures.” Furthermore, the lack of collaboration, both within municipalities and with external stakeholders, exacerbates the problem. Sanchez emphasizes, “Collaboration between public officials inside the municipalities and their departments is something that came up in our research as preventing optimal operation. We need to foster better collaboration not only within municipalities but also with NGOs, the private sector, and other spheres of government.”

Lastly, the implementation of strategies and plans for skills development often fails to bridge the gap between policy and practice. Sanchez highlights: “Skills development plans are failing in their implementation, and we need to invest more in soft skills and knowledge sharing. This includes leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills, which are crucial for effective service delivery.”

Success Stories and Positive Outcomes

Despite the challenges faced, the research highlights several success stories and positive outcomes. Sausi points to the case of Makhanda, where the Unemployed People's Movement successfully held the municipality accountable by taking it to court, offering a powerful example of community action. Sanchez adds another example: "Public officials, especially middle managers, have found ways to be creative and apply their agency to make sure that things move forward despite limited resources and organizational issues." She continues, "These individuals often go above and beyond to ensure that services are delivered and that communities are heard." These examples underscore two key areas of positive progress. Dr Kombi Sausi and Ms Diana Sanchez's research provides valuable insights into the state of municipal governance in South Africa. Their findings emphasize the need for a more coordinated approach to skills development, improved collaboration, and reduced bureaucratic hurdles.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Skills and Capacity Assessment:** Regularly assessing the skills and capacity of municipal officials is essential for effective governance. This includes both technical skills and soft skills such as leadership and communication.
2. **Regulatory Environment:** Streamlining regulations can improve the efficiency and responsiveness of municipalities. Simplifying procurement processes and reducing bureaucratic hurdles can enhance service delivery.
3. **Political Influence:** Reducing political influence in municipal operations can enhance the ability of officials to deliver services. This may involve professionalizing the local government space to minimize political interference.
4. **Implementation:** Ensuring the effective implementation of skills development plans is crucial for addressing capacity constraints. This requires a focus on both hard and soft skills to ensure that officials are well-equipped to address complex problems.
5. **Professionalization:** Professionalizing the local government space can reduce political influence and improve governance

outcomes. This involves creating a more merit-based system for hiring and promoting municipal officials.

“Implementation is at the heart of it all, and we hope that policymakers will take heed of these findings to improve governance and service delivery.”

– **Dr Kombi Sausi**

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Chapter 41

Coalition Governments: Insights from Professor Jaap de Visser

Introduction

In this chapter, Professor Jaap de Visser from the Dullah Omar Institute at the University of the Western Cape, shares his extensive experience in municipal governance, highlighting the challenges coalitions face and exploring potential solutions. His insights emphasize the importance of ethical leadership, structured coalition agreements, and systemic reforms to strengthen governance and service delivery.

Early Influences and the Start of a Journey

Prof. de Visser's journey into local government began in 1998 when he worked in Parliament as part of an internship while completing his Master's degree. Reflecting on those formative years, he recalled, "I had no idea what I was stepping into, but I was told that local government was going to change the course of history in this country." At the time, key legislative bills were being discussed, including the Demarcation and Structures Bills, which set the foundation for municipal governance.

During his time in Parliament, he witnessed the first Section 139 intervention in Butterworth's Transitional Local Council, marking an era of critical governance shifts. "That was a defining moment for me. I decided to dedicate my work to ensuring local government succeeds," he explained. His commitment led him to pursue further studies, including a Ph.D. focused on municipal governance. Since then, his work has expanded internationally, advising governments across Africa and beyond.

Challenges in Local Government

South Africa's local government faces significant challenges, particularly in coalition governance, political instability, and service delivery. Prof. de Visser highlighted several pressing issues:

Unstable Coalition Agreements: Many coalitions fail due to vague agreements and conflicting interests. "The problem isn't just forming coalitions but managing them. Parties need structured agreements that go beyond simply sharing positions." Without proper frameworks, coalitions collapse, leading to frequent leadership changes and governance paralysis.

The "Kingmaker" Issue: Small political parties often hold disproportionate power in coalition negotiations, dictating terms despite having minimal voter support. "We cannot have parties with 2% of the vote deciding the fate of municipalities. This distorts governance and fuels instability," he emphasized. Electoral threshold reforms could prevent such disproportionate influence.

Excessive Use of Motions of No Confidence: Motions of no confidence are frequently used as political tools rather than genuine mechanisms for accountability. "Councils have become battlegrounds where leaders are ousted every few months. That kind of instability is disastrous for service delivery," de Visser warned. Limiting such motions to prevent abuse could improve governance continuity.

Lack of Community Involvement: Despite local government being accountable to communities, residents often feel powerless in coalition disputes. "Local government should be about people, not just political manoeuvring. Communities must be actively involved in governance decisions, not just spectators," he stated.

Governance Model Limitations: The executive mayoral system exacerbates instability by concentrating power in one individual. Prof. de Visser advocates for the collective executive system, where governance responsibilities are proportionally shared, ensuring greater stability. "If coalitions are inevitable, then the system should be structured to accommodate them better. The executive mayor model simply isn't built for this reality," he

argued. “The executive mayoral system puts too much power in one person’s hands, leading to instability when coalitions collapse. A collective executive system ensures proportional representation in municipal decision-making,” he explained. He argued that such a system would mitigate instability by reducing the need for constant political negotiations over power-sharing.

The Role of Education in Leadership: Prof. de Visser stressed the importance of education in equipping leaders with the tools needed to navigate municipal governance challenges. “Education is the key. It empowers leaders to make informed decisions rather than emotional or politically motivated choices,” he stated. He highlighted the need for political leaders to undergo governance training, ensuring they understand municipal systems, legal structures, and ethical leadership.

He also referenced international examples where structured coalition agreements have led to stability. “Look at Germany and the Netherlands. They take months to form a coalition because they negotiate structured agreements. In South Africa, we rush into coalitions within 14 days, and they collapse within weeks.” Extending the timeframe for coalition negotiations, he argued, could enhance stability and prevent short-term decision-making.

Leadership and Ethical Governance: At the heart of successful municipal governance is ethical leadership. Prof. de Visser emphasized the importance of structured coalition agreements that prioritize service delivery over political manoeuvring. “We need to remove the instability caused by kingmakers, these tiny parties that hold municipalities hostage,” he asserted. He suggested reforms such as electoral thresholds to prevent fragmented councils.

Looking ahead, Prof. de Visser encouraged municipalities to adopt best practices that promote ethical governance. “We need conventions, not just laws, that guide coalitions towards stability. Municipalities must establish clear principles for governance, decision-making, and accountability.” He warned that without ethical leadership, local government will continue to deteriorate. “At some point, something has to give. If politicians don’t prioritize municipal service delivery over political gains, we will face deeper crises.”

Prof. Jaap de Visser's reflections highlight the need for pragmatic governance reforms to improve coalition stability in local government. While coalitions present inherent challenges, they also provide an opportunity for more inclusive and representative decision-making. By fostering ethical leadership, implementing structured coalition agreements, and refining governance frameworks, municipalities can navigate coalition complexities and ensure effective service delivery.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Coalitions are Inevitable:** Due to South Africa's proportional representation electoral system, coalition governance will remain a fundamental aspect of municipal politics. "Our electoral system makes coalitions unavoidable. The sooner we accept this reality, the sooner we can implement governance structures that support them."
2. **Structured Agreements Prevent Instability:** Clear frameworks outlining governance principles, conflict resolution mechanisms, and accountability measures are critical for coalition success. "The best coalitions are those built on structured negotiations, not rushed deals."
3. **Ethical Leadership is Non-Negotiable:** Leaders must prioritize service delivery and municipal stability over short-term political gains. "If coalition leaders only seek personal gain, municipalities will remain unstable. Ethical governance is the only path to long-term success."
4. **Education Strengthens Decision-Making:** Political leaders need training in governance structures to navigate coalition complexities effectively. "Leaders with political knowledge make better decisions. We need political training programs to ensure competence, not just popularity."
5. **Electoral System Reforms Can Help:** Introducing electoral thresholds, reconsidering governance structures, and adjusting coalition negotiation timelines can contribute to long-term municipal stability. "If we tweak our electoral system—introducing thresholds, refining coalition structures—we can eliminate the chaos of unstable governance."

Chapter 41

“Democracy is messy, but it doesn’t have to be dysfunctional. We have the tools to make coalitions work; we just need the will to implement them.”

– **Prof. Jaap de Visser**

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Chapter 42

The LGSETA and Skills Development and Ethical Leadership with Ineeleng Molete

Introduction

In this chapter, Chief Executive Officer of LGSETA, Ineeleng Molete, discusses critical issues around local government in South Africa, highlighting the importance of stakeholder feedback, skills development, and ethical leadership in enhancing the effectiveness of local governance. Despite skills development facing scrutiny for inefficiencies, Molete emphasizes the untapped potential in it and the need for transparent stakeholder engagement to transform municipalities into thriving centers of service delivery and economic growth. “Local government is the heartbeat of democracy,” Molete asserts, underscoring its vital role in serving communities.

The Role of LGSETA in Strengthening Local Governance

The LGSETA operates as one of 21 Sectoral Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) tasked with facilitating skills development across municipalities. Its mission is to ensure that local government employees receive the essential technical training, ethical leadership principles, and financial oversight skills necessary for effective service delivery. Molete states, “Our role is clear: we capacitate municipalities, ensuring that public servants have the technical knowledge and governance skills required to drive meaningful service delivery.”

The Importance of Stakeholder Feedback

Molete emphasizes that stakeholder feedback is not merely a bureaucratic exercise; it is foundational to participatory governance. Engaging directly with municipalities, political representatives, and communities enhances skills development outcomes and strengthens financial accountability. “Feedback is the lifeblood of effective governance,” he states, indicating that it ensures resources are utilized efficiently. While municipalities submit reports to LGSETA, Molete argues that real oversight requires face-to-face interactions. “We could simply analyse documents, but true governance means physically visiting municipalities and hearing from the people involved.” He highlights the importance of direct engagement: “Our Imbizos ensure that stakeholders have a voice, allowing them to express their concerns and successes.”

Funding Mechanisms for Skills Development

Investment in skills development is crucial for governance success. LGSETA’s funding structure includes contributions from municipalities, which provide 1% of their payroll via Skills Development Levies, collected by SARS and distributed to SETAs. Additionally, 49.5% of funds are allocated for discretionary grants used for training programs and workforce development. A further 20% is designated as mandatory grants for municipalities to implement training initiatives. The National Skills Fund contributes 20% to support broader workforce programs across various sectors, while 0.5% is allocated to the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) to ensure standardized certifications. Finally, 10.5% of the budget is reserved for administration costs, which encompass governance, staffing, and operational expenses. Molete stresses the importance of strategic funding: “Public funds must be used strategically to ensure that training investments align with the needs of communities.”

Addressing Inequality through Skills Development

Molete highlights how LGSETA’s training initiatives help break cycles of economic exclusion, particularly in rural areas. Instead of placing learners in distant training centers, LGSETA ensures

that internship programs occur within their communities. “We don’t send someone from Paarl to Johannesburg; we keep training local, ensuring immediate municipal impact,” he emphasizes. As technology reshapes industries, continuous skill upgrades are essential. Molete notes, “A plumber trained on electric geysers 20 years ago must now learn solar and green energy geyser installation.” LGSETA facilitates refresher programs to ensure skills remain competitive, stating, “We must adapt our training to meet the evolving demands of the labour market.”

Challenges in Local Government and Councillor Development

A significant challenge in municipal governance is the lack of literacy and technical knowledge among councillors. Many lack the formal training necessary to oversee budgets or manage infrastructure. Molete states, “Without trained professionals, service delivery collapses. We must ensure that every local government employee understands their role and responsibilities.”

Recognizing this gap, LGSETA launched its Councillor Development Strategy in October 2021, structured around three pillars. The first pillar involves councillor induction and skills audits. The second pillar focuses on function-based training, developing financial literacy among councillors so they can read municipal financial statements and interpret budgets effectively. The third pillar emphasizes soft-skills development, providing conflict resolution training and leadership development to encourage ethical governance. Molete emphasizes: “Training must prioritize governance and ethics. Technical skills matter, but ethical leadership is the foundation of good governance.”

Molete also highlights that while educational qualifications are important, ethical leadership is paramount. “A mayor with a degree is worthless if they lack integrity. How do you inspire young people if you have a criminal record?” He calls for a redefinition of leadership identity, drawing parallels with countries like China and Singapore, where citizens take pride in hard work and discipline. “South Africans should not view our

challenges as insurmountable. We must take accountability and build governance structures that foster resilience.”

LGSETA’s Provincial Offices: Community Engagement

LGSETA maintains eight provincial offices and multiple satellite offices to ensure that training opportunities reach communities beyond metropolitan areas. Molete encourages communities to engage with LGSETA through these offices, which serve as the first point of contact for training opportunities. The satellite offices are strategically located to make access to training easier for rural communities. Furthermore, LGSETA hosts quarterly Provincial Skills Development Forums, where municipal officials and learners can engage directly with LGSETA representatives. Molete states, “Communities don’t always need to visit our offices. They can organize forums, request meetings, or call our toll-free number for assistance.”

Opportunities for Matriculants and University Students

LGSETA actively supports matriculants and university students pursuing careers in municipal governance, urban planning, and public administration. Learners can apply directly for bursaries, apprenticeships, and learnerships at www.lgceta.org.za. These programs include funding for municipal studies in degrees such as urban planning, financial management, and governance, as well as practical skills development in areas like plumbing, electrical work, waste management, and construction. The recognition of prior learning initiative allows for reskilling workers adapting to technological advancements in service delivery industries. Molete emphasizes, “We must ensure that the next generation is equipped with the skills necessary to lead our municipalities effectively.”

Molete’s insights highlight the transformative potential of skills development in local government. “We must stop waiting for scandals before we discuss governance challenges. Instead, we must proactively invest in training, leadership ethics, and stakeholder engagement.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Councillor Training Must Prioritize Governance and Ethics:** “Technical skills matter, but ethical leadership is the foundation of good governance.” Molete emphasizes that training should focus on instilling values of integrity and accountability.
2. **Skills Development Must be Accessible to Rural Communities:** Molete asserts, “LGSETA ensures that training is available beyond metros, prioritizing rural municipalities to bridge the skills gap.”
3. **Stakeholder Engagement Drives Impact:** “Direct oversight visits and community forums improve transparency and training effectiveness,” Molete states, underscoring the importance of communication.
4. **Political Office Should Not Be a Career:** Molete believes, “Councillors must view leadership as public service, not lifelong employment,” encouraging a mindset shift towards community-focused governance.
5. **LGSETA Must Expand Digital Access:** “The new website and WhatsApp interaction will make skills training more accessible,” Molete notes, reflecting the importance of technology in education.

“Local government is the heartbeat of democracy.”

– Ineeleng Molete

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Chapter 43

A Code for Ethical Leadership for Local Government with Kris Dobie

Introduction

Ethics forms the cornerstone of effective governance in local government, influencing decision-making, leadership accountability, and institutional integrity. In this chapter, Kris Dobie, Senior Organisational Manager at The Ethics Institute, discusses the launch of the Code for Ethical Leadership in Local Government and explores whether ethics is caught or taught.

The Ethics Institute: Building an Ethically Responsible Society

The Ethics Institute is a not-for-profit organization committed to promoting ethical leadership and governance across multiple sectors, including public institutions, private enterprises, and professional associations. Its vision is to build an ethically responsible society by ensuring organizations foster ethical environments rather than relying solely on individual morality. “Organizations are a major driver of ethical behaviour in society. If you want ethics to take root, you need proper ethics infrastructure in place,” Dobie explains.

The Ethics Institute’s mission is to advance ethical leadership in municipalities, ensuring that decision-makers operate with accountability, transparency, and integrity while addressing the systemic challenges of politicization, destructive deployment practices, and ineffective oversight. The Institute collaborates with: municipalities and government departments to strengthen local government ethics frameworks; private sector organizations to advance corporate governance and ethical

compliance; state-owned enterprises to promote accountability and anti-corruption measures; and professional associations to uphold ethical standards in various industries.

Ethics Infrastructure in Local Government

Dobie believes that municipalities require structured ethics management systems to ensure ethical practices become institutionalized rather than dependent on individual goodwill. The Ethics Institute promotes ethics infrastructure by:

1. **Training and certifying ethics officers**, ensuring municipalities have designated officials overseeing ethical compliance.
2. **Establishing ethics committees**, tasked with upholding ethical governance and preventing corruption.
3. **Developing anti-corruption strategies** in collaboration with local government stakeholders.
4. **Facilitating discussions on ethical leadership**, ensuring municipal officials remain accountable for their decisions.

“Just as an organization needs an HR manager, it needs someone to oversee ethics management,” Dobie notes, reinforcing the importance of ethics officers in municipal structures.

Is Ethics Caught or Taught?

A central debate in ethical governance is whether ethics can be taught or whether people absorb ethical behaviour from their environments. The Ethics Institute’s approach recognizes that ethical behaviour is largely shaped by institutional culture rather than formal instruction alone. “There are three types of people in ethical environments,” Dobie explains:

- 10% are inherently ethical: they consistently act with integrity, regardless of circumstances.
- 10% are inherently unethical: they actively exploit systems for personal gain.
- The remaining 80% are “decent but dubious,” meaning their ethical choices are influenced by the organizational culture they operate in.

This middle group, the vast majority of employees and leaders, will follow the prevailing ethical tone of an organization. If ethical leadership is prioritized, they will adhere to ethical practices. However, if corruption, political interference, or personal gain dominate governance structures, they will adjust to those behaviours instead. “Ethics is not necessarily about teaching people to be moral; it’s about creating environments where ethical behaviour is the easiest path,” Dobie emphasizes. Thus, ethical behaviour is largely “caught”, absorbed through institutional governance, leadership tone, and accountability structures rather than learned solely through training, he concludes.

Launching the Code for Ethical Leadership in Local Government

The Code for Ethical Leadership in Local Government emerged from years of research into governance failures in municipalities, informed by local government ethics surveys, anti-corruption strategies, and policy development. “Wherever we go in local government, we hear the same concern: ethical leadership is missing, and governance structures are failing due to politicization,” Dobie explains. The Ethics Institute identified two primary governance failures contributing to ethical erosion:

1. Politicization of local government, where political interests supersede professional competence, weakening municipal functionality.
2. Destructive deployment practices, where individuals are appointed based on political connections rather than qualifications, leading to skills gaps and administrative inefficiencies.

These systemic issues result in a shortage of municipal expertise, which impairs operational efficiency; unqualified individuals overseeing key oversight structures, which compromises accountability; and political interference in municipal administration, which disrupts service delivery. The Code for Ethical Leadership in Local Government serves as a governance framework designed to counteract these failures, focusing on institutional ethics rather than personal morality.

Challenges in Implementing Ethical Leadership

Dobie noted that there are a number of challenges in implementing the code in municipalities:

1. **Political Interference in Governance:** Many municipalities suffer from deep politicization, where leaders prioritize political interests over governance integrity.
2. **Destructive Deployment Practices:** Appointments based on patronage rather than qualifications weaken administrative structures, creating skills gaps and inefficiencies.
3. **Lack of Accountability in Oversight Structures:** Municipal committees often lack competent individuals capable of proper oversight, leading to weak checks and balances.
4. **Resistance to Ethical Culture:** Without strong commitment from leadership, ethical reforms face resistance, preventing cultural transformation in local government.

The Code for Ethical Leadership in Local Government provides a clear governance framework, ensuring political and administrative roles are respected, oversight structures are professionalized, and municipalities operate in the best interest of their communities. “Ethics is not about individuals; it’s about the systems and governance structures that shape behaviour. The more ethical governance becomes the norm, the more municipalities will thrive,” Dobie concludes.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Ethical Leadership Must Be Embedded in Governance Structures:** Personal integrity is important, but structured governance ensures lasting ethical behaviour. Ethics must be integrated into municipal oversight and decision-making processes. “Ethics is not just about individual morality; it’s about the governance systems that shape behaviour.”
2. **Political and Administrative Roles Must be Clearly Defined:** Municipal governance fails when political interference disrupts administration. The Code emphasizes respecting the boundaries between political direction and professional execution. “Politics should guide strategy, but administration must deliver service.”

- 3. Ethical Culture is Caught, Not Just Taught:** Ethical leadership thrives when organizations create environments where doing the right thing is the easiest choice. “People absorb ethics from the leadership tone set in their workplace.”

“Ethics is not just about individual morality; it’s about the governance systems that shape behaviour.” – **Kris Dobie**

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



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Chapter 44

Barbara Awuor on Transformative Leadership and Community Development in Kenya

Introduction

Since transitioning to a devolved system in 2013, Kenya has faced complex governance issues, including resource allocation disputes, political tensions between central and county governments, and concerns over national revenue distribution. In this chapter, Barbara Awuor provides an in-depth look at how Kenya's governance model operates, the struggles of political leadership, and how citizens are mobilizing in response to economic and policy frustrations. "Kenya's youth are no longer content with watching corruption unfold. They are taking to the streets, demanding accountability, and pushing for meaningful change in governance."

Kenya's Governance Structure: A Shift to Devolution

Kenya gained independence in 1963 and initially operated under a centralized government system. However, in 2010, the country adopted a new constitution, ushering in a devolved governance model that became operational in 2013. "We moved from a system where everything was controlled by the national government to one where county governments had a say in local development", explained Awuor.

Under this model Kenya has one central government, led by the President, with 47 county governments, each headed by a governor. Counties manage local governance, overseeing functions such as agriculture, health services, water supply, and local infrastructure. National functions like security, foreign

policy, and large-scale development remain under the central government's jurisdiction.

Revenue Allocation and Coordination

Revenue distribution between national and county governments remains a contentious issue. Counties receive funding from the national government, allocated through the Commission on Revenue Allocation (CRA) based on population size, economic activity, and fiscal needs. However, counties often struggle with late disbursements, affecting service delivery. “County governments sometimes don’t receive their allocated funds on time, which leads to delays in infrastructure development and essential services,” according to Awuor.

Political and Governance Challenges at County Level

The county Governor oversees executive functions and members of County Assemblies (MCAs), who act as legislators, much like councillors. Tensions frequently arise between Governors and MCAs, especially over budget allocations and development priorities. “Some governors have been impeached because of disagreements over how funds are allocated to local wards within counties.” Beyond internal disputes, counties also face challenges from the national government, including attempts to retain control over devolved functions, limiting county autonomy in agriculture, healthcare, and local water management.

The Rise of Youth-Led Protests

Kenya is experiencing large-scale protests, driven by Generation-Z and millennial activists frustrated with government mismanagement, economic inequality, and excessive state spending. While protests initially erupted over the 2024 Finance Bill, which proposed punitive tax hikes, demonstrations have since evolved into wider calls for governance reform. “The protests are no longer just about tax increases. People are angry about corruption, political waste, and the government’s failure to address unemployment.”

Extravagant Spending by Public Officials

Among citizens' grievances is the extravagant spending by politicians, including luxury travel expenses such as MPs hiring private jets costing millions, and political fundraising events known as Harambees, where millions of shillings are handed out and are often perceived as questionable donations or corruption, as in the cases of fake fertilizer, unsafe cooking oil, and missing public funds. "People are watching their elected officials spending millions while ordinary citizens struggle with poverty and unemployment. It's enraging," said Awuor.

Extrajudicial Killings and Government Response

During the protests, Kenyan security forces were accused of using excessive force, leading to at least 39 deaths, including of three children. The killing of a 12-year-old child, who was shot eight times, has further fuelled public outrage. "The fact that the government has not expressed remorse over the killings is making people even angrier. This is no longer just about taxes; it's about justice." While President William Ruto has since withdrawn the Finance Bill, protests continue, reflecting broader frustration with governance failures.

Awuor concluded that Kenya's current political unrest is a turning point in civic activism, as young people reject the longstanding tolerance for political corruption and mismanagement. While the country has a well-structured devolved system, governance challenges persist, particularly in connection with revenue distribution, political interference, and financial accountability. "For years, people accepted corrupt leadership as the norm. Now, they're saying enough is enough."

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Youth Engagement in Governance Is Essential:** Kenyan youth, particularly Generation Z, are leading protests and advocacy for better governance. "The Generation Z activists are challenging their parents' passivity. They are demanding accountability instead of tolerating political excesses."

2. **Extravagant Political Spending Fuels Discontent:** Public officials' luxury spending and misuse of funds have exacerbated frustrations, showing the importance of responsible fiscal management. "We are seeing MPs spending millions on private jets while people struggle to afford basic needs. That level of waste is unacceptable."
3. **Devolution Needs Stronger Accountability Measures:** While Kenya's devolved governance model has brought governance closer to citizens, it still faces challenges such as delayed funding, political interference, and corruption. "County governments can only work efficiently if revenue is allocated fairly and on time. Right now, that isn't always happening."
4. **Protests Can Influence Policy Decisions:** The withdrawal of the Finance Bill shows that citizen activism can pressure governments to reconsider harmful policies. "The Finance Bill was withdrawn, but the fight is far from over. This movement is about systemic change, not just one policy."

"Kenya's youth are no longer content with watching corruption unfold. They are taking to the streets, demanding accountability, and pushing for meaningful change in governance."

– **Barbara Awuor**

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



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Section B

Active Citizens: Community

This section focuses on the role of active citizens in shaping governance and community development. It highlights the efforts of individuals and organizations advocating for social justice, human rights, youth empowerment, and environmental sustainability.

The chapters showcase impactful initiatives, from revitalizing neighbourhoods and supporting youth through sports to empowering marginalized communities and addressing governance challenges. Discussions include reflections on African identity, decolonization, and the intersections of governance with trade unions, faith-based activism, and cultural movements. The section also emphasizes the importance of collaborative crime prevention, addiction recovery, and leveraging education for local transformation.

Chapter 45

Combatting Disinformation in Local Government with Dr David Rosenstein

Introduction

Disinformation poses a significant threat to governance and public trust, especially during critical periods like elections. In this chapter with Dr David Rosenstein, a clinical psychologist and behavioural scientist, the complexities of disinformation and its impact on local governance are explored. This chapter examines the key themes discussed in the interview, including the nature of disinformation, its rise in the digital age, the challenges of addressing it, and the importance of fostering critical thinking among citizens. The discussion also highlights the Local Government Anti-Disinformation Project, an initiative aimed at combating disinformation and raising public awareness.

The Nature of Disinformation

Dr Rosenstein draws a clear distinction between disinformation and misinformation, emphasizing their differing intentions. While misinformation involves the unintentional spread of falsehoods, disinformation refers to “purposeful statements or productive media” designed to manipulate public opinion or serve specific agendas. He explains: “Disinformation extends beyond fake news. It could be social media, online media types, or even illegitimate websites pushing certain agendas.” Disinformation often exploits sensitive issues such as race, class, or political affiliation to provoke emotional responses. This emotional manipulation makes it challenging for individuals to critically evaluate information. Dr Rosenstein observes, “The more

emotional you are about something, the harder it is to change your beliefs or critically assess contrary information.”

The Rise of Disinformation

The proliferation of disinformation is closely tied to the rise of social media and the digital information age. Dr Rosenstein notes that the vast amount of information available online makes it difficult for individuals to discern credible sources. “We are in this age of information, where information can be weaponized to sway opinions or push particular agendas,” he explains. He draws further parallels between disinformation and traditional propaganda. While propaganda is often state-driven and politically motivated, disinformation is broader in scope, involving individuals, organizations, and political groups. Historical examples, such as the “swart gevaar” campaigns in South Africa during the 1990s, illustrate how emotive messaging has long been used to influence public sentiment.

Challenges in Addressing Disinformation

One of the significant challenges in combating disinformation lies in its deeply embedded nature within political and social systems. Dr Rosenstein acknowledges the difficulty of navigating this space, particularly during elections when political parties often engage in tactics bordering on disinformation. Another challenge is the public’s tendency to consume and share information uncritically. Dr Rosenstein explains, “We digest information in a very quick way, multitasking through our lives without considering what’s in front of us. This makes it easier to fall prey to disinformation.” He further notes that the lack of critical thinking skills and media literacy among citizens exacerbates the problem, allowing disinformation to spread unchecked. He highlights the role of emotions in the spread of disinformation. “Messaging that relies on emotive issues makes it harder to change people’s beliefs,” Dr Rosenstein states. He explains that individuals are more likely to accept information that aligns with their existing emotions and beliefs, making them susceptible to manipulation.

The interview with Dr David Rosenstein sheds light on the multifaceted nature of disinformation and its impact on local

governance. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, the challenges of combating disinformation will only grow more complex. However, by fostering critical thinking, promoting media literacy, and leveraging collaborative initiatives like the Local Government Anti-Disinformation Project, there is hope for mitigating its effects. Ultimately, the fight against disinformation requires a collective effort from governments, organizations, and citizens alike.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Fostering Critical Thinking is Essential:** Individuals must approach information with a critical eye, distinguishing between fact and opinion. “If you take extra effort and are thoughtful and critical, it’s going to help you a lot.”
2. **Educational Initiatives:** Teaching media literacy in schools, can play a crucial role in equipping citizens with the tools to evaluate information critically. “It’s about making people aware of examples of disinformation and helping them understand what to look out for.”
3. **The Local Government Anti-Disinformation Project** serves as a model for collaborative efforts to combat disinformation. He stresses the need for citizens to critically evaluate the information they consume and avoid sharing content without verifying its credibility.

“The more thoughtful and critical we are, the better equipped we will be to navigate the overwhelming flood of information in today’s world.”

– Dr David Rosenstein

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview
on this chapter.



Published: 12th October 2021

Chapter 46

Cultivating Community and Environmental Well-Being with Jan Odendal

Introduction

Environmental sustainability and community engagement are essential for addressing the pressing challenges of climate change, resource management, and social inequality. Jan Odendal the founder of the Green for Life initiative, shared his journey of promoting environmental stewardship through innovative projects that engage municipalities, schools, and communities. This chapter explores the origins of Green for Life, the challenges faced in implementing environmental projects, and the lessons learned in fostering community-driven solutions to environmental and social issues.

The Origins of Green for Life

Green for Life was founded more than 15 years ago by Jan Odendal, a retired senior education manager, together with two of his friends who are both advocates. The initiative began with a focus on cleaning rivers and educating communities about the importance of clean water. Odendal recalls: “I started cleaning rivers at art festivals like the KKNK and the Woordfees in Stellenbosch. We used the rivers as theatres, where children and students celebrated the importance of clean drinking water.” The organization later expanded its focus to tree-planting initiatives, starting with the Trees for Words project at the Woordfees cultural festival in Stellenbosch. Odendal describes the project as a collaboration with schools, university students, and the local municipality to plant indigenous and fruit trees. “It was

a tremendous occasion, sowing the seed in the minds of young children that we need to respect nature and live in a world with fresh air,” he explains.

Challenges in Promoting Environmental Initiatives

One of the primary challenges faced by Green for Life is the perception that environmental stewardship is solely the responsibility of municipalities. Odendal acknowledges this but emphasizes the need for community involvement. “Even though municipal officials are being paid to clean our towns and plant trees, it’s not always possible. You need people with passion, expertise, and know-how to step forward and assist municipalities in making our environment more beautiful and cleaner,” he states.

Another challenge is addressing the broader social issues of unemployment, inequality, and poverty while promoting environmental projects. Odendal highlights how Green for Life integrates job creation and education into its initiatives. In Mossel Bay, the organization is working with jobless women from local townships to establish a nursery for aloe trees. “They are taught by experts how to start a nursery, not only for aloes but also for fruit trees, it’s about creating opportunities for sustainable livelihoods while addressing environmental challenges,” he explains.

Despite challenges, Odendal notes that municipalities and communities have been largely receptive to Green for Life’s initiatives. He recounts successful collaborations with municipalities in Stellenbosch, Oudtshoorn, and Cape Town, where projects such as river clean-ups, tree planting, and environmental education programs have made a significant impact.

Challenges and Opportunities for Expansion

Green for Life has achieved significant success in the Western Cape and Odendal envisions expanding the initiative to other parts of South Africa. He describes the overwhelming response to a recent national radio interview, where listeners from across the country expressed interest in joining the organization’s projects. “The dream is that in every town, people should take notice of

a healthy lifestyle and how they can contribute to it by planting vegetable gardens and fruit trees,” he says.

Odendal also highlights the potential for partnerships with national organizations, such as the Department of Agriculture and local churches, to scale the impact of Green for Life’s initiatives. He shares an example of the Seeds of Hope project, which was launched during the COVID-19 lockdown to promote home gardening and healthy eating habits. “We started a vegetable revolution, with hundreds of vegetable gardens now thriving in communities across South Africa,” he explains. The Green for Life initiative demonstrates the transformative power of community-driven environmental projects. Through collaboration, education, and a commitment to addressing social issues, the organization has made a lasting impact on communities in the Western Cape and beyond. Jan Odendal’s vision for a greener, healthier South Africa is rooted in the belief that everyone has a role to play in environmental stewardship.

By fostering partnerships, empowering communities, and integrating social and environmental goals, Green for Life serves as a model for sustainable development and community engagement. The lessons learned from this inspiring initiative offer valuable insights for addressing the interconnected challenges of environmental sustainability and social inequality. “You need people with passion and expertise to step forward and assist municipalities in making our environment more beautiful and cleaner,” he states. Through collaboration, education, and dedicated leadership, Green for Life continues to make a meaningful difference in communities.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Collaboration:** It is important to work with diverse stakeholders, including municipalities, schools, churches, and community organizations. “When we join hands with municipalities, universities, schools, and churches, we can make a huge difference. It’s all about working together,” he explains.
- 2. Education and Awareness:** The organization actively involves children and students in hands-on projects, such as cleaning

rivers and planting trees, to instil a sense of responsibility and respect for nature. “We use these projects to sow the seed in the minds of young people that we need to respect nature and live in a healthier world,” Odendal states.

- 3. Integrate Social and Economic Development:** By involving marginalized communities in projects such as tree planting and vegetable gardening, the organization fosters job creation, skills development, and improved food security.

“It is possible that every town, working together, can make South Africa the place that we all want to live in forever and ever.” – **Jan Odendal**

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 20th October 2021

Chapter 47

Implementing the Social Profit Canvas in South African Municipalities with Professor Marc Vermeulen

Introduction

The pursuit of public value in municipal governance is a complex but essential endeavour, particularly in the South African context. Professor Marc Vermeulen, a sociologist and professor at Tilburg University in the Netherlands unpacks the Social Profit Canvas. This innovative tool integrates elements of public value management and the business model canvas to help organizations in the public sector articulate, measure, and enhance the value they create. This chapter delves into the development of the Social Profit Canvas, its application in municipalities, the challenges of implementing public value frameworks and the lessons learned from this approach.

The Concept of Public Value

Professor Vermeulen defines public value as the social benefits created by public institutions like schools, hospitals, and social housing. He explains: “The value occurs not in the hands of those who are investing. It’s for the bigger good, for society at large.” Unlike private companies, where the relationship between input and output is often direct and measurable, public value is more complex and intangible.

He elaborates on the fragility of public value, quoting a famous Dutch poet: “Alles van waarde is weerloos” (All things of value are vulnerable). This vulnerability arises because the

benefits of public initiatives are often delayed, diffuse, or realized by different stakeholders than those who bear the costs. For example, investments in primary education may take decades to show their full impact. “People have a tendency to overestimate the costs because that’s what they see directly,” Vermeulen notes. “The benefits, on the other hand, are harder to see and take longer to materialize.”

The Development of the Social Profit Canvas

The Social Profit Canvas was born out of a need to make public value concepts more practical and actionable. While inspired by Harvard Professor Mark Moore’s public value frameworks, Vermeulen found these models to be “high over, not concrete enough, and based on the American context .” A chance conversation with a colleague introduced him to the business model canvas, a popular tool in Western Europe for startups.

By integrating the public value framework with the business model canvas, Vermeulen and his team created a more intuitive and structured tool. “It’s a one-page schedule, a canvas that addresses 11 questions you should ask yourself when working in the public domain,” he explains. These questions guide organizations through a systematic process of defining their mission, identifying stakeholders, evaluating capacity, and assessing the legitimacy of their actions.

Challenges in Implementing Public-Value Frameworks

One of the key challenges in applying public-value frameworks is the difficulty of measuring and communicating intangible benefits. Vermeulen highlights the example of special needs education, where the benefits of integrating severely handicapped children into regular schools were questioned. “It’s not a one-to-one relation with the person,” he explains. “The impact may take years to become visible, and the benefits may accrue to others, such as family members or society as a whole.” Another challenge lies in the capacity of public institutions to implement new methods. Vermeulen points out that municipalities often lack the specialized skills needed to support innovative projects, such

as advising entrepreneurs in townships. “Civil servants may not be the best people to mentor starting entrepreneurs,” he observes. This gap in capacity can hinder the effectiveness of public-value initiatives.

Legitimacy is another critical issue. Vermeulen notes that public projects must align with legal, moral, and social standards to gain acceptance. He recalls a case where the Social Profit Canvas helped to highlight a violation of the European Kids Treaty, leading to a shift in perspective among stakeholders. “Legitimacy is one of the most convincing arguments for public value,” he states. “Without it, public initiatives struggle to gain the necessary support.

Application in South Africa

Vermeulen sees great potential for the Social Profit Canvas in South Africa, particularly in municipalities. He shares an example of economic support for township entrepreneurs, where the canvas could help identify capacity gaps and legitimacy issues. “It’s about understanding the logic of what you’re doing and addressing the unique challenges of the South African context,” he explains. “Tailoring the framework culturally and politically is crucial.” To tailor the canvas for South Africa, Vermeulen and his team are working with local experts to translate the framework culturally and politically. “It’s not a copy-paste action,” he emphasizes. “We need to tailor-make it for the South African context.”

The Social Profit Canvas represents a significant step forward in articulating and enhancing public value in the municipal sector. By integrating intuitive design with rigorous methodology, it provides a practical tool for addressing the unique challenges of the public domain. Professor Marc Vermeulen’s work highlights the importance of collaboration, adaptation, and innovation in the pursuit of public value.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Simplifying Complex Concepts:** The Social Profit Canvas distills public value into 11 intuitive questions, making it easier for organizations to understand and apply the framework.

“It’s a methodology to help clarify your planning around a project,” Vermeulen explains. “Even a quick glance at the canvas can reveal blind spots or areas of weakness.”

2. **Focusing on Stakeholders and Systems:** Understanding who benefits from public initiatives and their connection to broader social systems is crucial. “It’s not just about the direct result of an action but also about its ripple effects on society,” Vermeulen emphasizes. This broader perspective ensures consideration of long-term and systemic impacts.
3. **Addressing Capacity Gaps:** Public institutions must ensure they have the right staff, skills, and infrastructure to support their initiatives. Vermeulen highlights the need for municipalities to adapt to changing roles, such as transitioning from traditional radio stations to multi-platform media organizations.
4. **Ensuring Legitimacy:** Aligning initiatives with legal and moral standards is essential for their long-term success. Vermeulen advises organizations to consider how changes in legislation or social norms might impact their efforts, reinforcing the need for ethical and regulatory alignment.
5. **Conducting Risk Analysis and Measurement:** Vermeulen cautions against overloading organizations with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and recommends focusing on the most crucial issues. “Focus on the two or three issues that are crucial for success or failure,” he advises.

“At the end of the day, it’s about telling a stronger story, one that helps people see the value of what we’re doing and why it matters.”

– Prof. Marc Vermeulen

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 26th October 2021

Chapter 48

Merlene Rossouw on Empowering Communities through Advocacy for Rights, Education, and Active Citizenship

Introduction

Active citizenship is the cornerstone of a thriving democracy, yet South Africa faces significant challenges in fostering an engaged and informed populace. Merlene Rossouw, a human and gender rights activist and Executive Director of the Women Lead Movement, unpacks the critical role of education, empowerment, and advocacy in building active citizenship. This chapter delves into Rossouw's insights into the challenges of civic apathy, the importance of public participation, and the transformative work of the Women Lead Movement in empowering communities to shape their own futures.

The Women Lead Movement: A Catalyst for Change

The Women Lead Movement was founded in 2017 with the goal of educating and empowering citizens to take an active role in shaping their communities and the country. Rossouw explains: "Our mission is to drive action that inspires ordinary men and women on the ground to believe that they are indeed the real decision-makers and influencers in society." The movement is based on three pillars: education, empowerment, and advocacy.

- 1. Education:** Rossouw emphasizes the transformative power of education, stating, "Education is the bedrock of our work. If you know better, you do better." The movement focuses on community education, providing knowledge

about democracy, human rights, gender equality, and public participation. This grassroots approach has proven effective in changing attitudes and behaviours, as Rossouw explains, “We have seen how mere sharing of information influences the attitudes, the mindsets, and the behaviour of people instantaneously.”

2. **Empowerment:** Through its empowerment programs, the Women Lead Movement aims to build leadership skills and resilience among participants. Rossouw shares, “We facilitate a process where our participants develop their own community action plans with activities such as campaigns, marches, workshops, and mentoring.” These initiatives help communities take ownership of their development and address their unique challenges.
3. **Advocacy:** The advocacy pillar focuses on mobilizing citizens to campaign against discriminatory laws, poor service delivery, and other pressing issues. Rossouw stresses the importance of meaningful public participation, noting, “Our people are not ignorant. If you engage them and ask them what the challenges are in their community, they will tell you—and they will also give you a solution.”

The Challenge of Civic Apathy: Rossouw highlights the pervasive apathy among South Africans as a significant barrier to democracy. She explains: “What we are witnessing now is a population largely apathetic. They have quite literally handed all their power and agency over to government, which is a recipe for disaster.” This disengagement, she argues, has allowed the government to operate with minimal accountability, undermining the very essence of democracy. One of the root causes of this apathy, according to Rossouw, is a lack of education about democracy and governance. She notes: “When South Africa became a democracy, one of the focus areas was not educating people about this new constitutional dispensation.” Many citizens, particularly in marginalized communities, still lack a basic understanding of their rights and responsibilities, as well as the functions of government. Rossouw adds, “If people know their rights and responsibilities and understand what to expect from each

sphere of government, this will give rise to a more robust and engaged citizenry.”

Challenges in Working with Local Government

Rossouw’s work often intersects with local government, a space fraught with both opportunities and challenges. She describes her approach as both collaborative and critical: “I work with you when I see your heart and mind are in the right place. I work against you if I see you are busy with shoddy, corrupt dealings.”

One of the key challenges Rossouw identifies is the lack of meaningful engagement by local government. She explains, “What this government and local government have been doing over the years is ticking boxes. They come with a pre-designed plan and force that plan down the throats of these people. That is not meaningfully engaging people.” Rossouw also criticizes the politicization of ward committees, which often exclude diverse voices and fail to represent the broader community. She argues, “The fact that ward councillors are the chair of ward committees does not mean that the entire ward committee must be full of DA, EFF, or ANC members. It has to be a diverse group of people representing the interests of that particular community.”

As South Africa grapples with civic apathy and governance challenges, the lessons from Rossouw’s work offer a sobering way forward. By investing in civic education, engaging communities meaningfully, and empowering grassroots leadership, South Africa can build a more robust and participatory democracy. As Rossouw aptly concludes, “Democracy means the power of the people, the rule of the people. Where are the people in the rule? That is the problem we must solve.”

Through education, engagement, trust-building, empowerment, and accountability, Rossouw’s work provides a powerful model for strengthening democracy and improving governance. Rossouw aptly concludes, “Democracy means the power of the people, the rule of the people. Where are the people in the rule? That is the problem we must solve.”

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Investing in Civic Education:** An informed and engaged citizenry is essential for a thriving democracy. “Democracy is not only about elections; it is about the role that ordinary people play, long after the elections, in shaping the country and the communities they want to live in,” she explains.
- 2. Meaningful Community Engagement:** Rossouw stresses that public participation should go beyond tokenistic consultations. “If you engage people and ask them what the challenges are in their community, they will tell you—and they will also give you a solution,” she notes. This approach fosters collaboration between government and citizens, leading to more sustainable and impactful solutions.
- 3. Building Trust and Relationships:** Rossouw highlights the challenges faced by these communities, including poverty, unemployment, lack of education, and public disengagement. “We go to communities where there’s poverty, unemployment, lack of education, lack of public involvement, and violence. These communities often feel forgotten and hopeless,” she says. Establishing trust helps empower residents to take an active role in shaping their futures.
- 4. Empowering Communities to Lead:** Through community action planning, participants develop their own strategies for addressing local challenges. “We facilitate a process where our participants develop their own community action plans. This grassroots leadership model ensures that solutions come from within the community itself, increasing their relevance and effectiveness.
- 5. Accountability is Essential for Good Governance:** Rossouw advocates for holding government officials accountable while remaining open to collaboration. This balanced approach ensures that public officials act in the best interests of the communities they serve.

“I work with you when I see your heart and mind are in the right place. I work against you if I see you are busy with shoddy, corrupt dealings.”

– Merlene Rossouw

Chapter 48

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 2nd November 2021

Chapter 49

Quinton Adams Transforms Shacks into Homes

Introduction

Informal settlements are one of the most pressing challenges in South Africa, marked by poverty, inadequate housing, and the absence of basic services. Quinton Adams, a psychologist turned social activist, shares the transformative work of addressing these challenges. Known as “The Shack Builder,” Adams has dedicated over two decades to improving the lives of people living in informal settlements. This chapter unpacks his approach to restoring human dignity, the innovative social entrepreneurship model he employs, the challenges he faces, and the lessons learned from his journey.

The Motivation Behind the Work

For Adams, the drive to transform informal settlements stems from a deep sense of purpose. “I believe I can make a significant impact,” he says. His journey began in 2002 when a child’s story of living in a bush instead of a home inspired him to take action. “That is where we started the work intervention within informal settlements,” he explains. Adams combines his professional training in psychology, philosophy, and sociology with hands-on activism. “The community is my practice,” he states, emphasizing his commitment to addressing the lived realities of those in informal settlements. His work focuses on restoring human dignity and creating sustainable solutions to the challenges of poverty, unemployment, and inadequate housing. Adams also advocates for systemic policy change to address the housing crisis. “We need to look at the national funding to solve

the housing problem because this backlog is just increasing,” he states, calling for a new social compact for housing that aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Social Entrepreneurship as a Model for Sustainability

A key aspect of Adams’ work is his innovative use of social entrepreneurship to sustain his projects. He explains: “Social entrepreneurship is to make profit on a social cause.” By selling wood and aluminium sheets, his organization generates income to fund its initiatives. “We make money for a social cause and I’ve realized that this is the way to go,” he notes. This model allows his organization to remain independent of government funding. “We don’t get government funding,” Adams says, adding that he prefers this approach because it ensures sustainability even when traditional funding sources dry up. The social entrepreneurship model has enabled his team to respond to emergencies like shack fires and flooding while also focusing on long-term solutions.

Challenges in Addressing Informal Settlements

Adams highlights several challenges in his work, particularly the lack of political will and engagement from local government. “I haven’t seen a councillor at all,” he reveals, despite working in informal settlements for over 15 years. He attributes this absence to a reluctance among councillors to engage with communities facing severe service delivery backlogs. “There’s no political will to solve the informal settlement crises,” he asserts. Another challenge is navigating the legislative framework for housing delivery. Adams explains, “We work within the informal housing sector, part of the shack upgrading project within the breaking new ground policy.” While this ensures compliance, it also adds layers of complexity to his work, particularly when building structures for people not on the official housing waiting list.

Adams also speaks about the dehumanizing conditions in informal settlements, describing them as “deep levels of poverty that are unimaginable.” He emphasizes the need to address these conditions not only for the sake of residents but also to reduce the burden on public health systems. “The health budget is so

high because of the living conditions of people in these informal settlements,” he explains.

Transforming Shacks into Homes

One of the most impactful aspects of Adams’ work is his ability to transform shacks into homes. He explains, “We assess the shack and identify the point of entry where we can change and transform.” This often involves simple but effective interventions, such as fixing windows, redirecting water, or ensuring proper ventilation. Adams’ approach is informed by chaos theory, which emphasizes understanding the rhythm of a system to identify leverage points for change. “You have to dance with the system,” he says, highlighting the importance of adaptability and creativity in his work. Empowering communities through skills development is another key aspect of his approach. Through his Backyard Varsity initiative, Adams trains young people in practical skills like carpentry and project management. “They were unemployed but not employable,” he notes, highlighting the importance of equipping individuals with the tools to improve their circumstances and create opportunities for themselves.

Adams’ journey as “The Shack Builder” exemplifies the power of grassroots activism and social entrepreneurship in addressing the challenges of informal settlements. His work not only restores human dignity but also offers a blueprint for sustainable, community-driven solutions. Adams makes an impassioned plea to municipalities to think beyond traditional approaches and partner with organizations like his to tackle the housing crisis. “If we don’t solve it, the municipalities will suffer the brunt,” he warns. His message is clear: by working together and prioritizing human dignity, it is possible to transform informal settlements and create a more equitable society.

Finally, Adams believes in both raising awareness and providing actionable solutions. “We accentuate the problem, but we also provide solutions,” he says. His work has gained international recognition, leading to partnerships with universities and presentations to the United Nations. By combining innovative thinking, community empowerment, policy advocacy, and global engagement, Adams’ approach offers

a powerful model for addressing the challenges of informal settlements.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Work Within the System While Thinking Outside the Box:** Respecting the legislative framework is crucial, but innovative solutions are equally important. “We are not part of the problem; we are part of the solution,” he says, stressing the importance of partnerships between NGOs, municipalities, and national government to create meaningful change.
2. **Small Interventions Can Have a Major Impact:** He recalls an instance where he fixed a window for a woman whose bed was soaked with rainwater, demonstrating how small interventions can have a major impact. “Sometimes we just have to fix a window or redirect water,” he explains, showing that practical, immediate solutions can greatly improve people’s living conditions.
3. **Equipping Individuals:** When young people have the tools, they can improve their circumstances and create opportunities for themselves as evident through the Backyard University program.

“This is not a wicked problem. It is solvable. We can change it.” – **Quinton Adams**

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 23rd November 2021

Chapter 50

Enhancing Youth Development through Sport with the Human Catalyst, Mpumi Lali

Introduction

Mpumi Lali is a passionate advocate for youth development and community transformation. In this chapter, he shares SCORE's inspiring journey of using sports as a tool for community development, particularly in municipal spaces, and his personal motivation for driving change in low-income communities. Mpumi describes himself as a "human catalyst," reflecting his commitment to enabling others to be the best they can be.

About SCORE

SCORE, an acronym originally using the initial letters for "Sport Coaches Outreach," has evolved over the years to focus on "changing lives through sport." Founded in 1990 by American Olympian, Juliet Thompson, SCORE began as a volunteer-driven initiative in the township of Khayelitsha, Cape Town. Juliet, inspired by her own transformative experience with sports, wanted to use sports as a tool for empowering young people in underprivileged communities. Mpumi emphasized SCORE's focus on low-income communities, explaining, "We operate in areas where poverty, unemployment, and lack of education are prevalent. Sports provide a positive outlet for young people, helping them build skills and confidence."

Mpumi Lali refers to himself as a "human catalyst" because of his passion for youth development. He explained, "A human catalyst enables other human beings to be the best they can be." Lali uses his facilitation and training skills to empower young

people in the Western Cape and across South Africa. His work focuses on teaching sports skills, sport administration, and club development to youth, helping them establish functional sports clubs and become community leaders. Lali is deeply committed to SCORE's mission of changing lives through sports. He shared, "SCORE specializes in community development, using sports as a tool to attract young people and involve them in positive activities." Through SCORE, Lali works with international and national volunteers to coach and mentor young people, helping them build skills, confidence, and resilience.

Sports Centers

SCORE operates three indoor sports centers in the Western Cape, providing safe spaces for community engagement. Lali explained: "These centers are located on municipal land and serve as extensions of municipal services. They offer young people opportunities to participate in sports and build positive connections." SCORE works closely with municipalities to establish sports centers and programs. Lali emphasized the importance of this partnership, saying, "Municipalities are key stakeholders. We collaborate with them to identify land for sports centers and ensure that our programs align with community needs."

In Swartland Municipality, for example, the relationship between SCORE and the local government has been particularly strong. The municipality actively supports SCORE's sports centers, providing amenities and reduced fees to ensure the centers are accessible to the community. However, Lali acknowledged that collaboration with municipalities also has its challenges. He shared, "While we work well with municipalities on infrastructure, we've struggled to establish strong partnerships for sports programs. Overcoming these challenges requires ongoing dialogue and relationship-building."

Challenges

SCORE faces several challenges in its mission to empower communities through sports. Since it operates in low-income communities, SCORE does not charge participants for its

programs. “We rely on funding, which is difficult to secure. Our teams often operate without proper kits, transport, or equipment. Despite this, we try to provide the basics to ensure young people can participate.” Poverty and unemployment in the communities SCORE serves create additional challenges. Lali explains: “Economic hardships often deter young people from participating in sports. We work to provide free programs and support to remove these barriers.” SCORE operates on bare minimum resources, which limits the scope and impact of its programs. Lali shared: “Our teams often lack proper kits and equipment. Despite this, we remain committed to providing opportunities for young people.”

Success Stories

Despite its challenges, SCORE has achieved significant successes in empowering communities through sports. Lali shared some of these success stories: SCORE has facilitated exchange programs that allow young people to travel to countries like Norway, France, Zambia, and Namibia. “These programs broaden horizons and build inclusivity. Participants return with new perspectives and skills that enrich their communities.” SCORE has successfully promoted sports that are less popular, such as male netball. Lali shared, “Our male netball team recently won the National Championships in Upington. Out of 11 players, nine came from our centre. This shows the impact of our programs in developing talent.” SCORE has transformed shy and disengaged young people into confident leaders. “We’ve seen young people with low self-esteem become captains and role models in their communities. This is the true impact of our work.”

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Sport as a Tool for Empowerment:** Sports can attract young people and provide a positive outlet for their energy. Mpumi emphasized: “Sports build skills, confidence, and resilience, transforming young people into leaders.”
2. **Collaboration with Municipalities:** Partnerships with municipalities are essential for creating sustainable programs.

Mpumi shared: “Municipalities play a key role in providing infrastructure and support for sports centers.”

3. **Inclusivity in Sports:** SCORE promotes sports that are less popular, such as male netball and female football, to challenge stereotypes and create opportunities for all. Lali explained: “Inclusivity is key to breaking barriers and empowering communities.”
4. **Overcoming Funding Challenges:** Operating in low-income communities requires innovative approaches to securing funding and resources. Lali shared: “We work with what we have to ensure young people can participate.”
5. **Transforming Lives Through Leadership:** SCORE’s programs have transformed shy and disengaged young people into confident leaders. Mpumi shared: “Seeing young people become captains and role models is the true impact of our work.”

“A human catalyst enables other human beings to be the best they can be.” – **Mpumi Lali**

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Published: 6th April 2022

Chapter 51

Rhoda Kadalie: Legacy of a Fearless Activist and Advocate for Social Justice

Introduction

Rhoda Kadalie was a prominent South African public intellectual and activist known for her fearless advocacy and commitment to social justice. In this tribute interview, her brother Patrick Kadalie shares insights into her life, her legacy, and the impact she had on South Africa and beyond. This chapter delves into key themes from the interview, including her early influences, career highlights, public persona, challenges faced, and the ongoing influence of her family legacy. Kadalie's reflections also provide valuable insights into the transformative power of dedicated activism and the importance of standing up for justice.

Early Influences and the Start of a Journey

Rhoda Kadalie grew up in a family deeply rooted in activism and social justice, which shaped her worldview from an early age. Her grandfather, Clements Kadalie, was a trailblazer as the first black trade unionist in South Africa, founding the Industrial Commercial Workers Union in the early 1920s. This legacy of fighting for workers' rights and social equity was a cornerstone of Rhoda's upbringing. Her father, a minister, was also actively involved in community work, emphasizing the importance of service and moral responsibility.

Patrick reflects on how these influences profoundly shaped Rhoda's character and commitment to fighting for justice. "Our family dynamics, including debates and differing views, influenced Rhoda's approach to activism," he said. "She balanced

the legacy of her grandfather's union work with her father's spiritual and community-focused values." This foundation instilled in her a sense of duty to advocate for those who were marginalized and oppressed.

Career Highlights

Rhoda Kadalie's career was marked by significant achievements that underscored her dedication to social justice and equality. She played a pivotal role in establishing the Gender Equity Unit at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), where she pioneered policies promoting women's rights and gender equality. Her advocacy created a safer and more inclusive environment for students and set a precedent for other institutions to follow. "Creating spaces where women felt safe was non-negotiable," she insisted.

In her pursuit of social change, Rhoda also founded Mpumelelo, a nonprofit organization focused on social innovation and impact. Through Mpumelelo, she facilitated fundraising and provided support for grassroots initiatives, empowering community-based organizations with resources and training to amplify their impact. "Empowerment starts at the grassroots," she believed. Additionally, in 1996, she was appointed as a Human Rights Commissioner by Nelson Mandela, taking on the critical responsibility of protecting and promoting human rights in post-apartheid South Africa. However, disillusioned by the government's actions and the slow pace of change, she eventually resigned from the position, reaffirming her commitment to grassroots activism and her belief that lasting change must originate from the community level. "Change must come from the people, not just the policies," she asserted.

Public Persona and Family Life

Kadalie was known for her strong, sometimes controversial public persona. Patrick shares that she was the same person in private as she was in public: authentic, passionate, and unafraid to voice her opinions. Her ability to articulate difficult truths made her a respected figure in activist circles, but it also attracted criticism and misunderstanding from those who disagreed with her

views. Her willingness to challenge the status quo and address uncomfortable issues was a hallmark of her activism.

Despite the challenges and debates within the family, Rhoda's commitment to justice and equality remained unwavering. Patrick recalls family discussions that often revolved around social issues, highlighting how these conversations shaped Rhoda's perspectives. "We learned to engage critically with different viewpoints, which fuelled her passion for justice," he noted. "She was never afraid to speak her mind, even if it meant standing alone."

Her strong and sometimes controversial public persona also led to misunderstandings and misrepresentations of her work and beliefs. Critics often labelled her radical, but she remained steadfast in her commitment to speaking truth to power. "Labels didn't define me; my actions did," she said. Balancing her public activism with her personal life was another ongoing challenge. Her public persona often overshadowed her private self, making it difficult to cultivate personal relationships outside of her activism. Despite these challenges, Rhoda remained unwavering in her mission, continuously striving for justice and meaningful social change.

Legacy and Future

Reflecting on Rhoda's legacy, Patrick emphasizes the importance of remembering her as a critical voice in South Africa's post-apartheid era. He believes her work in social innovation and gender equity should be celebrated and her impact will be felt for years to come. The Kadalie family continues to honour her memory through their ongoing commitment to social justice and community work. "Rhoda should be remembered as an activist who stood up for justice, defended her truth, and had a major impact on so many people's lives," he concluded. Rhoda Kadalie's life was marked by her dedication to social justice, her fearlessness in the face of adversity, and her commitment to creating lasting change. Her work at UWC, Mpumelelo, and the Human Rights Commission left a significant mark on South Africa's social and political landscape.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Starting Small But Dreaming Big:** Rhoda's journey illustrates the importance of starting from humble beginnings while aspiring for significant change. Her legacy reminds us that impactful activism can stem from a strong commitment to community and justice. "I wasn't looking at the money," she said. "I was looking at the opportunity to get my foot in the door."
2. **Authenticity in Advocacy:** Rhoda's ability to remain true to herself, both in public and private life, underscores the importance of authenticity in activism. Her unwavering voice for justice serves as a model for future leaders. "She was unafraid to voice her opinions, even when they were controversial."
3. **The Importance of Family Influence:** The dynamics within the Kadalie family highlight how diverse perspectives and discussions can enrich one's approach to activism and social justice, fostering a deeper understanding of social issues. "Our family dynamics, including debates and differing views, influenced Rhoda's approach to activism."
4. **Navigating Challenges:** Rhoda's experiences with disillusionment and public perception illustrate the complexities of being an activist. Her resilience in overcoming such challenges is a testament to her strength and dedication. "Critics often labelled her as radical, but she remained steadfast in her commitment to speaking truth to power."
5. **Legacy of Impact:** Rhoda's contributions to gender equity and social innovation demonstrate the enduring impact of committed activism. Her life inspires others to pursue social justice relentlessly, leaving a lasting legacy for future generations. "Rhoda should be remembered as an activist who stood up for justice, defended her truth, and had a major impact on so many people's lives."

"Change must come from the people, not just the policies." – **Rhoda Kadalie**

Chapter 51

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 4th May 2022

Chapter 52

Reimagining Trade Unionism and Skills Development with Karl Cloete

Introduction

In this chapter, Karl Cloete, former Deputy Secretary General of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), shares his insights on the current state of the trade union movement. He explores the pressing need for revitalization, focusing on worker representation and skills development as critical areas for reform.

Karl Cloete's Journey in the Trade Union Movement

Karl Cloete's journey in the trade union movement began in 1983. As a student activist, he engaged in organizing efforts to empower workers, often at great personal risk. His official membership in NUMSA commenced on August 7, 1987, shortly after the union's formation. Cloete's commitment to the labour movement spanned over three decades, culminating in his early retirement in 2020. After leaving NUMSA, Cloete established Rock Solid Consulting Services, a consultancy aimed at enhancing worker and trade union education. His focus includes skills development, strategic planning, and research in industrial strategy.

The Current State of the Trade Union Movement

Cloete characterizes the trade union movement as being in a state of crisis, primarily due to a significant shift away from prioritizing the interests of workers. He highlights several key issues contributing to this crisis. One of the main concerns is the neglect of skills development. Historically, trade unions have played a vital role in advocating for skills development

and training; however, Cloete observes a troubling trend where unions have largely neglected this area, failing to champion initiatives that would empower workers through education and skills enhancement. This neglect undermines workers' potential to advance in their careers and improve their livelihoods. "Skills development is the backbone of worker empowerment, yet it is often overlooked," Cloete notes. Another critical issue is the gap between policy formulation and implementation. Cloete points out that many policies designed to benefit workers fail to translate into effective action on the ground. While well-crafted policies may exist, their execution often falls short, leaving workers without the support they need. Additionally, Cloete notes the fragmented approach of the government, where different departments operate in silos, exacerbating the challenges faced by the trade union movement. This lack of cohesion results in ineffective collaboration and resource allocation, making it more difficult to address national issues such as unemployment and skills shortages. "We must break down silos to create cohesive solutions," Cloete emphasizes.

The Need for Rethinking Skills Development

Cloete emphasizes the urgent need to re-examine and re-imagine skills development in South Africa, highlighting several critical considerations. He begins by drawing attention to the historical context, specifically the effectiveness of apartheid-era policies such as the "manpower acts." Despite their discriminatory nature, these policies were successful in training artisans and addressing skills gaps, and Cloete argues that understanding this past can help inform current practices, enabling the creation of a more inclusive skills development framework. "Learning from the past can guide our future," he asserts.

Addressing Implementation Challenges

Cloete partially agrees with the view that South Africa possesses strong policies but faces challenges in their implementation. He highlights several key points to explain his stance. Firstly, he emphasizes the importance of examining policies from the perspective of their beneficiaries. Cloete argues that

policies should be designed with the needs of workers in mind, ensuring they address the real challenges faced by the labour force. “Policies must speak to the realities of workers,” he insists. Additionally, he underscores the necessity of greater coordination within government departments for effective policy implementation. According to Cloete, a more integrated approach, where departments collaborate to tackle national challenges, is vital, as opposed to allowing individual entities to operate in isolation. Finally, Cloete stresses the importance of worker empowerment, particularly through skills development. He argues that any policy aimed at economic recovery and job creation must prioritize building a skilled workforce, as such efforts will be ineffective without it. Policies should focus on developing skills that align with market demands and economic needs to ensure long-term success. “Empowerment through skills is non-negotiable,” he states.

Vision for the Future

Karl Cloete envisions a revitalized trade union movement that prioritizes skills development and worker empowerment. He emphasizes the need for several critical actions to achieve this vision. First, he advocates for meaningful dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders, including government, business, and civil society, to identify and address key issues within the current skills development system. “Collaboration is the key to unlocking potential,” he notes. Cloete believes that such collaboration can lead to innovative solutions that benefit all parties involved. Cloete argues that unions should lead efforts to empower workers through education and skills training, positioning themselves as strong advocates for workforce development. “Unions must be at the forefront of worker empowerment,” he concludes.

Karl Cloete’s insights underscore the urgent need for the trade union movement to refocus on worker empowerment and skills development. As Cloete aptly concludes, “We need to re-imagine and review our approach to skills development to build an inclusive economy.”

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Worker-Centered Policies:** This focus ensures that workers are empowered and represented in all decision-making processes, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability. “Workers must be at the heart of policy.”
2. **Integrated Government Approach:** Collaboration among departments can lead to more effective solutions to national challenges, enhancing the overall impact of policies. “Integration is essential for effective governance.”
3. **Union Involvement:** Trade unions should play a more active role in skills development and training initiatives. “Unions must reclaim their role in skills development.”
4. **Historical Learning:** Understanding historical contexts and past successes can provide valuable insights for current policy development. “History is a guide for future success.”
5. **Continuous Dialogue:** Engaging in ongoing dialogue with stakeholders can help identify and address critical issues in skills development. “Dialogue fosters innovation and inclusion.”

“Skills development is the backbone of worker empowerment, yet it is often overlooked.”

– Karl Cloete

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Published: 18th May 2022

Chapter 53

Exploring African Identity and Decolonization with Patric Tariq Mellet

Introduction

In this chapter we engage with Patric Tariq Mellet, a heritage activist and author, whose lifelong dedication to community-oriented politics and the promotion of ancestral cultural heritage offers profound insights into these topics. This chapter explores key themes including the distortion of African history, the concept of African identity, the importance of decolonization, and the role of heritage in shaping a unified African consciousness.

The Distortion of African History

Mellet's book, *The Lie of 1652*, critically examines the historical narratives that dominate South African museums and educational systems. He highlights a significant issue: the pervasive distortion of African social history, which has often been overlooked or misrepresented. Mellet asserts, "We were given a very distorted and sometimes false history when it came to African social history." This Eurocentric narrative neglects the rich tapestry of African contributions and experiences.

The Need for Decolonization

Mellet emphasizes the urgent need to transition from a neo-colonial interpretation of history towards a decolonial understanding of Africa's past. This includes recognizing that the historical narratives taught in schools and presented in museums often reflect colonial perspectives that marginalize African voices. He advocates for an educational framework that encourages

critical inquiry, urging individuals to explore and question the information they have been taught. “By fostering a stronger sense of self and belonging, individuals can reclaim their identities and histories,” he states.

Encouraging Exploration

Mellet’s approach is not about imposing a single narrative but rather about encouraging exploration and dialogue. He believes that people should seek out information that contradicts what they have learned in traditional educational settings. This exploration can lead to a more profound understanding of one’s identity and heritage, ultimately contributing to a more cohesive and informed society. He emphasizes, “Exploration is key to understanding our true selves.”

The Concept of African Identity

Mellet delves into the complexities surrounding African identity, addressing the historical and cultural contexts that define who is considered African. He criticizes the misuse of terms like “first nations” and “first peoples,” arguing that these are often racially charged constructs that fail to capture the nuances of African identity. He explains: “Every single African society in South Africa has as part of their ancestral cultural history a heritage of Khoi, San, and Kalanga.” Mellet traces the origins of the term “African” back to the first black civilization in Africa, known as Kemite, which translates to “black.” This historical context is vital for understanding contemporary identity politics. By grounding the conversation in historical facts, Mellet seeks to dismantle divisive narratives that have emerged over time. “Understanding our roots is essential for identity,” he asserts.

He emphasizes that African identity is not monolithic; it encompasses a multitude of cultures, languages, and histories. By embracing this diversity, Africans can foster a sense of unity that transcends ethnic and cultural differences. Mellet argues that recognizing the interconnectedness of various African identities is essential for building a cohesive national and continental identity. “Unity in diversity is our strength,” he notes.

The term “Cammisa” translates to “fresh water” or “sweet water,” symbolizing the blending of various cultural heritages. Mellet describes how the Cammisa River system in Cape Town serves as a metaphor for the interconnectedness of different communities. He states, “We are Africans and our sub-identity is this Cammisa coming together, and it’s coming together as a cement that binds us.” This concept emphasizes the importance of recognizing shared histories and experiences, particularly among those who have been marginalized in mainstream narratives.

Challenges in Defining African Identity

Mellet addresses the challenges in defining African identity, particularly within the context of South Africa’s complex history. He discusses the historical evolution of the term “Afrikaner” and its implications for contemporary identity politics. By emphasizing the importance of understanding the historical context of these terms, he urges a move beyond divisive labels to embracing a unified African identity.

The term “Afrikaner” has evolved over time, reflecting the changing dynamics of South African society. Mellet points out that understanding the historical context of these terms is essential for addressing divisions and promoting unity. He argues that a political identity should not overshadow the deeper cultural and ancestral connections that bind people together as Africans. “History informs our present and future,” he states.

He then advocates for a redefinition of identity that transcends racial and ethnic divisions. He emphasizes the need to recognize that all individuals with African ancestry share a common heritage and should be united under the broader umbrella of African identity. This approach encourages inclusivity and fosters a sense of belonging among all Africans, regardless of their specific ethnic backgrounds. “We must move beyond labels to unity,” he urges. The lack of a cohesive Southern African identity hampers efforts to address regional challenges. Mellet argues that by fostering a collective consciousness, nations can work together to tackle issues such as economic inequality, migration, and xenophobia. This requires a shift in mindset that

recognizes the shared histories and cultural ties among Southern African nations. “A collective identity strengthens us,” he notes.

The colonial legacy of divide and rule has left deep scars on African societies, creating divisions that persist to this day. Patric Tariq Mellet’s insights into African identity and governance underscore the importance of decolonization, unity, and the celebration of diverse cultural heritages.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Decolonization:** Implementing decolonial approaches in education and governance is essential for a true understanding of African history and identity. “Decolonization is key to reclaiming our history.”
2. **Unity in Diversity:** Recognizing and valuing the contributions of various ethnic groups can strengthen social cohesion. “Our diversity is our strength.”
3. **Historical Awareness:** Education that emphasizes historical accuracy can help dismantle harmful stereotypes and prejudices. “Awareness leads to understanding and unity.”
4. **Community Engagement:** Involving diverse voices in decision-making fosters a sense of ownership and accountability. “Community engagement is the foundation of governance,” Mellet states.
5. **Addressing Historical Divisions:** Acknowledging past injustices and working towards reconciliation can pave the way for a more equitable future. “Healing our divisions is essential for progress.”

“We need to build unity between peoples and stop saying that some Africans are non-Africans because they are not part of Sub-Saharan bloodlines.”

– Patric Tariq Mellet

Chapter 53

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 10th March 2024

Chapter 54

Empowering Youth and the Role of Local Government with Sakhe Duka

Introduction

This chapter introduces Sakhe Duka, a young broadcaster and mother who is transforming lives through radio. This chapter explores key themes, including the importance of local governance, the challenges faced by young people, and the power of resilience and community support.

The Journey of Sakhe Duka

Sakhe Duka, a 25-year-old mother and broadcaster, shares her journey from being part of a close-knit family to becoming a prominent voice on community radio. Her background reflects the struggles and triumphs of many young South Africans. Despite facing life challenges, Sakhe pursued her passion for radio production, thanks to the unwavering support of her mother and the opportunities provided by community radio KC 107.7 in Paarl and NEMISA. She states, “I’m spiritually inclined and I love the fact that I can speak to the world through my work.” This highlights the transformative power of support systems in shaping one’s path. Sakhe emphasizes, “Support systems can truly change lives.”

The Role of Local Governance

Sakhe believes that local government must be more responsive to the needs of young people, providing opportunities for growth and development. “Local governance plays a crucial role in creating an environment where young people can thrive,” she asserts. By prioritizing policies that directly impact the youth,

such as education and employment initiatives, local governments can foster trust and engagement among the youth. Investing in community infrastructure and programs that engage young people can lead to more vibrant and supportive environments, while including youth in decision-making processes ensures that their voices and concerns are heard, leading to more effective governance. She insists, “Youth voices must be at the forefront of decision-making.”

Challenges Faced by Young People

Sakhe identifies several significant challenges faced by young South Africans. One of the most pressing issues is unemployment, which has become a major problem in many communities. The lack of job opportunities leads many young people into bad habits, creating a cycle of despair that is difficult to escape. Alongside unemployment, substance abuse is a significant concern, often serving as a coping mechanism for dealing with other problems such as unemployment and gender-based violence (GBV). Many young people turn to substances to numb their pain, which only worsens their situation. GBV is another pervasive issue, particularly affecting young women. “GBV is a crisis that affects us all,” Sakhe notes. Teenage pregnancy is also prevalent, often due to a lack of education and access to contraceptives. The social stigma surrounding teenage pregnancy further isolates young mothers, making it even harder for them to thrive. Finally, there is widespread disillusionment with the government. Many young people feel frustrated and lack confidence in local government due to unfulfilled promises and perceived corruption. This disillusionment often leads to apathy and disengagement from civic responsibilities. Sakhe warns, “Disillusionment breeds disengagement.”

The Impact of Radio

Sakhe’s love for radio stems from its ability to transform lives by changing perspectives and renewing mindsets. She believes that radio can be a powerful tool for social change, saying, “I love radio because it allows me to speak to the world and make a difference.” This highlights the potential of media to influence public opinion

and inspire action. Radio provides a platform for marginalized voices, allowing them to share their stories and experiences. “Radio gives a voice to the voiceless,” she states. Local radio stations can foster community engagement by addressing local issues and encouraging participation in governance. “Community engagement starts with conversation,” Sakhe believes.

Youth and Local Government

She suggests that more youth involvement in governance could lead to better policies and greater community engagement. She states: “We need more youth leagues in government to bring fresh ideas and perspectives.” Establishing youth leagues within local government can empower young people to contribute their ideas and perspectives. Pairing young individuals with experienced mentors in governance can also help them navigate the political landscape and develop their leadership skills. Providing education about civic responsibilities and governance can encourage young people to become active participants in their communities.

Sakhe Duka’s journey highlights the importance of resilience, community support, and effective local governance in empowering young people. Her dedication to transforming lives through radio serves as an inspiration to others. As Sakhe concludes, “Continue to be resilient, even when the situation seems impossible.” Her message resonates as a call to action for young people to pursue their dreams and for communities to support their efforts.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Community Support:** Providing mentorship, financial support, and opportunities can empower young people to achieve their dreams. “Community involvement is crucial for fostering a supportive environment.”
- 2. Responsive Governance:** Local government must be more responsive to the needs of young people, addressing issues like unemployment and GBV. “Proactive measures can help rebuild trust in governance.”
- 3. Transformative Media:** Using media platforms like radio can be a powerful tool for social change and community

development. “Media can amplify voices and facilitate dialogue.”

4. **Addressing Teenage Pregnancy:** Implementing comprehensive education and access to contraceptives can help reduce high rates of teenage pregnancy. “Education is essential for informed decision-making.”
5. **Combating Substance Abuse:** Providing support systems and rehabilitation programs can help young people overcome substance abuse. “A multi-faceted approach is necessary to tackle this issue.”

“Local governance plays a crucial role in creating an environment where young people can thrive.”

– Sakhe Duka

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Published: 2nd June 2022

Chapter 55

Youth Leadership and Social Advocacy with Siphokhazi Vuso

Introduction

In this chapter, Siphokhazi Vuso, a multimedia journalist from the Eastern Cape, explores her journey, the importance of multimedia journalism, and her advocacy for social issues.

The Journey of Siphokhazi Vuso

Vuso hails from the Eastern Cape. Her journey includes several key milestones. She made the bold decision to relocate to Cape Town in search of better opportunities in the media industry, demonstrating the courage and determination often required of young professionals. Over the past 3-4 years, she has successfully developed her career in multimedia journalism, gaining a strong reputation for focusing on the human stories behind the headlines. She reflects, “Every story is an opportunity to give a voice to those who might not be heard.”

The Role of Multimedia Journalism

Vuso highlights the importance of multimedia journalism in today’s technology-driven world. She emphasizes the need to adapt to new forms of storytelling, combining traditional journalism with digital media. She states, “It’s not just about writing anymore; it’s about creating content that engages people across different platforms.” This evolution reflects the changing landscape of media and the necessity for journalists to connect with diverse audiences. The key aspects of multimedia journalism include engagement, adaptability, and impact. Engagement is achieved by utilizing various media formats such as videos,

photographs, and social media to create compelling content that captures the audience's attention. Adaptability is crucial, as it involves staying current with technological advancements and understanding audience preferences to enhance storytelling. Finally, multimedia journalism has the power to make an impact by raising awareness about social issues through powerful and persuasive narratives. Vuso asserts, "Our role is to inform, but also to inspire change."

Addressing the Challenges

Vuso stresses the importance of advocacy and community engagement to tackle these issues. Her experiences as a journalist have provided her with insights into the struggles faced by many South Africans, motivating her to raise awareness through her work. She notes, "Real change begins with awareness and action."

Vuso is passionate about social advocacy, particularly in the areas of GBV and child rights. She believes in the power of storytelling to raise awareness and drive change. She states, "Every time I interview someone, I feel a deep connection and a responsibility to share their story." This connection underscores the role of journalists as advocates for social justice. She actively engages with the community, building meaningful relationships with individuals affected by these issues, allowing them to authentically share their stories. Additionally, she empowers marginalized voices by providing them with a platform to share their experiences, helping to amplify their concerns and drive change. She emphasizes, "Empowerment comes from being heard and understood."

Being a Young Black Woman in Cape Town

Vuso reflects on her experience as a young black woman in Cape Town, describing it as a journey filled with opportunities and personal growth. She says, "Being in Cape Town has opened my mind to different worldviews and experiences." While she acknowledges the existence of racism, she emphasizes the importance of having a thick skin and resilience in her profession. "Resilience is my armour," she adds.

Her personal growth has been fostered through various experiences, including cultural exposure and resilience. Meeting people from diverse backgrounds has broadened her perspective, enriched her understanding of social issues, and helped her approach life with a more open mindset. Additionally, she has developed a strong sense of self, allowing her to navigate challenges in her career with resilience and confidence. These experiences have played a key role in her personal and professional development.

Confidence in Local Government

Vuso expresses a personal confidence in local government but recognizes the widespread disillusionment among her peers. She suggests that involving more young people and women in governance could lead to positive change. She states, “I would love to see a woman-led political party that focuses on the issues that matter to us.”

Local governments should prioritize youth involvement by encouraging young people to participate in governance, ensuring their voices are heard and represented in decision-making processes. Additionally, promoting women-led initiatives is essential for addressing issues that disproportionately affect women and children, empowering women to take leadership roles in shaping policies. Lastly, fostering transparency and accountability is crucial for building trust with the community. By implementing transparent practices and accountability measures, local governments can strengthen public confidence and enhance the effectiveness of governance. “Transparency builds trust,” she asserts.

And If You Were to be Mayor for a Day?

If given the opportunity to be mayor for a day, Vuso would prioritize addressing homelessness and gender-based violence (GBV). She shares: “I would buy coffee for all the homeless people every day, because everyone deserves a cup of coffee.” Her action plan includes several key initiatives. First, she would focus on increasing the availability of shelters and support services for the homeless population. Secondly, she would advocate for child-

protection initiatives, prioritizing the safety and well-being of children, particularly in vulnerable communities. “Compassion can be a catalyst for change,” she believes.

Siphokhazi Vuso’s journey as a multimedia journalist and social advocate highlights the importance of resilience, adaptability, and community engagement. As she concludes, “Let’s get young people involved, let’s get women involved, and let’s hear all views.”

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Inclusive Governance:** Involving young people and women in governance can lead to more effective and representative decision-making. “Inclusion is key to transformative leadership.”
2. **Multimedia Storytelling:** Adapting to new forms of storytelling can enhance engagement and impact in journalism. “Innovation in media is about connecting with hearts and minds.”
3. **Addressing Social Issues:** Prioritizing issues like GBV, homelessness, and child safety can improve public trust and well-being. “Social advocacy through journalism can drive real change.”
4. **Community Engagement:** Building strong relationships with the community can foster trust and support for governance initiatives. “Community engagement strengthens social bonds.”
5. **Strengthening Justice Systems:** Ensuring that the justice system delivers appropriate and timely responses to crimes can restore public confidence. “Justice must be swift and fair to rebuild trust.”

“Every story is an opportunity to give a voice to those who might not be heard.” – **Siphokhazi Vuso**

Chapter 55

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 8th June 2022

Chapter 56

Advocating for Human Rights and Social Cohesion with Vuyo Ntlangu

Introduction

In this chapter Vuyo Ntlangu, a young human rights advocate and refugee rights activist delves into key themes from his work, including the pivotal role of human rights advocacy, the pressing plight of refugees in South Africa, the pervasive issue of xenophobia, and the valuable governance lessons that can be gleaned from his experiences. Ntlangu's unwavering commitment to social justice and his relentless efforts to safeguard the rights of marginalized populations offer profound insights into overcoming adversity and nurturing a culture of accountability and service delivery in local governance.

The Role of Human Rights Advocacy

Vuyo Ntlangu is a passionate human rights advocate dedicated to raising awareness and defending the rights of vulnerable and marginalized populations in South Africa. He highlights his commitment by stating, "As a human rights advocate, I work to protect the rights of women, children, members of the LGBTIQ+ community, and refugees."

A key aspect of Ntlangu's advocacy is awareness-raising. Through his efforts, he strives to inform the public about the rights of marginalized groups, contributing to a more informed and empathetic society. He explains, "The more people understand the rights of others, the less likely they are to fear or hate them." In addition to raising awareness, Ntlangu is also deeply involved in legal defence. Another crucial aspect of his work is community engagement. Ntlangu actively engages with

communities to foster understanding and respect for diversity, an essential element in promoting social cohesion and inclusivity in society. “Engagement doesn’t mean parachuting in—it means standing with people in their context, listening, and learning,” he notes.

Combating Xenophobia and Promoting Social Cohesion

Ntlangu believes that addressing xenophobia requires a comprehensive, multifaceted approach, combining education, community engagement, and policy implementation. He emphasizes the importance of promoting social cohesion, fostering tolerance for diversity and uniting people through diversity. According to Ntlangu, “Efforts to combat xenophobia must prioritize creating a society where different cultures and communities can coexist harmoniously.” Ntlangu emphasizes the importance of community dialogues, which facilitate conversations between local residents and refugees to address misconceptions, break down barriers, and foster meaningful relationships. “People fear what they don’t understand. When they hear each other’s stories, walls come down,” he explains. These strategies work together to build a more inclusive and accepting society.

The Plight of Refugees in South Africa

Ntlangu sheds light on the significant challenges faced by refugees in South Africa, emphasizing issues such as documentation, access to basic services, and social integration. According to him, refugees frequently encounter human rights violations, and one of the primary barriers is expired or incomplete documentation. “Without valid papers, you don’t just lose access—you lose dignity. You can’t get healthcare, education, or a job. You’re invisible,” he explains.

Ntlangu addresses several common misconceptions surrounding refugees, such as the belief that they take jobs from South Africans or contribute to crime and disease. He explains that these are largely misunderstandings, emphasizing that many refugees actually create job opportunities for local South Africans

and contribute positively to the economy. “Many refugees actually create job opportunities for local South Africans,” he affirms. Ntlangu explains the long and often frustrating process of transitioning from refugee to citizen in South Africa, which can take up to 20 years due to inefficiencies within the Department of Home Affairs. He states, “The process is supposed to take around five years, but it often takes much longer,” highlighting the significant delays refugees face. Despite these challenges, Ntlangu stresses that refugees still have the right to seek employment, pursue education, and contribute to society as they wait for permanent residency and eventual citizenship.

Challenges Faced by Refugees and Advocates

Ntlangu highlights several critical challenges faced by refugees and human rights advocates in South Africa. One of the primary issues is documentation, as refugees often encounter significant difficulties when attempting to renew their papers. This problem leads to obstacles in accessing essential services. Xenophobia also remains a pressing concern, with deep-seated misconceptions and prejudices against refugees fuelling social tensions and contributing to violent incidents. “It’s not just verbal abuse—people have lost homes, businesses, and lives,” he warns.

Another significant challenge is economic integration, where refugees face numerous barriers to entering the job market and accessing business opportunities. This is further complicated by the gap between policy and practice. Although there are laws in place to protect refugees, they are not always effectively enforced or implemented. “Laws exist on paper, but implementation is weak. Rights without enforcement are empty,” he says. Additionally, social integration is a struggle, as refugees often find it hard to adapt to South African society due to cultural and language barriers. The inefficiency of the Department of Home Affairs adds to these difficulties, as long delays in processing refugee applications and status changes exacerbate the situation.

Ntlangu’s work as a human rights advocate, refugee rights activist, and peace monitor exemplifies the importance of promoting social justice and protecting the rights of vulnerable populations.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Human Rights Protection:** Ensuring the protection of human rights for all, including vulnerable and marginalized groups, is fundamental to a just society. “You cannot talk about good governance and ignore human rights.”
2. **Enhancing Policy Implementation:** Bridging the gap between policy and practice is essential to ensuring that laws and regulations are effectively implemented and safeguard the rights of all individuals. “Laws on paper are meaningless if people still suffer on the ground.”
3. **Social Cohesion:** Promoting social cohesion and tolerance for diversity through community engagement and policy implementation can mitigate xenophobia. “Unity in diversity means seeing our differences as strengths.”
4. **Empowerment through Education:** Educating young people about refugee issues and human rights fosters a more inclusive society. “When young people know the truth, they stop repeating hate.”
5. **Supporting Economic Integration:** Providing support for refugees to access economic opportunities and contribute to the local economy strengthens communities. “Economic inclusion benefits everyone, not just refugees.”

“Laws exist on paper, but implementation is weak.
Rights without enforcement are empty.”

– Vuyo Ntlangu

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on this chapter.



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Chapter 57

Yusuf Patel on Honouring Don Mattera: A Life of Cultural Activism and Unwavering Integrity

Introduction

In this chapter community leader, Yusuf Patel, pays tribute to legendary cultural activist, Don Mattera, and reflects on Mattera's impact on South African history, his complex identity, his resistance against apartheid, and the importance of keeping his legacy alive. Mattera's influence stretched beyond poetry, activism, and journalism; he was a voice for justice, a protector of cultural heritage, and an advocate for non-racialism. His journey from gangster to poet, from resistance fighter to journalist, and from exile to mentor showcases his unwavering commitment to uplifting South Africa's marginalized communities.

From the Streets of Sophiatown to the Heart of Activism

Born in 1935, Don Mattera grew up in Sophiatown, a vibrant, multicultural neighbourhood that embodied the essence of South African diversity. Described as Johannesburg's District Six, Sophiatown was home to Africans, Indians, Chinese, and mixed-race families, a melting pot of cultures, languages, and resistance movements. "Sophiatown had Africans, Indians, Chinese. It was the beating heart of black culture, much like Mabarakstad in Pretoria or the bustling streets of Durban," said Patel.

Mattera was deeply embedded in the social fabric of this dynamic community. He was a soccer player, a poet, and eventually the most feared gang leader. In the late 1950s, however, his life took a dramatic turn when he transitioned

from gangsterism to political activism. “At that time, Don was the gangster of Western Sophiatown. He was the Don. He had charisma, he had presence. But as political resistance intensified, he was converted from the streets to the ANC Youth League. A whole new world opened up for him outside of gangsterism and fighting.” Mattera’s exposure to political struggle led him to black consciousness, poetry, and later journalism, marking the beginning of his fight against apartheid.

A Poet of Resistance: Mattera’s Art in the Face of Oppression

As apartheid tightened its grip on South Africa, Mattera used poetry as a form of resistance. His writings captured the trauma of forced removals, political brutality, and the resilience of black communities. Two days after the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960, where police opened fire on peaceful protesters, killing 69 people, Mattera penned a poem called “Day of Thunder, Day of Blood”:

“The dusty streets of Sharpeville.
The thunder roared from distant skies,
And the blood flowed from Black men’s eyes
When they met the hail of dum-dum bullets.
The crying, the calling, the falling, the running,
Of men, women, and children.
And the cold grey faces of the dead
Had stopped the hail and held the thunder.
While my people sang:
Return, oh Africa, oh return.
Bitter was that day.”

His poetry was raw, painful, and unapologetic, exposing the brutality of the apartheid regime. In 1963, this very poem led to his detention for 12 days, marking one of his many confrontations with state repression.

Mattera's Complex Identity: Navigating Race, Culture, and Heritage

One of the most painful realities of apartheid was its racial classification system, which forcibly split families based on arbitrary definitions of race. Mattera, whose grandfather was Italian and grandmother was Tswana, was directly affected by these policies. "Don always said, 'I have Boesman blood in me too.' He spoke Afrikaans, English, Xhosa, Zulu, Tswana, Sotho, Venda, and even some Italian. He was truly South African." Due to apartheid laws, his family was divided—some classified as "African," others as "Coloured." His brothers were forced to live in different areas based on these classifications, a painful reminder of the regime's brutality. "Apartheid didn't just destroy communities; it tore families apart. One brother was classified as African, the other as Coloured. Families were ripped apart by racial classifications they never chose." Mattera's poetry and writings consistently challenged racial identity, nationalism, and apartheid's divisive policies.

Challenges in Honouring Mattera's Legacy

Despite his contributions, Mattera was marginalized in post-apartheid South Africa. His refusal to conform and his outspoken criticism of those in power led to his exclusion from mainstream political roles. He never became a minister, never occupied a high-profile government position, and was left financially struggling in his later years. "For all the things he did—his writing, his activism—he was left with almost nothing. That is the tragedy of South Africa." His legacy is at risk of being forgotten, as younger generations remain disconnected from the cultural and political struggles that shaped the nation. If his work is not actively preserved, his contributions to literature, journalism, and activism may fade from public consciousness.

Mattera's legacy must live on through education, cultural preservation, and a commitment to non-racialism. His poetry, journalism, and activism should be integrated into school curriculums, ensuring future generations understand his role in shaping South Africa. "Our kids must learn about Don Mattera's writings, poetry, and short stories. If we do not reclaim our

cultural heritage, we will lose our identity.” Mattera’s message was simple: we are Africans, beyond race and division. His belief in unity, justice, and cultural pride should remain a guiding force for South Africa’s future.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Cultural Activism Must Be Preserved:** Mattera’s legacy must be celebrated through education, ensuring that young people embrace their African identity and cultural history. “We must embed his poetry and writings into our curriculum.”
2. **The Tragedy of Marginalization in Post-Apartheid South Africa:** “With all his contributions, Don lived on a small special pension. That is the reality of our country.” South Africa must do more to honour its intellectual and cultural leaders, ensuring they receive the recognition they deserve.
3. **Non-Racialism Must be Actively Defined and Defended:** To keep his vision alive, leaders and citizens alike must actively resist racial divisions and advocate for true inclusivity. “We talk about non-racialism but we don’t define it. We still call ourselves Coloured, Indian, White; when will we all simply be Africans?”
4. **Honesty and Integrity Should Always Guide Leadership:** “Don could have been a minister, but he refused to compromise his principles. He criticized those in power openly, and that made him unpopular.” Mattera’s unwavering honesty serves as an example for today’s leaders: standing for truth comes at a cost, but it is essential for ethical governance.

“Apartheid didn’t just destroy communities; it tore families apart.” - **Yusuf Patel**

Chapter 57

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Chapter 58

Peter Jones on his Last Moments with Steve Biko

Introduction

The interview took place on September 12th, the anniversary of Steve Biko's death and P. C. Jones's 77th birthday. As the last person to be with Steve Biko before his arrest, Jones shares his life journey, his political awakening, and the pivotal moments that shaped his activism within the Black Consciousness Movement.

Early Life of Peter Cyril Jones

Peter Cyril Jones grew up in Somerset West, a small village outside Cape Town. Born into a family of five children and raised by a single mother who worked in service and factories, Jones's childhood was marked by economic hardship and racial segregation. Jones recalled growing up in a mixed neighbourhood before the implementation of apartheid's Group Areas Act. "We lived amongst and played with white children," he explained, but as he grew older, he began to notice the racial divide. "Our white friends became hesitant to play with us or be seen with us in certain places." Jones's political awareness began to take shape in his early teens. "By the age of 15, I was already aware of the wrongness of white society and the brutality of apartheid," he said. Inspired by the whispers of adults about events like the Sharpeville massacre and the burning of dompas (passbooks), Jones started questioning the social structures around him.

Education and Mentorship

Jones attended the Methodist School for primary education and later Gordon High School in Somerset West, a segregated school

for coloured children. Despite the challenges, Jones excelled academically and was encouraged by his mother to achieve what his siblings could not. His neighbours, the February brothers—renowned teachers and graduates—became early mentors. “They were very political and served as role models,” Jones said. At Gordon High, his class teacher, played a fatherly role, further shaping his understanding of society.

While Jones was an avid reader, he did not engage with political literature until later in life. “Political writings were largely banned,” he explained. His formal political induction began at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), where he enrolled in 1968 to study for a B.Com degree.

University of the Western Cape: A Political Awakening

At UWC, Jones found himself among like-minded students from poor households who were politically aware and articulate. “The world opened up completely,” he said. The late 1960s were a turbulent time in South Africa, with the ANC and PAC banned, leaving a vacuum in the liberation movement. Jones became involved in the formation of the South African Students Organisation (SASO), an all-black university movement that defined “black” as all those politically, socially, and economically oppressed—Africans, Coloureds, and Indians. By 1969, Jones attended SASO’s first annual conference in Durban, where he encountered Steve Biko for the first time. “Steve stood out as a figurehead,” Jones recalled. “He had an incredible ability to explain the nature of blackness, oppression, and the need for black people to free themselves.” This conference heightened Jones’s sense of mission and deepened his commitment to revolution.

The Black Consciousness Movement

After leaving UWC due to financial constraints, Jones remained politically active. He helped form the first branch of the Black People’s Convention (BPC), the political wing of the Black Consciousness Movement. As the treasurer of the Cape Town branch and later a regional organizer, Jones worked tirelessly to mobilize and recruit people into the movement. The Black

Consciousness philosophy, as articulated by Biko, focused on the re-humanization of black people. “It was never anti-white,” Jones emphasized. “It was about empowering black people to reject the dehumanization of apartheid and take ownership of their liberation.”

Jones’s relationship with Biko deepened over the years. Their first personal interaction occurred in 1973 at the BPC’s annual conference in King William’s Town. Despite being banned and restricted to his hometown, Biko found ways to participate in the movement, often meeting with delegates one-on-one. By 1976, Jones was traveling regularly to King William’s Town to update Biko on the movement’s activities and collaborate on initiatives like the anti-Transkei independence campaign. This campaign aimed to resist the South African government’s plan to declare Transkei an independent homeland, a move that would entrench apartheid.

Arrest and Detention

On 18 August, 1977, Jones and Biko were arrested at a roadblock near Grahamstown while returning from Cape Town. They had been traveling to meet Dr Neville Alexander to discuss a unity initiative among liberation movements. Jones described the risks they took: “Steve wasn’t afraid to move around the country if it was necessary for the cause.” Despite Biko’s banning order, they believed the mission was worth the danger. Their arrest marked the beginning of a harrowing ordeal. Biko was brutally beaten during his detention, leading to his death on September 12, 1977. Jones was also detained and subjected to interrogation but survived to continue the struggle.

Challenges in the Struggle

Jones reflected on the challenges faced by the Black Consciousness Movement:

- **State Repression:** The apartheid government used banning orders, arrests, and violence to suppress activists.
- **Internal Divisions:** Differences in ideology and strategy sometimes created tensions within the liberation movement.

- **Resource Constraints:** While the Black Community Programmes were well-funded, managing resources effectively was a constant challenge.
- **Personal Sacrifices:** Activists like Jones often had to balance their political work with economic survival and family responsibilities. Despite these challenges, Jones and his comrades remained steadfast in their commitment to liberation.

Legacy of Black Consciousness

Jones believes that the philosophy of Black Consciousness remains as relevant today as it was during the apartheid era. “It’s about empowering people to take ownership of their lives and their communities,” he said. Reflecting on the movement’s impact, Jones pointed to the 1976 Soweto Uprisings as a turning point. “That revolutionary fervour burned through the 1980s and culminated in the new South Africa,” he said.

Peter Cyril Jones’s story is a testament to the courage, resilience, and vision of South Africa’s liberation activists. As the last person to be with Steve Biko before his death, Jones carries the weight of history and the responsibility to keep the legacy of Black Consciousness alive. “Steve Biko taught us that liberation comes from within,” Jones said. “It’s a lesson we must continue to teach and live by.”

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Empowerment through Identity:** The Black Consciousness Movement emphasized pride in Black identity as a foundation for liberation.
2. **Unity in Diversity:** Despite differences in language and culture, the movement united oppressed groups under a shared identity.
3. **Courage in the Face of Repression:** Activists like Jones and Biko demonstrated unwavering commitment despite state violence.

4. **Sustainability of Movements:** Effective resource management and accountability were key to sustaining the movement's activities.
5. **Relevance of Philosophy:** The principles of Black Consciousness remain vital for addressing contemporary challenges in South Africa.

“Steve Biko taught us that liberation comes from within.” – **Peter Jones**

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Chapter 59

A Township with a Logo with Dr Zwandile Plaatjie

Introduction

This chapter brings together two inspiring leaders from Gugulethu township in Cape Town, Dr Zwandile Plaatjie and Mr Pumzile Nteyi. The discussion explores the story behind the creation of Gugulethu's official logo, the township's groundbreaking year-long 60th-anniversary celebration and the broader impact of fostering community pride and identity. The conversation dives into the challenges and opportunities of leading initiatives in a township environment, the importance of preserving historical legacies, and the role of such projects in inspiring young people and uniting diverse communities.

Personal Journeys

Dr Zwandile Plaatjie was born and raised in Gugulethu, where he attended primary school and began his career as a teacher. Over the years, he transitioned into roles as a school principal, psychologist, and community activist. His passion for education and community development is reflected in his work, which includes six books. Among these is *Gugulethu: The Fragments of Unwritten History*, a book that documents the township's untold stories and highlights its rich cultural heritage. Dr Plaatjie shared his motivation: "I grew up in Gugulethu, and I've seen both its struggles and its potential. My goal has always been to help disadvantaged communities, especially the youth, because they are the future of this township."

Mr Pumzile Nteyi, also a native of Gugulethu, has spent 28 years in the media and communications industry. His career

began at a community radio station in Cape Town, CFlat, where he worked his way up to become a programs manager at the SABC radio station. Recognizing the need to give back to communities, he eventually founded his own communications and PR agency, focusing on assisting NPOs and grassroots organizations in gaining visibility and funding. “I felt that there were so many organizations doing incredible work in our communities, but they weren’t getting the recognition they deserved,” Mr Nteyi explained. “I wanted to use my experience to amplify their voices and show the world the positive things happening in our townships.”

The Vision Behind the Celebrations

In 2018, Gugulethu celebrated its 60th anniversary with a year-long program of events. This initiative was led by the Gugulethu Development Forum, with Dr Plaatjie and Mr Nteyi playing pivotal roles. Initially, the idea was to host a gala dinner, but the team felt this approach would exclude many residents. Instead, they designed a year-long series of events that aimed to engage all sectors of the community. “We realized that a gala dinner would only accommodate a few hundred people, but Gugulethu is home to thousands,” said Mr Nteyi. “So, we came up with a plan to have monthly events that would touch every part of the community. By the end of the year, we wanted everyone to feel that they had been part of the celebration.” The program included a wide range of activities, from sports tournaments and cultural showcases to educational workshops and business expos. This approach ensured that residents from all walks of life could participate in the celebrations and feel a sense of pride in their community.

Community Response

The response from the community and stakeholders was overwhelmingly positive. Support came from national, provincial, and local governments, as well as from Gugulethu residents living in other provinces. The celebrations became a unifying force, bringing together people from diverse backgrounds and creating a sense of shared pride in the township’s legacy. “People were so excited to be part of something positive,” said Dr Plaatjie.

“Even those who had moved away from Gugulethu felt a strong connection to the celebrations. It showed us that our township’s identity is something to be proud of.” The decision to celebrate Gugulethu’s anniversary was not without criticism. Some questioned why a township, often seen as a relic of apartheid, should be celebrated. “We have to celebrate where we come from,” said Mr Nteyi. “Many people leave the township once they achieve success, but they forget that this is where their journey began. By celebrating Gugulethu, we’re reminding people of their roots and showing young people that there’s hope and potential here.” Dr Plaatjie added: “Too often, townships are associated with negative stereotypes. We wanted to show the world—and ourselves—that Gugulethu is more than its challenges. It’s a place of resilience, creativity, and pride.”

The Creation of Gugulethu’s Logo

The idea for a township logo came from Dr Plaatjie’s book, *Gugulethu: The Fragments of Unwritten History*. He felt that while the book introduced Gugulethu’s story to the world, the township needed a visual symbol to complete its identity. “The logo is more than just a design,” said Dr Plaatjie. “It’s a symbol of who we are and where we’re going. It represents our history, our struggles, and our dreams for the future.” The logo was created through a public participation program that involved schools, local artists, and community organizations. The team distributed pamphlets at strategic locations, including libraries, police stations, and the Gugulethu Mall. They also used radio announcements and school visits to encourage participation. “The response was incredible,” said Mr Nteyi. “People from all walks of life came forward with ideas, and the final design was a true reflection of our community’s collective vision.”

The story of Gugulethu’s logo and 60th-anniversary celebration demonstrates the power of community-driven initiatives to inspire pride, foster unity, and change perceptions. Through their efforts, Dr Plaatjie and Mr Nteyi have not only celebrated the township’s legacy but also created a blueprint for other communities to follow.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Community Engagement is Essential:** The success of the logo and anniversary celebrations was largely due to the inclusive approach taken by the organizers. “When people feel included, they take ownership of the project.”
2. **Celebrate Local Identity:** Projects like Gugulethu’s logo and anniversary celebrations demonstrate the importance of celebrating local heritage. “We need to show people that their community is worth celebrating.”
3. **Empower Young People:** Involving young people in community projects not only inspires them but also helps to develop future leaders. “Our youth are the future, and we need to invest in them.”
4. **Collaboration Across Sectors:** The involvement of government, businesses, and local organizations was crucial to the success of Gugulethu’s projects. This collaboration ensured that the initiatives had the resources and support needed to thrive.

“Local government is about more than service delivery, it’s about building communities, preserving legacies, and inspiring hope for the future.”

– Dr Zwandile Plaatjie

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



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Chapter 60

Reviving Communities: Stephen Herbst on the Impact and Growth of Tidy Towns

Introduction

In chapter explores Stephen’s personal journey, the origins of Tidy Towns, and the inspiring work they do to transform communities along South Africa’s south coast. This grassroots initiative demonstrates how civic pride, collaboration, and determination can address local challenges and create lasting change in communities.

A Passion for Community

Stephen Herbst’s story is deeply rooted in the south coast of Margate, where he has lived for over 30 years. Originally from Johannesburg, Herbst moved to Margate in the early 1990s, where he established two successful businesses—a clothing business and an air-conditioning business—employing many local residents. His passion for the area stems from a lifetime of memories and a desire to give back to the community that shaped him. Reflecting on the decline of Margate’s tourism industry over the past 15 years, Herbst and a group of like-minded individuals created Tidy Towns to address the challenges facing their local community. As Herbst explained, “Tidy Towns has been one of the best things I’ve been a part of. It’s about giving back to the community that gave me so much.”

The Origins of Tidy Towns

The inspiration for Tidy Towns came in 2022 when Reg Horne, a retired local resident, raised concerns about litter and public

drinking on Margate's beachfronts. This sparked a conversation among community members, culminating in the formation of Tidy Towns. The name itself is borrowed from a movement in Ireland that awards towns for cleanliness and civic pride. However, the south coast initiative is entirely homegrown and tailored to the needs of the region. Herbst described the initiative as "100% voluntary" and deeply rooted in civic pride. "If you're going to wait for government to do things on their own, I think we're going to wait to a point where there's going to be nothing left," he said. Instead of criticizing government, Tidy Towns works collaboratively with municipal officials to achieve shared goals. This approach has allowed them to bypass unnecessary delays and focus on delivering tangible results for their community.

What Does Tidy Towns Do?

Tidy Towns focuses on cleaning and revitalizing key tourist areas along the south coast, particularly its beaches. The initiative began with St Michaels Beach and has since expanded to include Shelly Beach, Uvongo Beach, Manaba Beach, and Margate Beach—all located along Marine Drive. The work is systematic and thorough, starting with basic tasks such as auditing dustbins, removing litter, and replacing bin bags daily. Volunteers also engage in weeding, cleaning, repaving, and edging pavements. Herbst's emphasized the philosophy of "clean makes clean," explaining that visible cleanliness attracts people who are more likely to respect and maintain the environment.

The initiative is funded entirely through donations from businesses, community members, and other stakeholders. These contributions enable Tidy Towns to employ volunteers, many of whom have faced hardship due to unemployment or addiction. Volunteers receive a daily stipend of R120, a meal, and the tools they need to carry out their work. Beyond cleaning, Tidy Towns has also undertaken larger projects such as road repairs, demonstrating their commitment to improving infrastructure and the overall quality of life in the community.

Collaboration with Local Government

Tidy Towns has cultivated a strong working relationship with the local municipality, particularly the health and sanitation departments. While the initiative often steps in to complete tasks that fall outside municipal timelines, it does so with the necessary permissions and support. One notable example is the repair of the R662 road leading to the Margate police station. Through community sponsorships, Tidy Towns completed the project for under R1 million—a fraction of the estimated R4 million costs estimated for traditional tender processes. This achievement highlights the efficiency and resourcefulness of the Tidy Towns team, as well as the power of collaboration between the public and private sectors. Stephen highlighted the importance of working alongside government rather than against it. “We’ve seen how people in the past have tried to criticize and sue, but ultimately nothing gets done,” he explained. “We realized that working with those who have the authority to give us the go-ahead has been the key to our success.” By fostering mutual respect and understanding, Tidy Towns has been able to navigate bureaucratic challenges and achieve meaningful results.

Empowering Volunteers

The initiative also goes beyond cleaning projects. For example, Tidy Towns has helped send 15 families back to their hometowns by providing bus tickets, food, and clothing. “That is the real beauty of what we do,” Stephen said. “It’s about more than just cleaning beaches—it’s about changing lives.” The heart of Tidy Towns lies in its volunteers, many of whom come from vulnerable backgrounds. The initiative provides these individuals with a sense of purpose, helping them reintegrate into society. Stephen shared stories of volunteers overcoming addiction, reconnecting with their families, and finding renewed hope through their involvement in Tidy Towns. Volunteers are not just contributors to the initiative but also beneficiaries of its success. Through their work, they gain valuable skills, a sense of responsibility, and a renewed sense of dignity. Tidy Towns also ensures the safety and well-being of its volunteers by providing third-party insurance

and addressing issues such as drug addiction through support and guidance.

Challenges

Running a voluntary initiative like Tidy Towns is not without its challenges. Stephen acknowledged that the work demands significant time and effort, often at the expense of personal and family time. “It’s a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week project,” he said. One of the biggest challenges has been managing large-scale projects without sufficient funding. Additionally, working with volunteers from difficult backgrounds has occasionally led to unforeseen issues, such as dealing with drug abuse or unsafe home environments. Another challenge has been navigating public criticism. While many supports Tidy Towns, some have questioned their methods or intentions. Stephen reflected on the importance of transparency and perseverance in overcoming these obstacles. “We thought it was going to be a feel-good thing, but we’ve faced a lot of obstacles. Over time, people have seen that we’re doing it for the right reasons and with a pure heart,” he said. Despite these challenges, Tidy Towns has continued to grow and inspire others, proving that determination, collaboration, and a clear vision can overcome even the most significant obstacles.

The challenges faced by Tidy Towns, such as dealing with bureaucratic delays, public criticism, and volunteer management, have required the team to remain adaptable and solution-oriented. Whether it’s stepping in to complete municipal tasks or addressing unforeseen issues with volunteers, the ability to pivot and respond to changing circumstances has been critical to their success.

Tidy Towns exemplifies the power of community-driven action. By focusing on collaboration, accountability, and empowerment, the initiative has transformed Margate’s beaches and inspired others to take ownership of their communities. Herbst’s story highlights the importance of civic pride and the potential for grassroots initiatives to drive meaningful change. His message is clear: “Don’t wait for government to act. Take the lead, work together, and create the change you want to see.” Tidy Towns is not just about cleaning beaches—it’s about fostering a

culture of responsibility, pride, and hope within the community. It serves as a powerful reminder that ordinary citizens can achieve extraordinary results when they come together with a shared purpose.

Tidy Towns embodies the principle of leading by example. The initiative's leaders, including Stephen Herbst, actively participate in cleaning, organizing, and managing projects. This hands-on approach inspires others to get involved and creates a culture of active citizenship. As Stephen put it, "We are not a bunch of people that talk. We actually do." Leadership is not about titles or authority—it's about action, commitment, and the ability to inspire others. By addressing not only environmental issues but also social challenges like unemployment and addiction, Tidy Towns demonstrates a holistic approach to community development.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Collaboration is Key:** By working alongside municipal departments, such as health and sanitation, the initiative has avoided unnecessary bureaucratic delays and achieved tangible results. "We realized that working with those who have the authority to give us the go-ahead has been the key to our success."
2. **Start Small, Think Big:** The initiative began with a single beach—St Michaels Beach—before gradually expanding to include Shelly Beach, Uvongo Beach, Manaba Beach, and Margate Beach. Starting small allowed the team to refine their approach, build momentum, and demonstrate success before taking on larger projects.
3. **Empower Volunteers:** Volunteers are the backbone of Tidy Towns. By providing purpose, structure, and support, the initiative has transformed the lives of many individuals, particularly those from vulnerable backgrounds. "Volunteers receive stipends, meals, and tools, but more importantly, they gain a sense of dignity and belonging".
4. **Transparency Builds Trust:** Tidy Towns ensures that all donations are managed responsibly through the Margate Round Table, with a chartered accountant overseeing their

bank account. This level of accountability reassures donors that their contributions are being used effectively.

5. **Civic Pride Drives Change:** The philosophy of “clean makes clean” underpins Tidy Towns’ approach. By creating visibly clean and well-maintained spaces, the initiative fosters a sense of pride and responsibility among residents.

“Don’t wait for government to act. Take the lead, work together, and create the change you want to see.” – **Stephen Herbst**

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



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Chapter 61

Gift of the Givers on Serving Humanity with Dr Imtiaz Sooliman

Introduction

In this chapter Dr Imtiaz Sooliman, the founder of Gift of the Givers, shares the story of Gift of the Givers, one of the most respected humanitarian organizations in the world. From disaster relief to long-term community development, its work has touched millions of lives across more than 45 countries. This chapter highlights the organization’s achievements but also provides valuable lessons in leadership, compassion, and purpose-driven action.

The Genesis of Gift of the Givers

Dr Imtiaz Sooliman’s journey toward founding Gift of the Givers began in 1992 during a visit to Istanbul, Türkiye. At the time, he was a medical doctor running a successful practice, but his life took a dramatic turn when he met a spiritual teacher who gave him what he describes as a “divine instruction.” “He said, ‘My son, I’m not asking you—I’m instructing you to form an organization. The name will be Gift of the Givers. It will serve all people, regardless of race, religion, culture, or political affiliation. You will serve unconditionally, expecting nothing in return—not even a thank you,’” Dr Sooliman recounted. The instruction was not just a call to action but a detailed blueprint for how the organization would operate. “He told me to serve with love, kindness, compassion, and mercy, while preserving the dignity of every person. Feed the hungry, provide water to the thirsty, clothe the naked, and always strive to be the best at what you do,” Dr Sooliman explained.

Faith as the Driving Force

For many, receiving such an instruction would have been overwhelming, but for Dr Sooliman, it was a moment of clarity. “I had no fear,” he said. “I knew that whatever came from my teacher was divinely inspired. He told me, ‘You will know what to do.’ And for 30 years, I have always known what to do, how to do it, and when to do it.” This unwavering faith has been the cornerstone of the organization’s success. “Everything we’ve achieved has been guided by this faith. From the resources we need to the projects we undertake, it all falls into place as if by divine design,” he explained.

The Early Years

The first major project for Gift of the Givers was responding to the civil war in Bosnia in 1992. “It came to me by inspiration,” Dr Sooliman said. “We sent 32 containers of aid into a war zone in Bosnia, followed by another 8 containers of warm items for the winter. The chill factor in Eastern Europe can reach minus 21 degrees. People had no roofs, no heating, and no warm clothes. We responded to their immediate needs.” This bold move established Gift of the Givers as an organization willing to go where others feared to tread. “It was a baptism by fire,” Dr Sooliman admitted. “But it taught us that when you act with purpose and faith, the resources and support you need will follow.”

The Mobile Hospital

In 1993, Gift of the Givers designed the world’s first containerized mobile hospital—a groundbreaking innovation that showcased South African ingenuity. “It was built in Africa and taken to Europe. It was a world first,” Dr Sooliman said. The mobile hospital was a game-changer in disaster response, providing life-saving medical care in conflict zones and areas with limited infrastructure. “Innovation allows us to solve complex problems in ways that are efficient, scalable, and impactful. This project was a turning point for us. It showed the world that Africa could lead in innovation and humanitarian aid,” he added.

A Growing List of Needs

Over the years, Gift of the Givers has expanded its scope to include 21 categories of projects, each designed to address specific needs within communities. “People came to us with different needs,” Dr Sooliman explained. “Some needed food parcels, others needed bursaries for their children, and some needed counselling services. Each project fell into place at the right time.” The organization’s work now spans disaster response, medical interventions, infrastructure upgrades, drilling boreholes, building houses, and even hostage negotiations.

Responding to New Challenges

Dr Sooliman emphasized that the organization has always adapted to new challenges. “In 2020, COVID-19 brought new demands. Before that, we were dealing with water crises, fires, and storms. Each year, something new comes up, and we respond.” The ability to adapt and innovate has been a hallmark of Gift of the Givers’ success. “We don’t just react to crises; we anticipate them and prepare accordingly,” he said. Despite its rapid growth, Gift of the Givers has maintained focus by mastering one project before moving on to the next. “We don’t take on a second project until we’ve mastered the first one,” Dr Sooliman said. “It’s been 30 years, and we’ve developed 21 projects. Each one is a prototype.”

Gift of the Givers stands as a shining example of what can be achieved through faith, compassion, and dedication. “Whatever we do is done through us, not by us,” Dr Sooliman said. “Our role is to serve with love and kindness, expecting nothing in return. As long as there is suffering in the world, our work will continue.” Gift of the Givers is not just an organization—it is a movement that inspires hope and change across the globe.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Faith and Gratitude Drive Action:** At the heart of Gift of the Givers’ success is an unwavering faith and a deep sense of gratitude. “Faith gives you the courage to act, even in the face of overwhelming challenges,” Dr Sooliman explained. “And

gratitude reminds us to give back, to pay it forward to those in need.”

2. **Mastery Before Expansion:** The organization does not take on new projects until it has mastered existing ones.” This ensures that every project we undertake is sustainable and impactful,” Dr Sooliman said. “It’s better to do a few things exceptionally well than to spread yourself too thin.”
3. **Adaptability is Key:** The ability to adapt to changing circumstances has been critical to the organization’s success. “Challenges will always come, but how you respond to them defines your success,” Dr Sooliman said. “We’ve learned to anticipate needs and prepare for them, rather than simply reacting.”
4. **Collaboration over Competition:** Gift of the Givers has achieved remarkable impact by working collaboratively with governments, other NGOs, and local communities. “No single entity can solve the world’s problems alone,” Dr Sooliman emphasized. “Collaboration allows us to pool resources, share expertise, and achieve far greater results.”
5. **Sustainability through Training:** By building second-, third-, and fourth-tier leadership, the organization ensures that its projects will continue to thrive for generations to come.” Leadership is not about centralizing power—it’s about empowering others,” Dr Sooliman said. “We focus on creating a culture of accountability and excellence within our teams.”

“Whatever we do is done through us, not by us.”

– Dr Imtiaz Sooliman

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Chapter 62

Social Justice Champion: Lorenzo Davids on Advocacy, Impact, and Community Empowerment

Introduction

In this chapter, Lorenzo Davids, social justice champion and the immediate past CEO of the Community Chest, explores his formative years in foster care to his impactful work in the NGO sector, his reflections on South Africa's public service, and his vision for a more equitable society.

A Childhood in Foster Care

Lorenzo Davids' early life is deeply rooted in both pain and purpose. "I was born in Bellville, Cape Town, and at just six months old, I was placed in foster care with a family living in Belgravia Road, Athlone," Davids shared. "My brother joined me in foster care four years later, and together, we grew up in a home where, at times, there were as many as eight or nine children being cared for." Despite the challenges of growing up in foster care, Davids describes it as a loving and healthy environment. However, the absence of traditional parental figures left a lasting impact. "There's a pain in going to bed alone, attending school events alone, and having your school forms signed by a 'guardian' instead of a parent. It builds a psychological narrative around you," Davids reflected. Yet this pain also gave rise to purpose. "It was in that environment that I began to see the world through the dual lens of pain and purpose. The challenges I faced shaped my desire to make a difference in the lives of others."

Maintaining a Connection with Biological Parents

Interestingly, Davids and his brother maintained a relationship with their biological parents, despite living in foster care. “We saw them during some school holidays and weekends. They eventually divorced, so we had two different places to visit. While they loved us, they recognized their inability to provide proper care,” Davids explained. This dual relationship—between his biological mother and his foster mother—created a complex dynamic. “Even today, I struggle with the kind of maternal relationship I should have with my biological mother, despite recognizing her as the person who gave birth to me. My foster mother, whom I called ‘Mama,’ was the maternal figure in my life,” he shared.

The Journey to Social Justice Work

Davids credits a profound lesson from his early schooling years with shaping his worldview. “He [the teacher] was training teachers, and we were the prototype class. Every morning for the first week, Dr Quint would come into class and say, ‘Close your eyes and tell me what you see.’ “At first, we laughed because we saw nothing. But by the fifth day, children started saying, ‘I see stars,’ ‘I see lights flickering,’ and other magical things. Then Dr Quint said something I will never forget: ‘In this country, it’s important that you learn to see in the dark.’” This lesson stayed with Lorenzo, shaping his understanding of the world and his passion for helping others navigate their own darkness.

From Student Movements to Public Service

Davids’ passion for social justice deepened during his university years, where he became involved in student movements. After graduation, he worked with student organizations at Wits University, UWC, and UCT, helping young people shape their futures. In 1990, Davids joined the public service as an assistant director of training and development. His role involved traveling across South Africa to train public servants in preparation for democracy.

However, this experience revealed a troubling reality. “While people loved the intellectual exchanges of the training

sessions, their behaviour didn't change. They wanted the change to promote themselves, not to serve the people," Davids observed. This realization led him to leave the public service in April 1994, just as South Africa transitioned to democracy. "I saw a narcissistic disconnect emerging—a focus on self-advancement at the expense of service delivery. It's why we have highly educated public servants today but still face abhorrent service delivery."

A Life Dedicated to People-Centered Work

After leaving the public service, Davids joined the Cape Town City Mission, an NGO focused on street children and institutional care. This marked the beginning of his journey in the nonprofit sector. "I realized that building a better country required more than intellectual training. It required a value system where people are at the centre," Davids explained.

Davids's work eventually led him to the Community Chest, where he served as CEO. The organization plays a pivotal role in funding NPOs across South Africa, enabling them to address critical social issues. Reflecting on his time at the Community Chest, Davids emphasized the importance of creating ecosystems of care. "We must build systems where people matter, where their stories are heard, and where their dignity is preserved," he said.

Challenges in Social Justice Work

Davids highlighted the pervasive inequality in South Africa as one of the biggest challenges. "We live in a country where the gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen. Social justice work often feels like fighting an uphill battle against entrenched systems of privilege." NGOs often operate with limited resources, which can hinder their ability to scale their impact. "There's always more work to be done than there are resources available. Balancing these constraints while meeting the needs of communities is a constant challenge," Davids explained. He also acknowledged the emotional toll of social justice work. "Dealing with systemic issues and individual suffering day in and day out can lead to burnout. It's important to find ways to sustain yourself while doing this work."

Lorenzo Davids' journey is a testament to the transformative power of resilience, purpose and compassion. From his early years in foster care to his work as a social justice champion, Lorenzo has dedicated his life to building a more equitable and caring society.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **The Power of Storytelling:** He believes that storytelling is essential for building a nation. “A country is made up of the stories of its people. When we listen to these stories, we begin to understand and address the root causes of inequality.”
2. **Seeing in the Dark:** Dr Quint's lesson about “seeing in the dark” remains a guiding principle. “We must teach people to navigate challenges and find hope even in the darkest of times.”
3. **People-Centered Systems:** The key to effective governance and social justice is putting people at the centre. “We need systems that prioritize the dignity and well-being of every individual.”
4. **The Danger of Narcissism:** He warns against the dangers of self-serving leadership. “When leaders prioritize their own advancement over the needs of the people, the entire system suffers.”
5. **The Importance of Collaboration:** He emphasizes the need for collaboration between government, NGOs, and communities. “No single entity can address the challenges we face. It's only through partnership that we can create meaningful change.”

“Social justice is not a destination—it's a journey. It's about creating a world where every person's story matters, and where every individual has the opportunity to thrive.” – **Lorenzo Davids**

Chapter 62

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on this chapter.



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Chapter 63

Social Cohesion and the Role of the Church in Public Witness with Dr Braam Hanekom

Introduction

In this chapter, Dr Braam Hanekom, Director of the Centre for Public Witness, expands on how the Dutch Reformed Church addresses some of South Africa's most pressing social issues, including housing, unemployment, education, social cohesion, and ecological concerns. Dr Hanekom's work is driven by a deep passion for bringing faith into the public sphere and fostering collaboration between diverse groups to create meaningful change. In this conversation, he shares his journey, the challenges he faces in uniting communities, and his vision for a more cohesive and inclusive South Africa.

The Formative Years: Faith and Public Witness

Dr Braam Hanekom's journey into public witness began in full-time ministry, where he served as a student chaplain at Stellenbosch University and later as a pastor in various congregations. Reflecting on this period, he shared, "I was also the moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church in Cape Town for eight years, which gave me a unique perspective on leadership and the role of faith in addressing social issues." Currently, as the Director of the Centre for Public Witness, Dr Hanekom works to bring faith into the public sphere. "I have a passion to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the marketplace because I believe that's where the church must be in the times we live in," he explained. The Centre for Public Witness focuses on tackling social ills such as housing, unemployment, education, and ecological matters.

“Our aim is to make the gospel practical—something that touches the hearts and lives of the most vulnerable and destitute in our society,” he said.

Challenges in Church Unity and Public Witness

One of the most painful challenges Dr Hanekom faces is the lack of unity within the church itself. “The Dutch Reformed Church and the Uniting Reformed Church, which were instrumental in laying the foundations of apartheid, still have a long way to go in coming together,” he admitted. He emphasized that this issue extends beyond these two churches. “We need the collaboration of all churches to speak with a unified prophetic voice. Without unity, it’s difficult to hold institutions like local government accountable,” he explained. Reflecting on the broader church landscape, Dr Hanekom remarked, “In any town, you’ll find 20, 30, or even 40 churches, but they’re fragmented. This lack of a unifying voice is one of the biggest challenges we face as a church community.”

Credibility in the Public Sphere

When asked whether the church suffers from a credibility problem, Dr Hanekom provided a nuanced response. “In some ways, the church does suffer from a credibility problem. But if you look at research on perceptions within civil society, you’ll find that the church is still the most recognized and respected institution in the country,” he explained. While acknowledging the church’s shortcomings, Dr Hanekom remains hopeful. “Although we sometimes mess it up and don’t always get it right, the church continues to have the potential to be a credible institution for holding government accountable, fostering social cohesion, and bringing people together.”

Facilitating Courageous Conversations

At the heart of the Centre’s work is fostering social cohesion through dialogue. “We’ve visited more than 60 towns, facilitating inclusive and courageous conversations about the future of these communities,” Dr Hanekom shared. “We bring together people from diverse backgrounds—civil society, the public sector,

and government—and ask two key questions: What is going on in this town? And what needs to be done right now? ”These conversations often lead to the formation of forums or working committees tasked with implementing practical solutions to improve the lives of local residents. The Centre’s work often involves small but impactful initiatives, such as painting houses in poor communities, growing vegetable gardens, or facilitating dialogue among diverse groups.

“Social cohesion isn’t always visible or tangible, but its absence is evident in conflict and poverty. When it’s present, communities flourish,” Dr Hanekom said. He emphasized the importance of restoring relationships in South Africa. “Since 1994, we’ve relied too heavily on politicians to do the work of nation-building.”

Challenges in Driving Social Cohesion

One of the most frustrating aspects of Dr Hanekom’s work is the apathy he encounters in civil society. “People are quick to point out what’s wrong, but when asked what they can do, they often retreat into their comfort zones,” he observed. Dr Hanekom also noted the prevalence of anger and bitterness across communities. “There are many bitter, angry people in South Africa, and I understand their frustration. But we need people who are willing to move beyond anger and engage in solutions.”

Despite these challenges, Dr Hanekom remains optimistic. “I firmly believe there are more good people than bad people in South Africa. We see pockets of hope and islands of excellence where people are making a real difference,” he said. Dr Hanekom emphasized the importance of building trust and fostering social cohesion to address South Africa’s challenges. “We don’t need thousands of people, just 15 to 40 individuals who are willing to make a difference. These should be people of influence and those who are willing to step into the shoes of others, whether they are White, Black, Coloured, or Indian,” he explained. He called for courageous conversations to restore trust and focus on tangible solutions. “We need people who say, ‘I’m angry and bitter, but I’m willing to listen and engage to find solutions.’ That’s the only way we’ll restore trust and improve lives.” Dr Braam Hanekom’s work

at the Centre for Public Witness highlights the critical role of social cohesion in addressing South Africa's challenges. His message is clear: South Africa's future depends on restoring relationships, fostering trust, and working together to build a more inclusive and equitable society. "There is hope, and we must keep working on it," Dr Hanekom concluded. "Faith must be practical. It's not enough to preach; we must act in ways that uplift the most vulnerable and address the real challenges in society."

Key Governance Lessons

1. **The Power of Dialogue:** "Courageous conversations are the foundation of social cohesion. They allow people to share their stories, understand each other, and build trust. Without dialogue, communities remain divided."
2. **Unity is Essential for Accountability:** Dr Hanekom emphasized that unity within the church and civil society is crucial. "Without a unified voice, it's difficult to hold institutions like local government accountable. Unity strengthens our ability to advocate for change."
3. **Small Actions Create Big Change:** "Even small, tangible efforts—like painting houses, growing vegetable gardens, or creating forums for dialogue—can have a profound impact on communities. Change starts with small, meaningful steps."
4. **Collaboration is Key:** "We need partnerships between civil society, government, and the private sector to drive meaningful change. No single entity can solve South Africa's challenges alone."
5. **Hope is a Driving Force:** Despite the difficulties, Dr Hanekom remains hopeful. "There are more good people than bad people in South Africa. Focusing on the pockets of excellence can inspire broader change."

"Courageous conversations are the foundation of social cohesion. They allow people to share their stories, understand each other, and build trust. Without dialogue, communities remain divided."

– Dr Braam Hanekom

Chapter 63

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Chapter 64

Leadership and the Arts: A Conversation with Marlene le Roux

Introduction

Marlene le Roux is an inspiring leader whose name is synonymous with activism, arts, disability advocacy, and transformative leadership. In this chapter she shares her philosophy on governance, leadership, and the role of the arts in fostering social cohesion and empowering communities. This conversation explores her journey, the lessons she learned from Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and her vision for using the arts as a tool for community transformation.

Unpacking Governance and Leadership

She described her leadership philosophy as follows: “Governance is about respect, dignity, and values. It starts with how you value yourself and what principles you embody in your daily life.” Having worked closely with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, she learned to prioritize truthfulness and integrity in her leadership. She shared: “Be truthful and walk the talk, even when there’s no media or applause. True leadership is about doing the right thing, not seeking recognition.”

“In South Africa, we often shift blame to the government, but we must ask ourselves: What change are we making in our own spaces?” She highlighted the need for leaders to move beyond group identities and embrace inclusivity, saying, “Leaders who define themselves by their group are not true leaders, they must serve all people.” Reflecting on Archbishop Tutu’s concept of the “Rainbow Nation,” le Roux acknowledged that South Africa has yet to achieve this vision. She explained, “We are a

nation searching for our identity, struggling with poverty and multiple identities. Poverty does not know colour, and we must find ways to bring communities together.” Le Roux emphasized the importance of addressing stereotypes and fostering positive cultural experiences to build social cohesion.

The Role of Families and Empowering Artists

Le Roux believes leadership begins at home, with parents instilling values and principles in their children. She stated, “You don’t get racist kids, you get racist parents. What are we teaching our children? Leadership starts with walking the talk in our homes.” She passionately advocates for the integration of the arts into governance and community development. She explained, “The arts are about confidence, spatial intelligence, and rhythm. They are essential for planning, creativity, and fostering social cohesion.” She highlighted the economic potential of the arts, noting: “In the UK, the GDP is driven by artists. In South Africa, we must invest in artists as professionals and entrepreneurs.” Le Roux emphasized the importance of equipping artists with entrepreneurial skills, saying: “Artists are their own marketing tools. They can sell anything and communicate policies effectively through their art.” She called on municipalities to include artists in decision-making processes, explaining that “Every municipality needs an artist on their board to bring creativity and inclusivity to governance.” As the CEO of Artscape, Le Roux has implemented programs to make the arts accessible to marginalized communities. She shared, “Artscape is just a building. We take the theatre to the people, reaching communities through choirs, brass bands, and cultural programs. The arts are for everyone, not just those who can afford it.”

She identified several challenges in integrating the arts into governance and community development. The arts are often seen as elitist and secondary to basic needs like food and jobs. Le Roux explained: “The arts are about confidence and spatial intelligence. They are essential for planning and creativity, but we must educate people about their importance.” Municipalities often view artists as entertainers rather than professionals. She emphasized that “Artists must be seen as professionals and entrepreneurs.

Municipalities must invest in their development and include them in governance.”

Le Roux’s work exemplifies the transformative power of governance, leadership, and the arts in fostering social cohesion and empowering communities. Her emphasis on values, servant leadership, and inclusivity provides valuable insights for leaders and organizations striving for change. Le Roux was granted an honorary doctorate by the Cape Town University of Technology for her selfless contribution to making the world a better place.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **The Arts as a Tool for Confidence and Cohesion:** The arts foster confidence, creativity, and social cohesion. “The arts are essential for planning, spatial intelligence, and rhythm.”
2. **Investing in Artists:** Artists must be seen as professionals and entrepreneurs. “Investing in artists drives economic growth and inclusivity.”
3. **Leadership Begins at Home:** Values and principles instilled at home shape future leaders. “Leadership starts with walking the talk in our homes.”
4. **Inclusivity in Governance:** Including artists in decision-making processes brings creativity and inclusivity to governance. “Every municipality needs an artist on their board.”
5. **Addressing Stereotypes:** Building social cohesion requires addressing stereotypes and fostering positive cultural experiences. “We must move beyond group identities and embrace inclusivity.”

“Leadership is about seeing every person for their character and contribution. It’s about walking the talk and creating spaces for everyone to thrive.”

– Dr Marlene le Roux

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Chapter 65

Exploring Governance and Leadership with Thuli Madonsela – Part 1

Introduction

In this chapter, former Public Protector, Thuli Madonsela, reflects on her personal journey, her philosophy on justice, and her pioneering work as Stellenbosch University’s Social Justice Chair. She shares insights into how empathy, patience, and resilience have shaped her advocacy, and how collective action is essential for addressing social challenges such as poverty, inequality, and systemic injustice.

Madonsela’s commitment to justice is rooted in her childhood experiences of inequality and discrimination, which inspired her lifelong pursuit of fairness and humanity. Her philosophy, “Justice for all is impossible without all for justice,” emphasizes the interconnectedness of humanity and the need for shared responsibility in creating a more equitable society.

About Thuli Madonsela

Thuli Madonsela is one of South Africa’s most respected leaders, known for her unwavering commitment to justice and integrity. Her journey began with a personal yearning for fairness as a young girl growing up in apartheid South Africa. She explained, “I do what I do because I’ve always had a yearning for justice. It started with justice for myself as a girl child, feeling treated unfairly in relation to my brother and cousins. As I became conscious, I realized that justice must extend to all humanity.”

Social Justice and Leadership

Madonsela's views on justice extend beyond individual rights to encompass broader social responsibilities. She explained: "Politics is not just about formal structures, it's about how we divide our shared resources and regulate freedoms to ensure balance. Everyone is in politics, whether formally or informally." Through her work at Stellenbosch University's Social Justice Chair, Madonsela aims to foster a deeper understanding of social justice and encourage people to embrace it as a way of living harmoniously.

Madonsela emphasized the critical role of empathy in driving meaningful change. She shared, "People are doing the best they can. Knowledge doesn't automatically translate into action—it requires rewiring and transformation." Her personal journey of embracing the LGBTQI community and people with disabilities demonstrates how empathy can challenge deeply ingrained biases and foster inclusivity. She explained: "It took me time to embrace humanity on their terms rather than my terms."

Patience in Advocacy

Recognizing the slow pace of social change, Madonsela advocates for patience and persistence in advocacy. She shared, "I'm in pain about poverty and the harm it does to people, but I've learned to be patient and help others discover the truth. Change doesn't happen overnight, it requires time, understanding, and collective effort." The Social Justice Chair at Stellenbosch University was established as part of the institution's restitution efforts, following its adoption of a restitution statement in 2018. Madonsela explained, "Our work focuses on helping people understand social justice and embrace it as a way of living together harmoniously." The Chair's initiatives aim to address systemic inequalities and foster inclusivity through transformative projects.

Action for Inclusion

One of the Chair's flagship initiatives, Action for Inclusion, addresses the issue of student debt and enables marginalized students to register for university. Madonsela shared, "When

we started, Stellenbosch University was hardline about student debt. Over time, we've raised funds to support students and seen the university embrace initiatives like Move for Food and Graduate Me." These efforts have helped bridge the gap between economic barriers and educational access, fostering inclusivity and opportunity.

Another key focus of the Chair is "visual retrenchment," which addresses the symbols and imagery that shape subconscious beliefs and social attitudes. Madonsela explained, "Symbols matter, they inform who we see as heroes and who we see as labourers. Changing symbols is essential for fostering inclusivity and challenging deeply ingrained biases."

Challenges

Despite the progress made, Madonsela acknowledged several challenges in advancing social justice and transformation. Social attitudes and behaviours shaped by history and trauma are slow to change. Madonsela explained: "Incidents of racism at Stellenbosch University are part of growing pains, reflecting the interface between students' upbringing and the process of embracing humanity. These challenges require patience and persistent engagement." Poverty and inequality remain significant barriers to social justice. Madonsela shared, "I'm in pain about poverty and the harm it does to people. Addressing these issues requires collective action and a commitment to systemic change." Madonsela emphasized, "Changing symbols and addressing language issues are not easy, they touch deeply rooted traumas and identities. However, these changes are essential for fostering inclusivity and healing social wounds."

Through the Thuma Foundation, Madonsela has cultivated resilience and self-reliance among young leaders and historically marginalized communities. She shared, "Our work focuses on cultivating enterprise and self-reliance, empowering communities to overcome dependency and build sustainable futures."

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Justice Requires Collective Action:** Justice for all is impossible without all for justice. Madonsela emphasized, “Shared responsibility is essential for addressing societal challenges.”
2. **Empathy Drives Change:** Understanding and embracing humanity on others’ terms is key to fostering inclusivity. “Empathy and patience are essential for transforming attitudes and systems.”
3. **Symbols Matter:** Visual retrenchment is essential for shaping subconscious beliefs and fostering inclusivity. “Changing symbols helps us see ourselves and others in glory.”
4. **Education as a Tool for Inclusion:** Initiatives like Action for Inclusion demonstrate the power of education in fostering access and equality. “Supporting marginalized students is essential for building a just society.”
5. **Patience in Advocacy:** Recognizing the slow pace of change, Madonsela advocates for patience and persistence in driving transformation. “Change requires time, empathy, and collective effort.”

“Justice for all is impossible without all for justice.”

– **Thuli Madonsela**

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Chapter 66

Exploring Governance and Leadership with Thuli Madonsela – Part 2

Introduction

In this chapter, former Public Protector, Thuli Madonsela, explores critical issues of systemic inequality, economic inclusion, and the transformative role of legislation in addressing historical injustices. Madonsela reflects on the origins and compromises behind South Africa's Equality Act and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), dissecting their impact and limitations while advocating for bold new approaches to foster a more inclusive and equitable society.

The Equality Act and Black Economic Empowerment

The Equality Act was introduced in February 2000 as part of South Africa's constitutional mandate to promote equality and eliminate systemic discrimination. However, as Madonsela explained, the act's promotion of equality provisions was frozen due to compromises between the black and white elite. These compromises prioritized elite interests over the broader population, leading to the adoption of BEE as a substitute for the Equality Act. Madonsela elaborated, "The Equality Act was designed to address de facto racial discrimination and move society towards egalitarianism. Instead, compromises led to the adoption of BEE, which primarily benefited the elite and left structural inequalities intact. It was a co-option approach rather than a mass solution, focused on appeasing elite interests rather than addressing widespread inequality."

Limitations of Black Economic Empowerment

While BEE has achieved some success in narrowing gaps between black and white elites, Madonsela highlighted its inherent limitations. She stated: “BEE was never meant to be fair to all, and it hasn’t been. It favours politically connected individuals and big businesses, leaving historically disadvantaged small businesses behind.” The current implementation of BEE often excludes grassroots communities and fosters a system of elite privilege. Madonsela criticized the creation of politically connected companies that secure lucrative contracts overnight, stating: “This perpetuates inequality rather than addressing it. Real historically disadvantaged businesses remain excluded, while those connected to power benefit disproportionately.”

The Systemic South African Challenges

Madonsela identified several systemic challenges that continue to hinder progress toward economic inclusion and equality:

Structural Inequality: The entrenched legacy of apartheid remains a significant barrier to economic justice. As Madonsela explains, “Apartheid created structural inequalities that trapped black people, women, and people with disabilities in cycles of poverty and exclusion. For example, the health system was regressively changed to prioritize efficiency over responsiveness, exacerbating injustices in historically black areas.” “These systems were designed to privilege certain groups while marginalizing others, and the effects are still deeply felt today,” Madonsela added.

Inefficient Resource Allocation: Government inefficiencies, corruption, and wastage further exacerbate systemic inequalities. Madonsela shared: “Unnecessary tenders, overbilling, and benefits for ministers divert resources that could be used to address structural injustices. Corruption and incompetence in public service implementation have created leaking pipelines that drain funds meant for equality measures.” She stressed the need for accountability in governance, stating: “The funds wasted through inefficiencies and corruption could be redirected to critical areas like healthcare, education, and infrastructure development in marginalized communities.”

Resistance to Redistribution: Efforts to redistribute opportunity, resources, burdens, and privileges often encounter resistance from elites. Madonsela emphasized, “The Equality Act would require businesses to actively redistribute resources and opportunities, but this has been met with opposition from big business and politically connected entities.” She highlighted that resistance to redistribution is often rooted in fear of losing privilege and power, stating, “Redistribution challenges the status quo and requires a shift in mindset from self-interest to collective well-being.”

Enacting the Equality Act

Madonsela advocated for the enactment of the *Equality Act*, stating: “The *Equality Act* would force society to re-examine everything, from attitudes to resource allocation, and ensure that policies reduce the gaps created by apartheid. It would compel decision-makers to consider whether their actions exacerbate or alleviate historical injustices.” The *Equality Act*, according to Madonsela, would serve as a framework for addressing systemic discrimination and fostering inclusivity. She emphasized: “This Act would hold both government and private entities accountable for their role in perpetuating inequality.” She added that the economic inclusion act would prioritize grassroots empowerment and community-led initiatives, stating: “This act would focus on creating sustainable growth by redistributing ownership and fostering enterprise development.”

Success Stories

Despite systemic challenges, Madonsela shared success stories that demonstrate the potential for transformative change. She highlighted examples of community-led projects that focus on education, healthcare, and infrastructure development, stating: “These initiatives demonstrate the power of local action in driving meaningful change.” Madonsela highlighted the success of Employee Share Ownership Schemes (ESOPs) in the UK, which redistribute ownership and foster economic inclusion. She explained, “These schemes offer a model for empowering marginalized communities and creating sustainable growth.”

She emphasized the potential for adapting ESOPs in South Africa, stating, “By redistributing ownership and fostering enterprise development, these schemes can help address systemic inequalities and create opportunities for historically disadvantaged individuals.” At Stellenbosch University, the Action for Inclusion initiative has successfully addressed student debt, enabling marginalized students to register for university. Madonsela shared: “This project demonstrates the power of targeted interventions in creating opportunities for historically disadvantaged individuals.”

She added that the initiative has fostered a culture of inclusivity and collaboration, stating, “By addressing economic barriers to education, we can create pathways for marginalized communities to access opportunities and build sustainable futures.”

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Efficiency vs Responsiveness:** Policies must balance efficiency with responsiveness to ensure inclusivity. Madonsela shared: “Efficiency should not come at the cost of excluding marginalized communities.”
2. **Accountability in Governance:** Reducing corruption and wastage is essential for freeing resources to address systemic inequalities. “We must recoup funds from leaking pipelines and redirect them towards equality measures.”
3. **Inclusive Legislation:** Neutral terminology and inclusive frameworks are key to fostering broad-based economic inclusion. “An Economic Inclusion Act would prioritize fairness and restitution without reinforcing supremacy.”
4. **Ethical Leadership:** Leaders must prioritize justice and inclusivity over elite privilege. “Transformative change requires ethical leadership and a commitment to serving all people.”
5. **Grassroots Empowerment:** Community-led initiatives can drive meaningful change and foster inclusivity. “Empowering communities to redistribute resources and opportunities is key to sustainable transformation.”

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“The Equality Act would force society to re-examine everything—from attitudes to resource allocation—and ensure that policies reduce the gaps created by Apartheid.” – **Thuli Madonsela**

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Published: 10th February 2023

Chapter 67

The Visionary Behind Knowledge FM: Dimas Baloi, Limpopo Innovator

Introduction

Dimas Baloy is the founder of Knowledge FM, a community radio station in Limpopo Province, South Africa. Driven by a passion for knowledge and community development, Dimas shares his journey of reviving a defunct radio station and transforming it into a platform for education, dialogue, and social impact.

This chapter explores how Knowledge FM serves the deeply rural communities of Limpopo, addressing challenges such as illiteracy, lack of opportunities, and social disconnection. Dimas also highlights the station's role in promoting peace, fostering community cohesion, and providing a voice for the marginalized.

About Dimas Baloy

Dimas Baloy describes himself as a lifelong seeker of knowledge, inspired by the belief that “my people perish for lack of knowledge,” a sentiment he attributes to Biblical teachings. His passion for knowledge stems from his early experiences growing up in a rural area with limited access to information. Before founding Knowledge FM, Dimas worked in media as a writer for the SABC. He also wrote for television, creating local dramas that reflected the realities of South African life. “I fell in love with storytelling and drama,” Dimas explained. “It’s a way to connect with people and share important messages.” His transition from a media writer to a community radio founder was driven by a deep desire to make a difference. “I realized that knowledge is the key to unlocking potential and driving change,” he said. “If I can

impart knowledge to someone's mind daily, even in small ways, I believe I've made a difference."

The Birth of Knowledge FM

The station was originally operational but was shut down by ICASA due to compliance issues. Dimas saw an opportunity to revive it and applied for the frequency. His application was successful, and Knowledge FM was reborn as a community-driven station with a mission to empower, educate, and uplift. The station operates 24 hours a day, broadcasting a mix of talk shows and music in a 50-50 ratio. It caters to the needs of a rural audience, many of whom face challenges such as poverty, illiteracy, and a lack of opportunities. Dimas noted: "Our area is deeply rural, with limited resources and institutions. People flock to cities like Johannesburg for opportunities because there's so little here." Knowledge FM serves as a beacon of hope, providing a platform for dialogue, education, and community engagement. "We're not just a radio station; we're a hub for transformation," Dimas explained. "Every program we air is designed to address the needs of our community."

Programming and Community Engagement

Knowledge FM's programming focuses on addressing the social and economic challenges faced by its audience. Key elements include:

Talk Shows: The station hosts talk shows that tackle issues such as education, health, and social cohesion. These programs are designed to empower listeners with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions about their lives and communities. "We look at the challenges facing our community and create programs that address them," Dimas explained. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the station provided accurate information about the virus and vaccination to counter widespread misinformation.

Charity Work: Knowledge FM goes beyond broadcasting and engages in charity work. The station organizes food and clothing drives for vulnerable populations, including immigrants from Mozambique and Zimbabwe. "We've supported destitute children

and families, especially during the pandemic,” Dimas shared. These initiatives have helped build trust and goodwill within the community, further cementing the station’s role as a pillar of support. The station also partners with local organizations and churches to amplify its impact. “Collaboration is key,” Dimas emphasized. “We work with others to ensure that our charity efforts reach those who need them most.”

Challenges

Running a community radio station in a rural area comes with significant challenges. Knowledge FM relies on donations from individuals and organizations, particularly churches in Johannesburg. “It’s a constant struggle,” Dimas admitted. “We depend on good Samaritans to keep the station running.” The lack of consistent funding limits the station’s ability to expand its programming and reach. The station is staffed primarily by volunteers, including presenters and managers. While this demonstrates the community’s commitment to the station’s mission, it also means that resources are stretched thin. “When we do get something, we compensate them for their travel and efforts,” Dimas explained. The station serves a deeply rural area with limited infrastructure and opportunities. This isolation makes it difficult to attract advertisers or secure long-term funding. “People here are not motivated or challenged because of the lack of opportunities,” Dimas observed. The station must constantly innovate to remain relevant and impactful.

Despite these challenges, Knowledge FM has achieved significant successes. One of the station’s most notable achievements is its role in resolving community conflicts. Knowledge FM facilitated peace talks between rival groups in the area, bringing together civic organizations, traditional leaders, and other stakeholders. “We managed to get people to sit down, talk, and smoke the peace pipe,” Dimas said. The radio station provided a neutral platform for dialogue and helped restore harmony in the community. This intervention also had a ripple effect, improving government service delivery and reducing tensions that had previously hindered progress. Through its programming and outreach, Knowledge FM fostered

dialogue and helped restore trust among community members. “Even government service delivery was being affected by these conflicts,” Dimas noted. “Now, there’s peace, and the community is moving forward.” The station’s 24-hour operation ensures that it remains a constant presence in the lives of its listeners. Its mix of talk shows and music keeps the community informed and entertained. By addressing critical issues such as education and health, Knowledge FM has become a catalyst for positive change in the region. Dimas shared: “We’re not just a radio station; we’re a partner in the community’s development.”

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Knowledge is Power:** Dimas believes that access to information can transform lives. “When people are informed, they make better decisions for themselves and their communities.”
2. **Resilience in the Face of Challenges:** Running a community radio station in a rural area requires perseverance and creativity. “Passion keeps us going.”
3. **The Power of Dialogue:** Knowledge FM’s role in conflict resolution demonstrates the impact of open, honest communication. “We provided a platform for people to air their grievances and find common ground.”
4. **Volunteerism as a Strength:** While relying on volunteers can be challenging, it also fosters a sense of ownership and commitment among community members. “Our volunteers understand the passion behind what we do, and that makes all the difference.”
5. **Community Engagement is Key:** The station’s success is rooted in its deep connection to the community it serves. By addressing local issues and involving residents in its programming, Knowledge FM has become a trusted voice in the region.

“Knowledge is the key to unlocking potential and driving change.” – **Dimas Baloy**

Chapter 67

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Published: 17th March 2023

Chapter 68

Jerry Seale on SACOS, Sports Inequality, and the Legacy of Liberation Sports in South Africa

Introduction

In this chapter, Jerry Seale reflects on his journey as a sports journalist, his motivations for documenting the legacy of the South African Council on Sports (SACOS), and the inequalities that continue to haunt South African sports. Through this candid discussion, he delves into the challenges of community sports today and critiques the systemic issues that hinder true transformation in sports.

The Journey into Sports Journalism and SACOS

Jerry Seale's passion for sports started at a young age and developed further during his time at the University of the Western Cape. After completing his studies, Jerry embarked on a career as a journalist for an Afrikaans-language newspaper, where he covered a wide range of sports across South Africa. "I've always been involved in sports," Jerry shared. But the idea for this book was inspired by a promise I made to Eddie Fortuin, the former president of Tennis South Africa, and Reggie Feldsman, the last president of SACOS. Reggie urged us to preserve the history of SACOS, and I committed myself to this task in 2019." Jerry's dedication to documenting this history stems from his deep respect for SACOS' contributions to non-racial sports and its role in the broader liberation movement. His personal experiences as a journalist allowed him to witness firsthand the triumphs and struggles of the organization.

The Legacy of SACOS

SACOS was not just a sports organization; it was a liberation movement. Known as the Liberation Sport Movement, SACOS was founded on the principle of non-racial sports and worked alongside the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC) to isolate apartheid South Africa from international sports events. “SACOS represented the oppressed,” Seale explained. “It was the only national non-racial sports organization of its kind, uniting athletes of all races who were excluded from equal opportunities under apartheid.” SACOS was steadfast in its policies, which emphasized inclusivity, equality, and accountability. Unlike many organizations of its time, SACOS was not aligned with any political party, a stance that made it both powerful and vulnerable.

Witnessing History and Unveiling Controversy

As a sports journalist, Seale travelled across South Africa, documenting the harsh realities faced by athletes under apartheid. Covering rugby within the South African Rugby Union (SARU) framework, Seale often witnessed the deplorable conditions under which black teams competed. “Facilities were appalling, especially for teams playing SA Cup rugby under SARU,” he recalled. “The playing fields were in terrible condition, and the disparities were glaring. Sadly, in many communities, not much has changed today, as these patterns continue.” These experiences motivated him to explore the broader structural issues in South African sports and to question the effectiveness of the current systems in addressing past and present inequalities.

A Bold Critique of Nelson Mandela’s Legacy in Sports

In his book, Seale makes a controversial claim, accusing Nelson Mandela of sidelining SACOS in favour of unifying apartheid-era establishment sports structures. “When Mandela was released from prison, he immediately prioritized integrating establishment sports into the international arena,” Seale argued. “But why didn’t he consult the Liberation Sport Movement? Why didn’t he address the conditions under which our people

played? Instead, SACOS was excluded, and secret meetings were held to form the National Sports Congress (NSC). This division weakened community sports and reinforced inequalities.” Seale acknowledges Mandela’s role as a unifying figure but questions whether his approach to sports transformation fully addressed the needs of historically marginalized communities.

Challenges in Modern Sports

The SACOS slogan, “No Normal Sport in an Abnormal Society,” remains a powerful call to action, Seale argues. He believes that despite progress in representation, systemic issues continue to plague South African sports. “Facilities in Black and Coloured communities remain inferior,” he noted. “In many areas, sports fields have been demolished or neglected entirely. How can we claim normality when these disparities still exist?” Seale emphasized the decline of community sports due to a lack of investment in infrastructure and programs. He cited Dal Josafat Stadium in Paarl as an example of how vibrant community sports spaces have been allowed to deteriorate. “Local government has failed us,” Jerry stated. “There’s no support for grassroots sports, and our communities are suffering as a result.

Local governments must invest in rebuilding stadiums and creating opportunities for young athletes.” Seale’s book, *South African Council on Sport (SACOS): The Lies, The Sell-Outs, The Betrayals and The Truth*, is a compelling exploration of South African sports history and a critique of its current trajectory. Through his work, he challenges leaders to confront uncomfortable truths and to commit to meaningful change.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Grassroots Sports are the Bedrock of Community Development:** Local governments must prioritize investment in community sports infrastructure and programs to restore the vibrancy of grassroots sports. “Neglecting community sports facilities stifles talent and erodes the unity fostered through local competitions.”
- 2. The Slogan, “No Normal Sport in an Abnormal Society,” Remains Relevant:** The continued disparities in sports

infrastructure and opportunities demonstrate that the conditions SACOS challenged still exist in many forms. “As long as inequality persists, the call for normalizing sports within a just society must continue.”

3. Local Governments Must Act as Champions of Sports

Development: Local governments play a crucial role in bridging the gap between policy and practice by actively engaging with communities and rebuilding sports infrastructure. “Empowering communities through improved facilities and support programs is essential for fostering unity and progress.”

4. Preserving Untold Stories Inspires Generations:

Documenting the struggles, achievements, and resilience of unsung heroes in South African sports ensures that their legacies guide and inspire future generations. “Capturing these stories not only honours history but also provides a foundation for progress.”

“The slogan, ‘No Normal Sport in an Abnormal Society,’ is as relevant today as in the past.”

– Jerry Seale

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 5th June 2023

Chapter 69

Youth Voices: Challenges, Hopes and Building Digital Bridges

Introduction

In this chapter, Thabo Nkosi, a dynamic youth leader, digital activist, and community organizer whose work is reshaping the landscape of social change shares his story. Thabo's initiatives span from leveraging digital platforms for social justice to mobilizing grassroots support in under-resourced communities. His core belief is encapsulated in his assertion: "When you empower youth, you empower the future." This chapter explores how innovative engagement, collective activism, and strategic investments can overcome systemic challenges and unlock the transformative power of young voices.

The Journey into Youth Activism and Digital Engagement

Thabo Nkosi's path to activism was forged by both personal experience and a keen awareness of community challenges. Growing up in an under-resourced community, he witnessed the struggles of marginalized groups, from limited educational opportunities to inadequate public services. "I realized early on that if we don't speak up, who will?" Thabo reflects, highlighting the spark that ignited his passion for change. Educated in public schools and active in local leadership forums, Thabo began using social media as a tool for raising awareness about social injustice. What started as a few online posts quickly evolved into a robust digital activism movement. His determination to ensure that "youth are the heartbeat of a transformative society" drives him

to create spaces where every young voice has the opportunity to be heard.

Recognizing the inherent power of technology, Thabo expanded his activism by establishing digital forums and online communities. These platforms allow young people from diverse backgrounds to connect, share personal stories, and coordinate on community projects. Thabo explains, “I wanted to create bridges, digital bridges, that connect isolated youth groups, enabling them to share experiences and join forces for our common causes.”

The Legacy of Youth Empowerment

Thabo is passionate about rewriting the traditional narrative of youth as passive bystanders. Instead, he envisions a future where young people are active architects of social reform. “Our goal is to build a movement where every young person feels seen, heard, and empowered to craft the future they deserve,” he asserts. His innovative campaigns have not only mobilized thousands online but have also translated into tangible community actions—such as local clean-up drives, educational workshops, and youth-led policy forums.

Cultivating a Culture of Engagement

At the heart of Thabo’s approach is a commitment to fostering a culture where collaboration and creative problem-solving are paramount. Digital spaces under his guidance encourage collaborative idea-sharing and mentorship, empowering young people to develop and execute creative solutions. “It’s not enough to simply demand change; we have to create the spaces where that change can take root,” Thabo remarks, underlining his belief in building sustainable, community-driven platforms.

Through extensive digital outreach and on-the-ground activism, Thabo has seen firsthand how systemic barriers stifle youth potential. “I see too many talented young people sidelined by a system that isn’t designed to support us,” he laments. His observations reveal that issues such as limited Internet access, insufficient funding for educational ventures, and social biases are not isolated incidents but are symptomatic of larger systemic failures that demand urgent reform.

Challenges in Achieving Youth Empowerment

While digital platforms have democratized information and activism, significant technical barriers persist. Thabo explains, “Our digital revolution is hampered by outdated infrastructures and limited funding for youth initiatives.” In many rural or marginalized urban settings, young people face multiple hurdles—ranging from unstable internet connectivity and obsolete devices to sporadic access to digital tools—which restrict their ability to mobilize effectively. Without reliable infrastructure, even the most innovative online campaigns struggle to gain momentum. Thabo emphasizes that passion alone cannot drive sustainable change. “We need to equip young people not just with passion, but with the skills and tools needed to drive lasting change,” he insists. Regulations may not yet fully accommodate the nuances of digital expression or protect against the misuse of personal data. Thabo notes, “There’s a significant gap between modern communication channels and the policies that govern them. Deep-seated social attitudes further compound these challenges. Many communities still harbour scepticism toward youth-led initiatives, often dismissing their contributions as inexperienced or overly idealistic.”

Despite their digital activism and community outreach, many youth voices remain marginalized in conventional political and administrative arenas. Thabo observes, “Too often, decision-making is reserved for a select few who overlook the potential of young people.” Thabo challenges conventional power structures that restrict decision-making to a select few. “Too often, decision-making is reserved for the few who overlook the fresh, innovative ideas that youth can offer,” he argues. His stance is a call to dismantle outdated hierarchies and to infuse new, energetic perspectives into governance and policy-making. Thabo Nkosi’s journey offers a powerful testament to the transformative potential of empowered youth. His vision is both bold and practical: to create platforms that not only amplify youth voices but also provide the requisite tools, training, and resources to enact systemic change.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Youth Empowerment Lays the Foundation for Future Change:** Thabo’s journey underscores that investing in youth not only nurtures individual potential but also catalyses broader social transformation. “If we empower youth, we empower the future.”
- 2. Local Initiatives Can Ignite National Movements:** Small-scale, community-driven projects have the potential to serve as sparks for nationwide reform. “Grassroots change is the spark that can ignite a nationwide movement.”
- 3. Transparent, Data-Driven Approaches Catalyse Action:** Accurate and accessible data is essential for holding systems accountable. “Accurate data isn’t just informative—it drives actionable change.”
- 4. Cultural Shifts Toward Inclusivity are Essential for Innovation:** For meaningful, lasting progress, society must fundamentally value and incorporate ideas from all corners—especially the youth. “True reform hinges on a culture that not only listens to youth but actively integrates our perspectives into decision-making processes.”
- 5. Investment in Capacity Building Unlocks Young Talent:** The long-term success of youth-driven initiatives depends on robust investment in education, mentorship, and infrastructure. “Our greatest asset is our energy and creativity. Investing in our skills transforms innovative ideas into reality.”

“When you empower youth, you empower the future.” – **Thabo Nkosi**

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Chapter 69

Published: 25th June 2023

Chapter 70

Collaborative Crime Prevention: Lessons from Stephan Landsberg and the Wellington Action Group

Introduction

In this chapter, Stephan Landsberg co-founder of the Wellington Action Group (WAG), shares how WAG focuses on crime prevention and collaborative governance to foster safety and community development. Landsberg shares his experiences, successes, and lessons learned from over a decade of working to make Wellington a safer town.

The Wellington Action Group

The Wellington Action Group was founded 10 years ago by Stephan Landsberg and Attie Barnard, an ex-policeman who wanted to give back to the community. The organization focuses on crime prevention through collaboration, technology, and community engagement. Landsberg explained, “We started this organization to make people alert to what is happening in our town and to assist them in preventing crime.” He goes further: “Crime is on everybody’s list nowadays. It all starts with crime, and then it escalates to something more. That’s why my feeling was to assist people in crime-related issues in communities.” The group employs a network of partnerships with SAPS (South African Police Service), security companies, neighbourhood watches, and the Community Police Forum (CPF). Stephan elaborated, “If there’s a good relationship with SAPS and security companies, everything will start falling into place.”

Using Technology to Fight Crime

The Wellington Action Group leverages technology to enhance crime prevention efforts. “We make use of overview cameras and license plate recognition (LPR) cameras, which are used in fighting crime.” In addition, the group uses WhatsApp groups to keep residents informed about crime-related issues in their neighbourhoods. “We ask people to stick to crime-related issues on these groups to ensure they remain effective.” The partnership with security companies has been instrumental in providing infrastructure such as CCTV cameras, which are monitored to prevent crime. Stephan emphasized, “The technology is there, and I think that is the way forward for everyone.”

Collaborative Governance

The Wellington Action Group operates as a hub for collaborative governance, bringing together various stakeholders to address crime. “We have monthly meetings with SAPS, security companies, law enforcement, and the traffic department to discuss hotspots and share information.” This integrated approach has yielded significant successes. “We’ve had plenty of successes, including major arrests and a visible reduction in crime. Visibility is key, and that’s where everyone can assist.” Stephan emphasized the importance of building trust and confidence in SAPS. “SAPS is not your enemy. People must get rid of that mindset.” He highlighted the challenges faced by police officers, who work in difficult environments and often lack appreciation for their efforts. “Just go to the police station and say thank you for the good work you are doing. That word ‘thank you’ means a lot to the members of the police service.” Stephan maintains regular communication with SAPS, meeting weekly with the station commander to discuss issues and share updates with the community. “It’s about working together and taking their hands to make us stronger.”

Managing Diversity and Avoiding Racial Profiling

Addressing the challenges of racial profiling, Stephan emphasized the importance of focusing on crime rather than race. “Crime is crime; it doesn’t matter where it happens or who commits it.” He

highlighted the need to work closely with diverse communities to understand the root causes of crime and build a united identity around safety. He shared, “Despite living in poor conditions, people in these areas are glad the police are there. They want to talk to you and raise their concerns. This shows SAPS is there for everyone, not just certain groups.” Stephan highlighted the critical role of neighbourhood watches in crime prevention. “Neighbourhood watches play a valuable role because of their visibility. Without them, crime would be much worse” He emphasized that neighbourhood watches are voluntary and rely on the dedication of community members who patrol even in difficult conditions.

The Role of Local Government

Local government plays an important role in crime prevention, but Stephan described it as one of many role players rather than the leading entity. “Local government has a huge role to play in crime prevention, but it’s a national function that filters down to provincial and local levels.” Stephan emphasized the need for local government to collaborate with SAPS and other stakeholders, “We are driving the bus; they must just stop, get on the bus, and join us.” He stressed that service delivery and crime prevention are interconnected, with issues like cable theft affecting entire communities.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Collaboration:** Crime prevention requires partnerships among SAPS, security companies, neighbourhood watches, and local government. “It’s an integrated approach with all the role players.”
- 2. Technology:** Leveraging technology such as LPR cameras and WhatsApp groups enhances crime prevention efforts. “The technology is there, and I think that is the way forward for everyone.”
- 3. Community Engagement:** Building trust and confidence in SAPS fosters stronger relationships and effective crime prevention. “SAPS is not your enemy.”

4. **Visibility:** Neighbourhood watches play a critical role in reducing crime through visibility and community involvement. “Without the neighbourhood watch, crime would be much worse.”
5. **Socio-Economic Development:** Addressing poverty and unemployment is essential to breaking the cycle of crime. “It’s a social problem, but it also leads to safety. If everyone can live in a safe environment, people will want to invest in your town.”

“Crime is on everybody’s list nowadays. It all starts with crime, and then it escalates to something more.” – **Stephen Landsberg**

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Published: 6th August 2023

Chapter 71

A Journey to Recovery and its Impact on Local Communities

Introduction

Addiction remains one of the most pressing yet often overlooked challenges in local communities. It silently affects individuals across different socio-economic backgrounds, often devastating families and communities. In this chapter a woman in recovery, who has chosen to remain anonymous shares her powerful story. She provides insight into the disease of addiction, the realities of living with substance use disorder, and the transformational journey of recovery through a 12-step program. Her experience sheds light on the silent struggles many faces and the hope that recovery brings.

Early Influences and the Start of a Journey

Addiction often starts subtly, woven into a person's life without immediate recognition. The guest describes how her addiction began at an early age, fuelled by a sense of disconnection and a need to fit in. "From a young age, I felt different, I didn't quite belong. The first time I drank alcohol, it felt like everything finally made sense." She explains how addiction does not discriminate, emphasizing that it can impact anyone, regardless of age, profession, or background. "People imagine addicts as people who are dishevelled, desperate, and dangerous. The reality is very different: it's the mother, the businessman, the student." For many, addiction initially provides an escape, masking underlying emotions and struggles. However, over time, the need for relief turns into dependence, consuming one's life. "Alcohol was my gateway, but eventually, that temporary relief faded,

and I needed more.” She describes the emotional turmoil that accompanies addiction—the shame, secrecy, and inability to stop despite wanting to. “Every morning, I told myself today would be different. That I’d only have one drink, but one was never enough. The cycle continued, and soon I lost myself.”

Challenges and How Society Can Respond

The guest highlights several obstacles faced by individuals battling addiction and how local governments and communities can better address the issue. Society often views addiction as a moral failing rather than an illness, leading many to suffer in silence. “People judge before they understand. They assume addiction is a choice when, in reality, it’s a disease.” Breaking this stigma requires a shift in perspective, treating addiction with the same urgency and compassion as other medical conditions. “We wouldn’t shame someone for having diabetes or depression, but we shame addicts. That needs to change.”

Secrecy vs Anonymity

While secrecy feeds addiction, anonymity plays a protective role in recovery. “Secrecy kills. The less we talk about it, the quicker we die. But anonymity provides a safe space to heal, without fear of judgment.” She emphasizes the importance of support groups that allow addicts to share their struggles without exposing their personal identities to the public. “Recovery meetings create spaces where people feel safe to open up, where we don’t have to fear being labelled or rejected.” Addiction doesn’t only affect the individual; it impacts loved ones, friendships, and workplace relationships. The guest reflects on how her addiction affected her son. “For 14 years, my son only knew an addicted mother. I was absent, disconnected. Recovery has given me the opportunity to truly be present.” For families of addicts, rebuilding trust can take time. “It took over a year for my family to believe that I had really changed. They had heard my promises before, only to watch me break them every time.”

The Role of Education

Education about addiction is critical for both individuals battling substance use disorder and their families. Understanding the disease helps eliminate harmful misconceptions and enables more effective community interventions. “People need to realize that addiction is not a choice; it’s a disease. If we treat it with the same urgency and compassion as other diseases, we can help more people recover.” She highlights the importance of teaching young people about addiction to prevent early exposure to substance abuse. “Alcohol and drug ads make it look glamorous, but no one talks about the consequences, the years lost to addiction, the families torn apart, the careers destroyed.” Communities often feel powerless in dealing with addiction, but local governments can play a crucial role in supporting recovery efforts. “People feel hopeless watching loved ones suffer, but there are resources. Governments must provide better access to rehabilitation programs, mental health services, and support groups.” She stresses that recovery cannot be forced; it must be a personal choice. “You didn’t cause it, you can’t cure it, and you can’t control it. The addict must be ready to surrender and seek help.”

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Secrecy Keeps Addiction Alive:** Silence and shame prevent addicts from seeking help. “The less we talk about our struggles, the more they consume us. Recovery begins when we acknowledge the problem.”
2. **Not Everyone Who Uses Substances is an Addict:** Some people can drink or use substances without developing dependency. “If you can take a drink and not think about having more, you probably don’t have the disease of addiction. But for me, one is too many and a thousand never enough.”
3. **Recovery Requires Surrender:** The decision to seek help cannot be forced; it must come from within. “I had to be completely broken before I could heal. No one could make the choice for me.”
4. **Education and Support Are Crucial:** Addiction should be treated with understanding rather than punishment. “Communities must stop blaming addicts and start offering

solutions. Support groups, education, and accessible rehab centers save lives.”

5. **Addiction is a Disease, Not a Moral Failing:** The guest emphasizes that addiction is not about weak willpower. “People assume addicts lack discipline, but addiction is an illness. Just like diabetes or heart disease, it requires treatment.”

“Addiction is not a choice; it’s a disease. If we treat it with the same urgency and compassion as other diseases, we can help more people recover.”

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 13th August 2023

Chapter 72

Reflecting on the UDF and South Africa's Transformation: Insights from Dr Rev. Allan Boesak

Introduction

As South Africa marks the 40th anniversary of the now defunct United Democratic Front (UDF), critical reflections arise regarding its legacy, the lessons learned, and the challenges facing the country today. The UDF was not merely a political movement; it was a unifying force that mobilized grassroots activism, fostered democratic participation, and played a central role in dismantling apartheid-era injustices. However, decades after its dissolution, South Africa grapples with persistent inequality, corruption, and economic stagnation.

In this chapter, Dr Rev. Allan Boesak, one of the UDF's founding members unpacks the movement's impact, the struggles of post-apartheid South Africa, and the path forward.

Early Influences and the Start of a Journey

Dr Boesak's commitment to justice was shaped by his faith and his love for his people. "I believe in a God who is a God of justice and freedom, who steps in to correct the injustices done to His people. If you have that faith, then you cannot ignore the call to fight for justice." His activism was not just a reaction to apartheid but a deliberate choice rooted in theological and moral conviction. "Jesus came to liberate the oppressed, to heal the broken-hearted. That is justice work, and I could not turn away from it." He describes his engagement in the struggle as both a spiritual and political duty. He reflects on how the UDF provided a platform for ordinary citizens, activists, community leaders, students,

religious figures, to challenge an oppressive regime while fostering a sense of national unity. “The UDF was a grassroots movement. It did not belong to one person or one party, it belonged to the people. That’s why it was powerful.”

Challenges in South Africa’s Transformation

Despite the political victories of 1994, South Africa remains one of the most unequal countries in the world. The country’s transition from apartheid to democracy was expected to bring radical social and economic change, but many of the structural inequalities have persisted. Dr Boesak argues that economic policy lies at the heart of South Africa’s continued inequality. “The economic system we adopted was not designed for equality; it was designed to benefit the few while leaving the majority behind.” He explains that South Africa’s embrace of neoliberal capitalism perpetuated economic injustices. “It’s a system that cannot live without greed. It does not trickle down. It hoards wealth at the top while the poor remain trapped in cycles of poverty.” He criticizes South Africa’s economic planning, arguing that it does not prioritize equitable wealth distribution. “Economic planning should serve the people, not serve capital.”

Failures in Education

Education was seen as a pathway to uplift disadvantaged communities, but South Africa’s education system continues to reflect economic inequality. “If you can afford private schools, your children will succeed. If not, they are doomed to mediocrity.” He laments the lack of investment in township schools and the decision to lower matric standards rather than improve education quality. “We don’t address the root problem, we simply lower the bar, making it harder for our youth to compete internationally.” He warns that without fundamental education reform; South Africa’s future workforce will struggle to compete in a global economy.

Education is vital for shaping future leaders who can challenge unjust systems. Dr Boesak stresses that democracy must be actively understood and engaged with, not accepted passively. “Our people must understand democracy, not just accept it

blindly. Freedom must be defined by the people, not by politicians or corporations.” He warns against apathy, urging South Africans to educate themselves about their history, economic realities, and political structures.

The ANC’s Choices

Dr Boesak argues that the ANC had a choice when transitioning into power but failed to act decisively. “Some say the ANC was forced into neoliberal capitalism. I say they had a choice, and they made the wrong one.” He describes how secret negotiations between ANC leaders and the apartheid regime shaped the economic landscape long before formal democratic transition. “Mandela wanted Freedom Charter economics—a model of social democracy where government ensures economic fairness. But ANC leaders pushed him to abandon it.” He believes that if Mandela had insisted on an alternative economic model, South Africa could have taken a different path. “We had a unique moment in history. Mandela had global credibility, if he had stood firm on economic justice, the world would have listened.”

Leadership and Ethical Governance

Dr Boesak calls for communities to reclaim their power from political elites. “The ANC dismantled community organizations because they saw them as competition. They told us, ‘You don’t need NGOs, you have a government now.’ That was their way of silencing activism.” He argues that the deterioration of grassroots movements has weakened democratic participation. “People were told to trust their leaders, but trust without accountability leads to corruption.” He emphasizes that local governance is the foundation for real change. “People think national politics matter most, but the most immediate face of governance is local government. If we don’t fix it, we cannot fix the nation.”

Dr Boesak concludes that South Africa’s democracy has been hijacked by corruption and elite interests, but he believes change is possible. “We fought for freedom and got democracy, but democracy must work for the people. It must empower the poor, not just enrich the elite.” He calls for South Africans to take back their revolution. “Our power has been hijacked; we must take

it back. Our voices have been silenced; we must reclaim them. Our future must be written by us, not by politicians who serve capital.”

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Faith and Justice Go Hand in Hand:** Dr Boesak’s activism was deeply rooted in his belief that faith must lead to justice. “If you say Jesus, you must say justice, otherwise, you are not real.”
2. **Economic Inequality Is Manufactured:** The system that South Africa adopted was designed to maintain inequality rather than dismantle it. “Neoliberal capitalism requires inequality. If we don’t challenge it, we will never change our reality.”
3. **Education is a Tool of Oppression or Liberation:** The way South Africa manages education reflects economic injustice. “If you lower the standards rather than improve the system, you ensure that the poor remain behind forever.”
4. **Community Organizations Must be Revived:** The ANC’s dismantling of grassroots activism weakened the fight for justice. “They told us we didn’t need community organizations anymore. That was a lie. We must rebuild them.”
5. **Local Governance is the Key to Transformation:** Real change starts at the community level, not just in national government. “The most important level of government is local government. If we don’t fix it, we cannot fix the nation.”

“If you say Jesus, you must say justice. Otherwise, you are not real.” – **Dr Rev. Allan Boesak**

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 20th August 2023

Chapter 73

Strategies for Revitalizing South Africa with Dr Allan Boesak

Introduction

In this follow-up chapter, Dr Rev. Allan Boesak discusses what must be done to get South Africa back on track. He reflects on the shortcomings of the democratic transition, the role of faith communities in justice, and the urgency of civic participation. His insights provide a sobering yet hopeful assessment of South Africa's path forward.

The Role of Faith and the Church in Justice

Dr Boesak recalls a time when the church stood firmly against apartheid, acting as a moral compass for the nation. "After 1994, the prophetic church we knew in the 1970s and 1980s disappeared. It wasn't taken away; we decided to be silent." During apartheid, religious leaders such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Dr Boesak himself spoke boldly against the regime's injustices, mobilizing communities and offering moral guidance. However, after democracy was achieved, the faith community distanced itself from activism. "We became like the Dutch Reformed Church under apartheid: too close to power and too afraid to challenge the government."

This reluctance to speak out, he argues, has allowed corruption and poor governance to flourish. "We whisper into government's ears instead of standing with the people. But biblical prophets spoke truth loudly, condemning injustice so that the people knew their suffering was heard." Dr Boesak believes that the church must reclaim its prophetic role and actively challenge

government wrongdoing. “If the church regains its courage, we can foster both spiritual and political renewal in South Africa.”

The Disappointments of Democracy

Reflecting on South Africa’s transition from apartheid to democracy, Dr Boesak acknowledges the deep sense of betrayal felt by many citizens. “We lived through the trauma of apartheid. Now we live through the trauma of democracy’s disappointments.” The euphoria of 1994 gave way to systemic failures—inequality persisted, corruption spread—and government institutions became compromised. While he initially hoped for retirement and a quiet life by the sea, he recognizes that his role is far from over. “There are young, bright, energetic leaders in South Africa. My role now is to advise and inspire the next generation to take up the baton.”

Challenges in South Africa’s Transformation

South Africa faces numerous obstacles in its efforts to fulfil the promise of democracy. Dr Boesak identifies key structural issues that continue to hinder the country’s progress.

Dr Boesak is highly critical of both the ruling African National Congress (ANC) and opposition parties, arguing that leadership must transcend partisan interests. “Politicians fall over the cliff a year after entering office. The system itself corrupts good intentions.” He urges citizens to hold leaders accountable and actively participate in governance. “We must send people into politics, support them, pray for them, and hold them to the fire so they remain committed to justice.” He also laments the absence of principled leadership. “There was a time when leaders were driven by conviction and a responsibility to the people. Today, politics is driven by self-preservation, personal wealth, and factional battles.”

Identity Politics and National Unity

South Africans remain divided by racial and ethnic classifications, creating barriers to true unity. “We are all Africans, yet some are seen as more African than others.” Dr Boesak criticizes the ANC’s

categorization of people based on race, arguing that true African identity must be rooted in shared values and struggle rather than bureaucratic classifications. “Identity should not be a political tool. It should be an affirmation of solidarity.”

Economic Redistribution and Land Reform

Economic inequality remains one of South Africa’s deepest wounds. “We cannot talk about national unity without addressing the land question and redistribution of wealth.” Dr Boesak refers to proposals by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and economists like Sampie Terreblanche for a wealth tax, noting that economic justice is essential for real transformation. “The ANC doesn’t want to listen because they have embraced neoliberal capitalism. But we must explore alternatives.” He criticizes South Africa’s post-apartheid economic decisions, arguing that they have entrenched inequality rather than dismantled it. “We adopted the same capitalist model that sustained apartheid. That was a mistake.”

The Role of Academia

Dr Boesak believes universities must play a more active role in shaping a just, egalitarian society. “Academia must be connected to communities, shaping leaders who understand social realities rather than creating intellectual elites detached from the people.” He advocates for curriculum reform, practical education, and better training for young people in vocational skills. “Not everyone must go to university. We need electricians, artisans—people who keep the country functioning with dignity and pride.” Education, he argues, must instill civic responsibility. “We need a generation that understands governance, justice, and activism. Education cannot simply produce workers for corporations; it must produce thinkers who challenge injustice.”

Leadership and Ethical Governance

South Africa must redefine governance in a way that prioritizes ethical leadership, civic engagement, and justice. “A new movement must emerge, one rooted in transparency, accountability, and deep moral conviction.” Dr Boesak envisions a political culture where citizens actively shape policies rather than

passively accepting government decisions. “We have brilliant minds in South Africa, economists, educators, activists, who can help fix this country. But they are ignored.”

Dr Boesak remains hopeful that South Africa can reclaim its democratic promise. “We are rich, not just in resources, but in our people. We can do this.” He calls for a national awakening, urging South Africans to demand transformation in governance, education, and economic policy. “We must do the painful work, next to each other. Only then will we find the unity and justice we lost.”

Key Governance Lessons

1. **The Church Must Regain its Voice:** Faith leaders must reclaim their prophetic role in speaking truth to power. “We cannot remain silent in the face of injustice. The people need a voice.”
2. **Democracy Must Serve the People:** Political structures should empower communities rather than entrench elite interests. “We fought for democracy, but democracy must serve the poor, not just the powerful.”
3. **Leadership Requires Accountability:** Citizens must actively hold politicians accountable, ensuring ethical governance. “If we don’t hold leaders’ feet to the fire, corruption will thrive.”
4. **Universities Must Drive Social Change:** Academia must be actively involved in shaping leadership and justice. “Education must be practical, connected to communities, and focused on empowering citizens.”
5. **Citizens Must Take Ownership of Change:** South Africa’s future depends on active civic engagement and renewed solidarity. “We must do the work—together. Our voices matter, and our future must be shaped by us, not just politicians.”

“We cannot remain silent in the face of injustice.
The people need a voice.” – **Dr Rev. Allan Boesak**

Chapter 73

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Published: 27th August 2023

Chapter 74

Local Partnerships: Pathways to Hope for South African Communities

Introduction

In the face of persistent youth unemployment and adult underqualification, South African communities are discovering new hope in collaborative, locally grounded approaches to education and training. This chapter explores how community colleges, and non-profit actors in Wellington in the Cape Winelands are working together to create inclusive, future-oriented pathways to employment and opportunity.

Wellington School of Skills: Turning Possibility into Purpose

The School of Skills in Wellington is a platform for learners with mild intellectual disabilities to express themselves. The school offers a four-year programme for students between the ages of 14 and 18, with half the curriculum dedicated to adapted academics and the other half focused on practical vocational training. “We offer skills like motor mechanics, welding, upholstery, hairdressing, food studies, and agriculture,” explained Mr Graham Cupido, the school’s principal. “These are real, employable skills.”

However, despite the relevance of the training, many graduates face difficulty entering the job market. “The challenge is what happens when our learners leave. We try our best to place them in opportunities, but certification hurdles and high unemployment make it tough,” he added. Even in a challenging environment, individual success stories have emerged. “One of our past students invited me to Lentegeur and showed me the

house he bought. He studied motor mechanics but now drives a 14-ton truck for Pick n Pay. He's doing exceptionally well," said Cupido. He also cited examples like Brandon Erasmus, who launched a catering business, and Matthew Olifant, who is now managing operations at a local hotel. "We wish this could be the case for all our learners, but even the few success stories matter deeply."

Western Cape Community Education and Training (CET) College: Free Skills for Real Futures

Complementing the School of Skills is the Western Cape Community Education and Training College, which offers free, entry-level education and occupational training. "We are the third tier of post-school education," explained Mr Jerimia Thuynsma, Chairperson of the Western Cape CET College Council. "Originally, we were adult learning centres. Now, we offer free skills training to help people find jobs or move into formal vocational colleges and universities."

The CET curriculum includes adult basic education (Grades 1–9), the Senior Certificate, and occupational courses in areas such as plumbing, bricklaying, welding, and motor mechanics. "Whether you want to finish matric or learn to become a motor mechanic, there are no fees," Jerimia said. "We believe financial barriers should not block opportunity." However, the CET Colleges face infrastructure limitations. "Most of our learning centres are in schools," he noted. "Schools operate until 3 p.m. and often don't have facilities for skills training. There's just no place for furniture making or welding in a traditional school classroom."

To solve this, the college is in negotiations with the Department of Public Works to secure standalone campuses. Jerimia highlighted that, "We need to train full-time in dedicated spaces. That's the only way to meet demand." Despite operating 73 campuses in the Western Cape and having a footprint in every province, CET Colleges remain under-publicised. "People often say, 'Why haven't we heard of this?'" Jerimia admitted. "That's a marketing failure by government. But we're fixing that. We're working on community-based planning where local stakeholders help determine which courses we offer."

The Wellington Skills Development Initiative

Alongside public institutions, the Wellington Skills Development Initiative is mobilising local resources to address training gaps. Once a town known for its leather factories, canneries, and furniture workshops, Wellington saw many of its industries collapse in the wake of global trade policy changes. “Wellington used to be known for skills,” Heindri Bailey recalled. “But global trade policy changes wiped many of them out.” The initiative was launched to restore this tradition. “Our schools don’t prepare learners for the labour market,” he said. “So, we stepped in.” Partnering with the Wellington School of Skills and the CET College, the initiative now runs innovative programmes in robotics, coding, and drone piloting. “We can’t train young people only for today’s jobs,” Bailey insisted. “We must prepare them for tomorrow’s economy. “His approach is pragmatic and action-oriented. “We’re not crying about failed policies. We’re acting. We identify gaps, bring in service providers, and support local NGOs who need help getting accredited,” he said. One of their recent milestones was hosting SETA information sessions to help community members understand qualifications and career pathways.

Challenges

Despite encouraging progress, several persistent challenges remain. One of the most pressing is the **inadequacy of training infrastructure**. As Jerimia pointed out, “Skills at a school can’t happen unless it’s a school of skills. You can’t teach welding in a Grade 8 maths classroom.” Attempts to build **stronger links with local government** have met mixed results. “Even today, we invited the district and local municipality, but they didn’t come,” Bailey noted. This absence has left a gap in strategic alignment and support.

The collaborative work of the Wellington School of Skills, the Western Cape CET College, and the Wellington Skills Development Initiative offers a compelling set of governance lessons for local, provincial, and national stakeholders. These lessons reflect the lived realities of practitioners.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Localization Makes Training More Effective:** Training is most impactful when it reflects the specific needs of the local economy. As Jerimia explained, “Whatever drives the economy in that district, that will then be the skills programme we offer.”
2. **Financial Accessibility is Essential:** Access to education and skills development must be barrier-free. “We don’t charge. Whatever we offer is free,” said Jerimia. This ensures that even the most vulnerable are not left behind.
3. **Cross-sector Collaboration is a Must:** Sustainable skills development requires active cooperation between education providers, civil society, local government, and industry. Bailey emphasised, “Local government and business are critical partners. We don’t want to deliver skills just for the sake of it; we want them to be relevant.”
4. **Certification Unlocks Opportunity:** Without recognised qualifications, skills training has limited value. “That’s the challenging part,” said Mr Cupido. “They are semi-skilled, but without documentation, doors remain closed.”
5. **Training Must be Aligned with Future Needs.** Skills development should not only respond to current demand but anticipate future economic trends. “In five years, robotics, drone piloting, and coding will dominate,” Bailey predicted. “We must start now.”

“We’re not here to complain. We’re doing something practical to give youth a future.” – **Mr Heindri Bailey**

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Chapter 75

A Lifetime in Youth Development and Community Activism with Frank Julie

Introduction

In this chapter, community activist, Frank Julie, reflects on four decades of youth development, nonprofit leadership, and grassroots empowerment. Julie has spent over 40 years mobilizing communities, training young leaders, and challenging systems that perpetuate poverty. His insights offer a blueprint for rebuilding grassroots organizations, fostering ethical governance, and empowering marginalized communities to take ownership of their development.

A Life Committed to Community Development

Julie's passion for empowering communities began in the mid-1970s, when he witnessed the injustices of apartheid firsthand in Bishop Lavis. Raised in poverty, he developed a deep awareness of social inequality, leading him to join political movements advocating for education and community reform. "My journey started during the school boycotts of 1980," he explains. "That was the moment I realized I wanted to dedicate my life to community work." During the turbulent 1980s, Julie became a national organizer, traveling extensively across South Africa to mobilize grassroots structures. His early commitment to activism shaped his approach to leadership, emphasizing self-reliance and community-driven change.

Founding Young People at Work

In 1992, Julie established the Resource Action Group (RAC), focusing on empowering unemployed youth. Over time, RAC evolved into Young People at Work, one of the most recognized youth organizations in the Western Cape. “We started small, but today, we’re one of the best youth organizations in the province,” he says. “We provide training anywhere, whether in libraries or via WhatsApp-based learning, making education accessible to all.”

Julie’s approach prioritizes mobility and accessibility: instead of waiting for participants to seek training, his organization brings skills development directly to communities. “Last year, 24,000 people signed up for training through WhatsApp,” he shares. “It’s all about removing barriers to education and making learning convenient for those who need it most.”

Challenges in Community Development

Julie argues that South Africa has shifted from participatory democracy to representative democracy, where people vote every five years but remain disempowered between elections. “People hand over their power to politicians and assume their work is done,” he laments. “We need communities to organize themselves and take control of their destinies.” He emphasizes the need to revive grassroots movements, citing the dissolution of organizations like the UDF as a key reason for the leadership vacuum in local governance. “The structures that existed before democracy were dismantled,” he notes. “We need to rebuild them to ensure long-term accountability.” Without active civic engagement, governance continues to deteriorate, perpetuating economic decline and corruption.

Economic Collapse in Small Towns

Having travelled extensively across South Africa, Julie has witnessed the decline of small towns, particularly those built around railways, mining, and agriculture. “Towns like Toast River and Kimberley are ghost towns now,” he says. “Unemployment

is at 90%, and people rely entirely on grants.” He describes devastating scenes, from business closures to deteriorating infrastructure, emphasizing the urgent need for economic intervention. “In Kimberley, there was a water crisis when I arrived,” he recalls. “Hotels had no water, and people had to rely on Jojo tanks. It’s heartbreaking to see places deteriorating like this.”

Education and Knowledge-Sharing as Leadership Tools

Julie believes that knowledge should be freely shared, not restricted by financial barriers. “I don’t write books to sell them; I write to share knowledge and help people build sustainable organizations.” Over the years, he has authored three books, distributing them across South Africa to help nonprofit leaders develop strategies for sustainability:

1. *The Art of Leadership and Management on the Ground* (2007) – A guide to building and managing nonprofit organizations.
2. *The Roots of the NGO Crisis in South Africa* (2010) – Analysing leadership struggles within the nonprofit sector.
3. *Fundraising Strategies for Struggling Nonprofit Organizations* (2021) – A practical approach to mobilizing resources beyond financial donations.

Julie has donated hundreds of copies to libraries nationwide, ensuring community leaders have access to essential knowledge. “I want to level the playing field for those who can’t afford expensive workshops,” he explains.

Leadership and Ethical Governance

Julie asserts that organizations belong to the community, not their founders, emphasizing transparency and collective governance. “When you build an organization, it is not your personal property,” he warns. “Leaders must be accountable to the people they serve.” Without strong ethical frameworks, organizations can become personal assets rather than serving the greater good. Julie calls for a return to grassroots activism, urging citizens to mobilize outside of political structures. “Without

grassroots power, local government will keep failing,” he asserts. “Communities must organize themselves to take back control of their development.” Frank Julie’s reflections highlight the importance of ethical leadership, participatory democracy, and grassroots empowerment in addressing South Africa’s socio-economic challenges. His call to rebuild grassroots structures, empower youth, and share knowledge freely serves as a blueprint for a more engaged and active civil society.” Leadership is not about titles; it’s about service, accountability, and uplifting communities.”

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Leadership is About Service, Not Ownership:** Organizations belong to the community, not their founders, and leaders must remain accountable and transparent in their decision-making. “Your organization is not your personal asset. It exists to serve the people.”
2. **Participatory Democracy Must be Revived:** To ensure meaningful change, citizens must actively engage in governance by self-organizing and holding leaders accountable. “People must organize themselves, not just rely on politicians.”
3. **Education and Knowledge Sharing Empower Communities:** Knowledge should be freely accessible to all, levelling the playing field through mentorship, books, and skills development programs. “I share my books for free so that leaders don’t have to reinvent the wheel.”
4. **Grassroots Movements Strengthen Accountability:** NGOs and community organizations must remain accountable to the people, not just donors. “Without grassroots power, local government will continue failing.”
5. **Ethical Leadership is Non-Negotiable:** True leadership is rooted in integrity, transparency, and a rejection of corruption. Leaders must establish systems of consequence management to ensure accountability. “If leaders are unethical, the entire system collapses.”

Chapter 75

“Leadership is not about titles; it’s about service, accountability, and uplifting communities.”

– **Frank Julie**

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Published: 4th December 2023

Chapter 76

Heidelberg Hope: Unveiling the Visionary behind Community Transformation in Gauteng with Dr Willem Sprong

Introduction

The town of Heidelberg, Gauteng, has faced significant challenges in infrastructure, safety, and municipal service delivery over the years. Instead of waiting for government intervention, Dr Sprong and a group of committed residents created Heidelberg Hope to bring meaningful change through community-driven solutions.

In this chapter, Dr Willem Sprong, founder of Heidelberg Hope, shares his vision for restoring Heidelberg's infrastructure, strengthening community engagement, and building partnerships to support local development. This conversation explores the town's deterioration, the impact of provincial planning decisions, and the role of collective action in shaping local governance.

The Story Behind Heidelberg Hope

Dr Sprong moved to Heidelberg in 2006 after leaving Nelspruit. When faced with a choice between settling in Johannesburg or Heidelberg, his wife convinced him to choose the quieter, historically rich town. But over the years, he watched as the town struggled with neglect, crumbling infrastructure, and crime, which led to frustration among its residents. "I saw how the town was suffering, broken infrastructure, neglected services, and people losing hope," he recalls. "We knew something had to be done." Inspired by his childhood experiences with his mother, who worked in civil protection during the 1988 floods in

Kimberley, Sprong saw the transformative power of community leadership. He realized that grassroots action could be the key to restoring Heidelberg, prompting the formation of Heidelberg Hope. “We want to see kids riding their bicycles to school again, without fear, in a town that is clean, safe, and functional,” Sprong explains. “That’s why we exist, to restore Heidelberg as a thriving, well-managed community.”

From a Small Initiative to a Registered Non-Profit

Initially, Sprong and a small group of concerned citizens started local improvement projects, but Heidelberg Hope formalized its efforts in early 2023 when business leaders approached him with an offer to scale their work into a structured nonprofit company. “A few months ago, some businessmen reached out and said they wanted to be involved,” Sprong explains. “What started as a small community initiative suddenly expanded into something much larger.” By organizing formally as a nonprofit company, Heidelberg Hope gained the ability to mobilize funding, partner with businesses, and create a governance structure that ensures transparency and accountability.

Key Initiatives Driving Heidelberg Hope

One of Heidelberg Hope’s most significant projects involved installing perimeter cameras at all town entry points to detect licence plates and flag suspicious vehicles. “Our system scans every vehicle entering Heidelberg and cross-references it with national databases,” Sprong explains. “If a car is flagged by police, we get an instant alert.” This initiative has already helped reduce crime, allowing authorities to identify stolen or suspicious vehicles before they move further into town. Frustrated by deteriorating roads and municipal delays, Heidelberg Hope launched a pothole repair project, relying entirely on local sponsorships and volunteer labour. “In the last two years, we’ve repaired over 3,000 potholes, completely funded by the community,” Sprong says. “Instead of just complaining, we take action.”

Advocating for Responsible Urban Development

Heidelberg Hope is currently challenging the provincial government over its plan to build 7,600 low-cost housing units for 56,000 residents, a project that exceeds Heidelberg's infrastructure capacity. "Our concern isn't about stopping development," Sprong clarifies. "It's about ensuring that provincial government upgrades our water systems, electricity grid, sewage network, schools, and clinics before bringing tens of thousands of new residents." Currently, certain parts of Heidelberg experience weeks- or months-long water shortages, while the local electricity network functions at only one-third of its original capacity. "You can't relocate thousands of people into a town where basic infrastructure is failing," he warns. "It's unfair to existing residents and unfair to the new arrivals."

Challenges in Collaborating with Local Government

Heidelberg Hope initially sought collaboration with Lesedi Local Municipality. However, after several unsuccessful meetings, the municipality stopped engaging with the organization. "Businesses were willing to donate materials for critical infrastructure repairs," Sprong explains. "But the municipality ignored our requests, even when all they had to do was accept free assistance."

Despite participating in Integrated Development Plan (IDP) discussions, Heidelberg Hope's concerns about crime prevention, water shortages, and infrastructure failures are consistently absent from municipal reports. "We raise the same issues year after year, but they never get documented in the official IDP report," Sprong says. "It's as if our concerns don't exist." Despite these setbacks, Heidelberg Hope remains committed to working with the municipality, differentiating itself from activist groups like AfriForum. "We don't want to fight Lesedi Municipality; we want to work with them," Sprong insists. "But they need to meet us halfway."

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Community Action is More Effective Than Complaining:** Instead of waiting for government intervention, communities can take initiative to fix infrastructure themselves.
- 2. Business and Citizen Collaboration Can Drive Meaningful Change:** Local businesses and residents can fund and support municipal improvements, complementing government efforts. The pothole repair project is a prime example of community-funded solutions, with private companies sponsoring equipment and labour.
- 3. Urban Development Must be Accompanied by Infrastructure Investment:** Large-scale housing developments should include upgrades to water, electricity, sewage systems, and public services.
- 4. Political Independence is Essential for Long-Term Success:** Heidelberg Hope refuses contributions with hidden agendas, ensuring fair, transparent allocation of resources for all residents.
- 5. Leadership:** Sprong's leadership in Heidelberg Hope demonstrates how communities can take charge of their town's development rather than waiting for government intervention.

“We can sit back and complain that nothing gets done, or we can start fixing things ourselves.”

– Dr Willem Sprong

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Published: 27th February 2024

Chapter 77

Insights from Christo van der Rhee, CEO of the FW de Klerk Foundation

Introduction

In this chapter, Christo Van Der Rhee, CEO of the FW de Klerk Foundation, discusses South Africa's human rights landscape, reflecting on constitutional principles, structural challenges, and the pressing need for socio-economic reform. This chapter explores the state of human rights in South Africa, the annual Human Rights Report Card, and how leadership, accountability, and citizen participation can shape the country's future.

South Africa's Transition to Democracy

South Africa's journey to democracy formally began in 1994, with the establishment of a constitutional framework designed to protect human rights and dismantle apartheid-era inequalities. However, in the decades since, significant disparities remain, particularly in access to education, employment, and justice. "The real challenge is shifting power relations and ensuring economic inclusion." The FW de Klerk Foundation acknowledges these realities and seeks to drive meaningful change through its research and advocacy initiatives.

The FW de Klerk Foundation and its Role in Human Rights Advocacy

The FW de Klerk Foundation was established to protect and promote the values of South Africa's constitutional democracy, ensuring that the Bill of Rights remains central to governance and public policy. The foundation serves as a watchdog, ensuring that

the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights are not simply theoretical but actively upheld in governance and daily life. “South Africa moved from an apartheid state to a constitutional democracy, and the Bill of Rights is the foundation of this new system,” Van Der Rheede explains. “Our report assesses how well the government is fulfilling its constitutional obligations.”

Key focus areas include monitoring government compliance with constitutional principles, advocating for human rights through research and public engagement and holding leadership accountable through policy recommendations.

The Human Rights Report Card: A Tool for Accountability

Every year, the FW de Klerk Foundation publishes the Human Rights Report Card, which evaluates South Africa’s adherence to constitutional principles based on key indicators such as crime rates and public safety, access to quality education, healthcare and social services, housing, food security, and economic inclusion. The report is based on data from various sources, including Stats SA (poverty and economic trends), police crime reports (safety and security indicators), and Constitutional Court rulings (legal precedents and human rights cases). While the grading system used in the report is somewhat subjective, the key focus is identifying areas where human rights are under threat and encouraging policy reform. “Everyone has the right to life and security, but crime statistics show rising levels of violence and gender-based abuse,” Van Der Rheede states. “This means that critical constitutional rights are not being adequately protected.”

Does South Africa Have a Truly Functional Democracy?

While the Human Rights Report Card acknowledges that South Africa has a functional democracy, Van Der Rheede questions whether it truly serves the majority of its citizens. “If you’re middle class or wealthy, you benefit from a functional democracy,” he explains. “But if you’re poor, you struggle daily with crime, lack of education, and food insecurity.” For example, access to legal representation is vastly different depending

on wealth: affluent citizens hire top lawyers, while the poor often face legal battles without adequate support. “The poorest communities suffer the most, whether from crime, housing shortages, or a broken education system,” he says.

Need for Structural Reform

While South Africa’s constitution is globally praised, it is clear that structural inequalities continue to hold back progress.

To break historical cycles of poverty, reforms must address economic inclusion and wealth redistribution, urbanization and spatial planning, and land reform and property rights. South Africa must go beyond political representation and actively reshape socio-economic structures to support the poorest communities. South Africa’s constitutional democracy is well-intended, but many human rights remain unfulfilled due to structural inequalities, crime, and economic stagnation. To ensure true dignity, equality, and freedom, leaders must prioritize structural reform, economic inclusion, and accountability.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Crime is a Major Threat to Human Rights:** Rising violence threatens basic security and well-being. “We are already on the brink of a narco-state; without stronger policing, crime syndicates will take over.”
2. **Education Reform is Urgent:** Over 80% of schools are dysfunctional, failing to equip youth for modern industries. “We train children for outdated jobs while ignoring the rise of artificial intelligence and digital economies.”
3. **Urban Planning Must Address Rapid Migration:** Municipalities must adapt spatial planning for long-term sustainability. “Without proper urban planning, apartheid-era divisions will persist.”
4. **Economic Policy Must Shift Towards Growth:** A staggering 70% of the budget goes to social interventions, while only 7% fuels economic development. “We need an economic strategy that prioritizes growth, job creation, and investment.”
5. **The Constitution Must be Actively Enforced:** Legal rights must translate into tangible improvements in people’s

lives. “If the Constitution is not actively enforced, it will remain a piece of paper instead of a guiding principle for national progress.”

“Leaders must place the interests of citizens above political or personal agendas. Real change requires genuine service.” – **Christo van der Rhee**

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Chapter 78

Zackie Achmat on Democratic Engagement and Local Governance

Introduction

Known for his work in the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), education reform, and civic activism, Zackie Achmat has been a consistent voice for justice in South Africa. Achmat's candidacy in the 2024 national elections marked a significant moment in South African politics, when independent candidates sought to challenge the dominance of traditional political parties and provide voters with alternative leadership choices. In this chapter, he reflects on his journey, the challenges of independent politics, and the broader political landscape of South Africa.

Activism, Mentorship, and Early Political Awareness

Achmat's activism was shaped by his upbringing, experiences in marginalized communities, and mentorship by influential figures. He recalls being taught political awareness from an early age, beginning with his grandfather, who would make him read newspapers aloud and discuss political developments despite being unable to read himself. "My grandfather made me read newspapers to him. While I wanted to read comics, he insisted that I read politics and through those discussions, I gained an early political education." Beyond his family, Achmat was mentored by key figures in South African activism, such as Jay Naidoo, Theresa Solomon, and Edwin Cameron, who taught him about non-racialism, class unity, and social justice movements. His first exposure to direct injustice occurred at age six, when he witnessed a pass raid in Johannesburg. He describes the fear he felt when police arrested the mother of his childhood friend, an experience

that stayed with him and helped shape his lifelong commitment to fighting inequality and oppression. “I was terrified that they would take my mother, but they took my friend’s mother instead. That fear and that injustice stayed with me.”

The Treatment Action Campaign: A Fight for Healthcare Justice

While Achmat had already been involved in civic activism, his role in founding the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) in the late 1990s propelled him into national prominence. TAC was established to advocate for affordable HIV/AIDS treatment, challenge pharmaceutical monopolies, and combat the denialism of the Mbeki administration, which questioned the link between HIV and AIDS. “Medicines that cost R10,000 a month were out of reach for almost everyone. We fought to ensure that people living with HIV had access to treatment.”

TAC became one of the most effective grassroots movements in post-apartheid South Africa, mobilizing ordinary citizens to challenge government policies. The campaign’s success led to major victories, including lowering the cost of antiretroviral (ARV) treatment, expanding healthcare access for HIV-positive individuals, and increasing public awareness and reducing stigma. However, the struggle was not without pain. Achmat recalls the loss of colleagues, activists, and friends throughout TAC’s battle against HIV/AIDS misinformation and government inaction. “We fought a civil war without guns and bullets, but we saw our friends and colleagues die. That was the hardest part.” After more than a decade at TAC, Achmat stepped down, feeling burnt-out and ready for new challenges.

Independent Politics and South Africa’s Disillusionment with Parties

Achmat’s decision to run as an independent candidate in the 2024 national elections was driven by a belief that political parties no longer serve the interests of ordinary South Africans. He argues that representative democracy has failed, with parties focusing more on money and political survival than meaningful change. “The majority of voters did not vote for any of the major

parties—including me. That tells us people are disillusioned with representative democracy.” South Africans have increasingly lost trust in political structures, reflected in lower voter turnout and growing support for independent candidates in local elections. However, Achmat acknowledges that the national space is more difficult to penetrate, as major parties dominate funding, media coverage, and political networks.

Challenges Facing Independent Candidates

Despite the potential of independent candidates, there are significant challenges that make electoral success difficult: Campaigning as an independent requires funding for logistics, outreach, and media visibility, resources that major parties have in abundance. While Achmat received donations, he notes the scale of party-funded election campaigns far outweighs what independent candidates can mobilize. “Politics has become about money: those who have it win. That’s the reality we are facing.” While independents have succeeded in local elections, the national level remains a steep climb. Many voters still perceive politics as requiring party backing, making independents struggle to convince the electorate that they can be effective without a party structure.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Political Disillusionment is Growing:** Voters are increasingly disillusioned with political parties, which is reflected in low voter turnout and scepticism towards traditional politics. “There’s no such thing as good people or bad people; only people who do good or bad things.”
- 2. Independent Candidates Face Structural Barriers:** Despite success in local elections, independents still struggle at national levels due to systemic obstacles and limited funding. “Politics has become about money: those who have it win. That’s the reality we are facing.”
- 3. Advocacy Does Not End with Elections:** People need to push for reforms in transport, spatial planning, substance abuse regulation, and neighbourhood safety. “We need to support

neighbourhood watches in poor communities, not with just reflector jackets, but real resources to help people feel safe.”

4. **Local Government Elections Will be Critical:** South Africans must demand accountability from local governments, ensuring that service delivery remains a top priority. “Spatial justice must be addressed rapidly. We can’t do ‘business as usual’; we need integrated communities, closer to city centers and economic opportunities.”

“If we don’t try to do a little bit of good every day, then we end up doing bad. There’s no such thing as good people or bad people; only people who do good or bad things.” – **Zackie Achmat**

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Published: 3rd June 2024

Chapter 79

Reginald “Doc” Fick Reflects on World Radio Day

Introduction

In this chapter, Reginald “Doc” Fick, a veteran of the radio industry and Head of Department at the National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa (NEMISA), shares his journey, the impact of radio, and the unique role of community radio in South Africa.

The Journey of a Radio Veteran

Reginald “Doc” Fick’s passion for radio began in his youth, growing up in Johannesburg and tuning into drama serials and music shows. His journey took him from Swaziland, where he learned technical skills, to the BBC in London, and various international assignments. Reflecting on his career, Doc Fick states, “The wonderful thing about being in the media is that it extends your boundaries, opportunities, and personality.” Despite the rise of digital media, radio remains a beloved medium in South Africa, with over 80% of the population tuning in weekly. Doc Fick attributes this to radio’s immediacy, intimacy, and ability to start conversations. “Radio is an immediate medium, engaging with listeners in real-time, whether they’re driving, doing homework, or washing dishes,” he explains. Additionally, radio builds emotional connections with listeners, fostering a sense of community and trust.

The Role of Community Radio

Community radio stations differ from commercial and public broadcasters in their non-profit nature and community ownership. Doc Fick emphasizes, “Community radio is meant to

benefit the community, not shareholders.” These stations often fund local initiatives, involve community members in decision-making, and provide a platform for diverse voices. Tanya Bosch describes community radio as a tool for democracy, diversity, and development, highlighting its role in advocating for local issues and empowering communities.

Despite their potential, community radio stations face challenges such as limited awareness and funding. Doc Fic notes, “We need to push harder for businesses operating in our communities to support us.” He advocates for a multi-faceted approach to sustainability, including social, institutional, and financial aspects. Social sustainability involves active community participation, while institutional sustainability focuses on robust policies and training programs. Financial sustainability requires diverse revenue streams, including advertising and membership fees.

Collaboration with Local Government

Doc Fic believes that community radio and local government should collaborate more closely. “We should have a state of the community, not just a state of the nation,” he suggests, advocating for regular updates on local issues and services. He sees community radio as a vital partner in local governance, capable of amplifying community voices and holding authorities accountable.

The Future of Community Radio

Looking ahead, Doc Fic sees a bright future for radio, especially with the advent of digital platforms. “Radio will be around for a long time because it’s trusted and accessible,” he asserts. He encourages ordinary citizens to get involved in community radio, whether as volunteers, presenters, or even engineers. “Community radio was first known as participatory radio, and we can partner with many people, including local government,” he concludes.

Reginald “Doc” Fic’s insights underscore the transformative power of radio, particularly community radio, in fostering democracy, diversity, and development. His

experiences highlight the importance of community engagement, sustainability, and collaboration in ensuring radio's continued relevance. As we celebrate International World Radio Day, Doc Fic's vision reminds us of the potential for radio to be a powerful tool for social change and local empowerment.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **The Power of Community Ownership:** Community radio stations thrive when they are owned and operated by the communities they serve, fostering trust and relevance.
2. **The Importance of Diverse Revenue Streams:** Financial sustainability requires a mix of advertising, membership fees, and support from local businesses and government.
3. **Active Community Participation:** Engaging community members in decision-making and content creation strengthens the station's impact and relevance.
4. **The Role of Radio in Local Governance:** Community radio can be a powerful partner for local government, amplifying community voices and holding authorities accountable.
5. **The Future of Radio:** Embracing digital platforms and encouraging citizen participation ensures radio's continued relevance in the modern media landscape.

“Radio builds emotional connections with listeners, fostering a sense of community and trust.”

– Doc Fick

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Published: 16th February 2022

Chapter 80

Advancing Employment Equity with Tabea Kabinde, Chairperson of the Commission for Employment Equity

Introduction

In this chapter, Tabea Kabinde, Chairperson of South Africa's Commission for Employment Equity (CEE), shares her journey from clinical psychologist to a prominent advocate for workplace transformation. Kabinde's narrative highlights the complexities surrounding employment equity, the systemic challenges faced in its implementation, and the strategies required to move from mere compliance to genuine conviction. Her reflections offer critical insights into fostering sustainable equity, inclusion, and diversity within South Africa's workplaces.

Early Influences and Pathway to Transformation Leadership

Kabinde describes herself as “an ordinary girl from Diepkloof in Soweto” whose initial career in clinical psychology evolved into a profound commitment to inclusion, diversity, and equity. Her experiences in the corporate world and recruitment industry led her to become involved with an association called Something Personnel, where she served as a transformation champion. This role provided a stepping stone to her involvement with Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) and eventually to her appointment by Minister Oliphant as Chairperson of the CEE. Reflecting on her journey, Kabinde emphasizes the formative nature of her early experiences: “I got involved initially as the transformation expert champion and that led me to getting involved in BUSA and, later on, being appointed a commissioner for employment equity.”

Challenges in Implementing Employment Equity

Kabinde identifies several critical challenges hindering effective employment equity implementation:

- 1. Structural Weaknesses in Legislation:** Kabinde points to the inherent limitations of self-regulation within the Employment Equity Act: “Employers set their own goals, and if they don’t meet these goals, there’s very little consequence.” This lack of accountability has perpetuated slow progress and superficial compliance.
- 2. Resistance and Lack of Managerial Will:** Kabinde underscores a prevailing resistance to transformation, noting: “Corporate South Africa prioritizes profits over the transformation of the country.” She argues that managerial will is lacking across demographics, driven by fear and perceived threats to existing power structures. “Asking white managers to vote for employment equity is like asking turkeys to vote for Christmas,” she quotes, emphasizing the deep-rooted resistance to change.
- 3. Disconnect Between Equity and Skills Development:** Kabinde highlights the failure to link employment equity with meaningful skills development. Employers, she observes, often resort to quick fixes and external consultants rather than investing in internal talent development: “Employers are very quick to poach rather than grow their own timber.”
- 4. Persistent Inequality for Vulnerable Groups:** Gender equity and disability inclusion remain significantly behind targets. Kabinde notes, “Gender equity is still problematic, where males are preferred over females.” Additionally, disability representation remains alarmingly low at 1.2%, exacerbated by historical stigmas and limited awareness.

The Role of Education and Awareness in Equity

Kabinde firmly believes in the transformative power of education and awareness. She argues that genuine equity requires comprehensive literacy and skills-training initiatives, especially at lower organizational levels, to facilitate upward mobility: “Managers do not see why it is important to up-skill people, and in the long run, it becomes problematic because you don’t

have growth from lower levels moving up.” She also emphasizes the importance of awareness campaigns around disability and discrimination, stating, “One of the first interventions employers should do is an awareness drive around disability—what it is and why it is important to declare it.”

Leadership, Compliance, and Moving Towards Conviction

Kabinde advocates for a shift from mere compliance to genuine conviction in employment equity practices. She calls for workplace activism, describing activists as “people who understand the law, question when it is not applied, and become the voice of the voiceless.” However, she acknowledges the risks of victimization and stresses the importance of protective legal frameworks and education to empower whistleblowers. To foster genuine conviction, Kabinde argues that employers must recognize the broader social benefits of equity: “Employers have to see a common good that comes out of the Employment Equity Act. Any employer that understands sustainability knows that to thrive, they need a winning team, a willing environment, and a willing community.”

Future Directions and Strategic Initiatives

Looking ahead, Kabinde emphasizes the critical importance of the *Employment Equity Amendment Bill* and its enforcement mechanisms. She identifies three key criteria for compliance certification under the new legislation:

- Meeting sector-specific five-year equity targets set by the Minister.
- Avoiding discrimination disputes at institutions like the CCMA or Labour Court.
- Compliance with minimum wage requirements.

Kabinde believes these stringent criteria will significantly enhance accountability and incentivize genuine transformation efforts. “The best way legislation can benefit people is if it hits the employer in the pocket,” she states, envisioning a

future where non-compliant organizations are excluded from government contracts.

Tabea Kabinde's journey from a clinical psychologist in Soweto to the Chairperson of South Africa's Commission for Employment Equity illustrate the power of determination, advocacy, and principled leadership in driving social change. Her insights offer critical lessons for leaders committed to creating equitable, inclusive, and diverse workplaces—ultimately contributing to a more just and sustainable South African society.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Accountability Drives Transformation:** Genuine change requires robust accountability mechanisms. Kabinde stresses the necessity of consequences for non-compliance: “Without consequences, employers get away with murder.”
2. **Education and Skills Development are Crucial:** Sustainable equity depends on continuous investment in education and internal talent development. “The best affirmative action is training and development,” Kabinde asserts, highlighting the importance of nurturing internal capacities rather than relying on external consultants.
3. **Moving Beyond Fear to Inclusive Leadership:** Kabinde identifies the need to transition from fear-driven management to inclusive, empowering leadership practices. “Employers have not gotten to a point where they see the benefit of creating learning organizations and cultural tolerance,” she observes.

“The best affirmative action is the training and development of people.” – **Tabea Kabinde**

Chapter 80

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview
on this chapter.



Published: 4th August 2022

Chapter 81

Ensuring Socio-Economic Rights with South African Human Rights Researcher, Yuri Ramkissoo

Introduction

In this chapter, the Yuri Ramkissoo, a senior researcher at the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), explores the Commission's mandate, the systemic challenges facing local government, and the role of socio-economic rights in addressing inequality and poverty. Yuri provides a detailed look into the Commission's work, its engagement with municipalities, and the outcomes of its recent conference on local governance.

The Role of the South African Human Rights Commission

The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) is a Chapter-9 institution, which means it derives its mandate from Chapter 9 of the Constitution. Its primary responsibility is to support constitutional democracy in South Africa. Yuri explained: "Our functions include promoting, protecting, and monitoring human rights. This involves addressing complaints, conducting advocacy and training and ensuring a human rights-based approach to service delivery." The SAHRC engages with municipalities primarily through its nine provincial offices, which handle complaints, conduct advocacy, and monitor local government performance. However, Yuri admitted that this engagement is often indirect and limited. "Our provincial offices are the main link to local government, but our monitoring is largely done through national statistics and site visits," she said.

As the Senior Researcher for Economic and Social Rights, Yuri's focus is on monitoring the realization of rights such as water, sanitation, housing, and social security. Her role includes gathering information from government departments to assess their progress in fulfilling these rights. She highlighted the unique nature of South Africa's Constitution, which explicitly includes socio-economic rights. "Economic and social rights are critical to the well-being of people in South Africa," she said, noting that her work is guided by Section 184(3) of the Constitution, which mandates the SAHRC to monitor these rights annually.

Challenges in Local Government

While South Africans have broadly realized their political rights, socio-economic rights remain elusive for many. Yuri noted that while there was significant progress in the provision of basic services like water and sanitation post-1994, this progress has stagnated over the years. "The state must take positive steps to ensure access to these rights, but we've seen a failure at the local level to maintain and expand these services," she said.

Yuri outlined a range of systemic issues that undermine the effectiveness of local government. These include:

- **Infrastructure Failures:** Many municipalities suffer from non-functional water and wastewater systems due to poor maintenance and ageing infrastructure.
- **Inadequate Budgeting and Corruption:** Poor financial management, corruption, and wasteful expenditure impede service delivery.
- **Skills Shortages:** A lack of technical expertise and capacity within municipalities hinders their ability to fulfil their mandates.
- **Climate Change Unpreparedness:** Local governments are ill-equipped to address the long-term impacts of climate change, despite being at the forefront of its effects. "These failures exacerbate poverty and inequality," Yuri explained. She emphasized that the lack of a human rights-based approach to service delivery often leads to a breakdown in trust between municipalities and the communities they serve.

Community Education and Advocacy

The SAHRC also undertakes education and advocacy initiatives in communities, targeting groups like civic organizations and faith-based organizations. Yuri explained, “We train these groups in the hope that the knowledge filters down to the broader community. While our resources are limited, this approach allows us to reach more people indirectly.” Yuri emphasized the critical role of the private sector in promoting human rights, particularly in addressing systemic inequalities. “The Constitution may not explicitly outline corporate responsibilities, but businesses must operate in a way that respects human rights,” she said. She highlighted the mining sector as an example, where communities often suffer long-term harm despite promises of economic upliftment. Yuri called for greater collaboration between the state, private sector, and civil society to tackle these challenges. “It’s in the private sector’s best interest to promote a sustainable environment for their businesses,” she added, noting that corporate South Africa must adopt a human rights-based approach to ensure long-term sustainability.

Pillars of Development

The SAHRC’s work is guided by pillars such as poverty, inequality, unemployment, and violence. Yuri explained, “Systemic failures at the local government level both result from and exacerbate these issues. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic, community-driven approach.” The Commission advocates for service delivery that is inclusive and collaborative. “By reducing poverty and inequality, we can build capabilities and agency within communities,” Yuri said, adding that this approach is essential for building a capable state from the ground up.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. The Importance of Monitoring and Follow-Up:** Systemic issues cannot be resolved without consistent monitoring and follow-up. The SAHRC’s commitment to developing a local government monitoring framework is a step in the right direction.

2. **Empowering Communities:** Education and advocacy initiatives can empower communities to hold local governments accountable and demand better service delivery.
3. **Addressing Root Causes:** Tackling systemic issues like poverty, inequality, and unemployment requires a holistic approach that addresses the root causes of these challenges.
4. **Corporate Accountability Matters:** The private sector has a significant role to play in promoting human rights and addressing systemic inequalities. Businesses must adopt sustainable, human rights-based practices.
5. **Adaptability and Resilience:** The SAHRC's ability to adapt its strategies and engage with stakeholders at various levels underscores the importance of flexibility in addressing complex governance challenges.

“Service delivery must be driven in collaboration with communities. Only then can we alleviate poverty, inequality, and unemployment, and build a capable state from the ground up.”

– Yuri Ramkissoo

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Published: 1st September 2022

Chapter 82

The Role of Media in Strengthening Local Governance with Dr Franz Kruger

Introduction

Dr Franz Kruger, an esteemed academic, journalist, and advocate for community media, delves deeply into the significance of World Press Freedom Day, its roots in the Windhoek Declaration, and the role of the media in shaping governance and democracy. Through his reflections, Dr Kruger explores the challenges facing the media landscape today and shares valuable insights into the future of journalism in South Africa and beyond.

The Journey into Media

Dr Franz Kruger's introduction to the media world was not meticulously planned, but it was deeply transformative. As a young university student, he stumbled into journalism through a chance job opportunity at the Windhoek Advertiser in Namibia. "I was hooked, it was an opportunity to be useful, to cover untold stories, and to have fun," he recounted. This initial experience was the spark for what would become a remarkable career. Dr Kruger eventually established an independent anti-apartheid news agency in the Eastern Cape, with four offices operating in one of South Africa's most politically active regions. During this time, he reported on significant stories of resistance and resilience, giving voice to communities whose struggles had been marginalized. Following South Africa's democratic transition in 1994, Dr Kruger took on a pivotal role as National Editor of Radio News at SABC. Reflecting on his early career, he remarked, "Journalism gave

me a way to contribute meaningfully to society, and I've never looked back."

Rooted in Anti-Apartheid Activism

Dr Kruger's activism began early, shaped by his upbringing in a socially conscious household. His father, a minister who served in District 6 in Cape Town, instilled in him an empathy for marginalized communities. This foundation was further strengthened during his university years, where he joined the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). "It was a matter of must," he explained of his involvement. As General Secretary of NUSAS, Dr Kruger worked tirelessly to challenge apartheid policies, organize protests, and raise awareness. He experienced the risks of activism firsthand, including a period of detention, but emerged even more determined to use journalism as a tool for change.

World Press Freedom Day: Origins and Significance

World Press Freedom Day, celebrated annually on May 3rd, commemorates the adoption of the Windhoek Declaration in 1991. This landmark document, produced at a historic meeting in Namibia, set forth the principles of media freedom and independence. Reflecting on this legacy, Dr Kruger noted, "Media freedom is not just a right for journalists, it's a right for society to be informed." South Africa, he added, should take pride in its role in this history. The nation's post-apartheid era brought sweeping changes, including constitutional guarantees for freedom of expression and the press. "But we must remain vigilant," he cautioned. "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance."

The Challenges Facing Local Media

The rise of the internet has revolutionized how we consume information, but it has also disrupted traditional business models for media. Advertising revenue, once the lifeblood of newspapers, has largely shifted to global digital platforms like Google and Facebook. This trend has led to the closure of numerous publications and widespread job losses. National media often captures the spotlight, but Dr Kruger emphasized that

the real battleground for governance lies at the local level. Yet local media remains underfunded and under-resourced, leaving many communities without critical information about their own governance.

“There’s so much happening at the local level that we don’t hear about,” he said. “Local journalism is crucial, not just for exposing corruption but also for fostering a sense of community and accountability.” While state funding has been instrumental in supporting community radio, it is often accompanied by political strings that threaten editorial independence. Dr Kruger stressed the need for transparent, fair frameworks to safeguard the autonomy of local media outlets. “Local government must understand that the media is not their tool,” he asserted. Instead, he called for partnerships that respect the media’s independence while fostering transparency and trust.

Building Capacity and Collaboration

Dr Kruger underscored the importance of training and capacity building as the backbone of a strong local media ecosystem. Programs like the Wits Radio Academy, which he founded, have equipped young journalists with the skills needed to address modern challenges. However, more sustained efforts are required. “Training is critical, but it must be ongoing,” he said. “We also need to address the issue of retaining talent, as many trained journalists move on to bigger markets.”

Dr Franz Kruger’s reflections illuminate the vital role that media plays in governance and democracy. His insights serve as both a celebration of the progress made and a call to action for the work still needed to strengthen local journalism, adapt to digital transformations, and safeguard press freedoms. “Media freedom is about empowering society with the information they need. Without it, democracy cannot thrive,” he concluded.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Media Freedom Empowers Society:** Press freedom ensures that citizens have access to reliable information, enabling informed decision-making. “Journalism is a public service;

it's about equipping society, not just individuals, with knowledge.”

2. **Local Journalism is Critical:** Strengthening local media is essential for uncovering corruption and addressing governance issues at the community level. “Local journalism is where governance starts: it's the foundation of accountability.”
3. **Sustainable Models are Needed:** Transparent funding mechanisms are key to maintaining the independence and viability of local outlets. “Funding must support, not compromise, the integrity of local journalism.”
4. **Digital Transformation is Inevitable:** Media must innovate and adapt to survive in a rapidly changing landscape. “As journalism moves online, we must find ways to sustain quality and credibility.”
5. **Ongoing Capacity Building:** Training programs must be continuous, with strategies to retain talent and support underserved regions. “Journalists need ongoing support to navigate new challenges and deliver impactful stories.”

“Accountability is strongest when local government and media work together for the benefit of the community.” – **Dr Franz Kruger**

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 7th May 2023

Chapter 83

Fighting Corruption in South Africa: Insights from Tawanda Kaseke from Corruption Watch

Introduction

In this chapter, Tawanda Kaseke, a Project Coordinator at Corruption Watch, discusses his journey into anti-corruption advocacy, his insights into the pervasive nature of corruption, and the role of citizens and whistle-blowers in promoting transparency and accountability.

The Journey into Anti-Corruption Work

For Tawanda Kaseke, combating corruption is not just a job; it's a calling. His commitment to driving social change led him to join Corruption Watch in 2020 as a Project Coordinator within the Stakeholder and Research Division. "For me, my work drives me to implement change in society," Tawanda explained. "Seeing where the country is heading, joining Corruption Watch was about shifting the mindset of young people and encouraging them to take a stand against corruption. The current situation is not pleasant, but change is possible if we work collectively." Through his role, Tawanda focuses on monitoring and exposing corruption involving public resources, ensuring accountability across sectors such as education, policing, and leadership appointments in Chapter 9 institutions.

Understanding Corruption

Corruption is often associated with financial theft, but Tawanda emphasized its far broader scope: "Corruption is the abuse of

entrusted power for private gain.” This definition encompasses numerous acts, including:

- **Bribery:** Offering or accepting money or favours in exchange for influence.
- **Extortion:** Coercing individuals into performing actions they would not otherwise undertake, such as sexual favours for employment.
- **Misappropriation of Funds:** Diverting public resources away from their intended purposes.
- **Abuse of Public Services:** Neglecting duties or exploiting services meant for citizens. He added that everyday behaviours, such as municipal employees wasting time or delaying services, also constitute corruption. “Failing to provide services that citizens are paying for directly steals from the public, it’s a form of corruption.”

Corruption Through the Ages

Although corruption is often portrayed as a post-1994 phenomenon, Tawanda clarified its deep historical roots. “Corruption dates back to colonial rule and apartheid,” he explained, citing examples such as tax evasion during the Dutch colonial period and corruption tied to the apartheid government’s attempts to combat international sanctions. He pointed out that many businesses implicated in state capture today were already engaging in corrupt practices before 1994. “Pre-1994, there wasn’t as much exposure, people didn’t have access to the information available today. The narrative that corruption only began post-1994 overlooks a long history of unethical practices.”

The Role of Corruption Watch

Corruption Watch plays a pivotal role in educating the public about corruption and advocating for systemic change. “Public awareness is key to combating corruption,” Tawanda stressed. Through initiatives designed to inform citizens, the organization encourages whistle-blowers to report acts of corruption. These reports form the basis of collaborative advocacy campaigns with

partners like the South African Human Rights Commission and the Public Protector’s Office.

A 2021 Corruption Watch report revealed that municipal managers are often central to corruption at the local government level. Irregular procurement processes, mismanagement of funds, and requests for sexual favours in exchange for employment are among the misconduct documented through whistle-blower accounts. “Weak systems and poor implementation of legislation create loopholes that allow municipal corruption to thrive,” Tawanda explained.

Challenges in Combating Corruption

Whistle-blowers play a vital role in exposing corruption, yet they face significant risks in South Africa, including inadequate legal protections and social stigma. “Whistle-blower identities are often disclosed, leading to unfair labour practices, exclusion, and even threats to their safety,” Tawanda shared. “We need stronger legal frameworks to protect whistle-blowers, including financial rewards, compensation for unfair treatment, and safeguards for anonymity.” He also emphasized the need for public awareness to counter negative perceptions of whistle-blowers, who are often labelled as *impimpis* (traitors) in certain contexts. “Society needs to see whistle-blowers as heroes: they are saving us from corruption and driving accountability.”

South Africa has robust anti-corruption laws, such as the Public Finance Management Act, but implementation at the local government level remains a significant challenge. Tawanda attributed this to a lack of awareness among municipal managers and flaws in recruitment processes that allow unqualified individuals to hold office. “We have strong legislation, but the implementation is weak. It starts with ensuring that municipal managers are knowledgeable about relevant laws and qualified for their roles.”

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Corruption is Systemic:** Corruption has deep historical roots in South Africa, spanning colonialism, apartheid, and

democracy. “Addressing corruption requires understanding its entrenched history and pervasive impact.”

2. **Public Awareness Drives Accountability:** Educating citizens on recognizing and reporting corruption is crucial for mobilization and change. “Knowledge empowers communities to act against corruption and demand accountability.”
3. **Whistle-Blowers are Heroes:** Strengthening protections and improving public perceptions of whistle-blowers is essential to encourage reporting. “Whistle-blowers are not traitors; they are heroes fighting for a better society.”
4. **Implementation Is Key:** Effective enforcement of anti-corruption laws depends on qualified leadership and strong systems. “Recruiting ethical leaders and enhancing legislative implementation are crucial steps.”
5. **Collaboration Builds Strength:** Partnerships among civil society, government, and the private sector foster transparency and accountability. “Multi-sectoral collaboration is the foundation for ethical and effective governance.”

“Corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.” – **Tawanda Kaseke**

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 14th May 2023

Chapter 84

Building Community Consciousness with Prof. Phillip Spies

Introduction

Professor Phillip Spies is an eminent academic, pioneering researcher, and staunch believer in the transformative power of ethical inquiry. Prof. Spies shared his extensive journey in higher education, shares insights into the evolving challenges within academic institutions, and underscores how rigorous research coupled with progressive teaching can reshape society.

The Journey into Academia and Research

Prof. Phillip Spies has spent more than three decades traversing the diverse landscapes of research and education. His academic career began with a deep-rooted passion for inquiry, a passion that propelled him from his early days as a graduate student to his current status as a thought leader in his field. “My journey began with a single conviction: that research isn’t merely an academic exercise; it’s a tool to drive meaningful societal change,” he reflects. “Rigorous academic inquiry is the cornerstone of progress,” he asserts, setting an inspiring tone that connects scholarly excellence with practical social impact.

Educated at Stellenbosch University, he quickly gained recognition for his groundbreaking studies and innovative approaches. Over the years, his work has spanned a range of subjects, from exploring the intersections of technology and policy to fostering interdisciplinary collaborations aimed at solving real-world problems. In parallel, his commitment to teaching has seen him mentor scores of emerging scholars, imprinting the values of integrity, curiosity, and resilience onto the next generation.

The Legacy of Innovative Research and Teaching

Prof. Spies's contributions have redefined modern academic practices at multiple levels. Not only has he introduced novel research methodologies but he has also reimagined how these practices can influence public discourse, policy formulation, and socio-economic development. "Our innovative teaching methodologies and research practices transcend the classroom and the lab; they ripple out to inform policy, drive economic development, and ultimately improve lives," he explains. His work is characterized by an interdisciplinary approach that links the theoretical with the practical. Whether it's bridging gaps between technology and governance or mentoring students on entrepreneurial research, he has consistently championed the idea that academic excellence and practical impact are interdependent. His career highlights include publishing influential papers in international journals, spearheading research collaborations, and even advising government bodies on matters related to innovation and academic integrity.

The Academic Lens on Institutional Challenges

Over the course of his career, Prof. Spies has witnessed the evolution, and at times the stagnation, of institutional frameworks. "What I have witnessed time and again is that when institutions fail to update their research and governance frameworks, the consequences extend well beyond poor academic performance; they stifle national progress," he explains. He recounts numerous instances where outdated administrative systems, rigid bureaucratic protocols, and a resistance to change have impeded breakthroughs that could otherwise have propelled his field forward. His observations, drawn from decades of firsthand experience, reveal that these challenges are not isolated but are embedded in broader cultural and institutional inertia. This realization has fuelled his commitment to advocating for systemic reform even as he continues his own scholarly pursuits.

A Call for Authentic Academic Leadership

In today's rapidly transforming educational environment, Prof. Spies champions a new model of academic leadership, one that

is proactive, transparent, and unafraid of disruption. “True academic leadership requires more than following established routines; it demands the courage to question obsolete processes and to champion reforms that push the boundaries of what’s possible,” he asserts. His call to action resonates in an era where the rapid pace of technological innovation forces academic institutions to continually reinvent themselves. Prof. Spies’s insistence on embracing change is not merely theoretical; it is informed by concrete examples from his own experience where bold decisions led to transformative breakthroughs in research and pedagogy.

Challenges in Achieving Excellence in Academia

While many institutions boast a commitment to research excellence, the practical realities often tell a different story. Prof. Spies points out that “Legislation and ideal policies are only as effective as their implementation. Outdated research infrastructure and limited resources frequently undermine our ability to execute transformative ideas.” He elaborates on how insufficient investment in modern laboratories, digital libraries, and collaborative platforms hampers innovative research. These gaps not only affect the quality of output but also stifle the potential of young scholars eager to contribute to their fields.

Underinvestment in Capacity Building

Prof. Spies consistently stresses the importance of nurturing academic talent through ongoing professional development. “If we wish to see a true transformation in higher education, we must start by empowering our researchers and educators with the latest tools and continuous training,” he emphasizes. For him, capacity building isn’t a peripheral activity; it is central to bridging the gap between visionary policy and its practical application. By investing in robust training programs and state-of-the-art resources, academic institutions can ensure that their scholars are equipped to drive innovation at every level.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Clean and Rigorous Inquiry Builds Public Trust in Institutions:** Transparent, ethical research practices create an environment in which public trust is not merely aspirational but becomes part of everyday governance. He emphasizes that “when academic inquiry is rigorous and transparent, trust in our institutions becomes a living reality, not just an abstract ideal.”
- 2. Grassroots Reforms Can Ignite Nationwide Academic Innovation:** Prof. Spies asserts that change begins at the grassroots level. Small-scale reforms, whether modernizing departmental processes or updating research protocols, can spark a broader movement toward accountability and innovation. “Small-scale reforms can spark a nationwide movement toward accountability.”
- 3. Data-Driven Transparency is a Catalyst for Systemic Change:** The commitment to gathering accurate, insightful data is critical for informed decision-making. “Accurate data isn’t simply informative, it catalyses action,” Prof. Spies notes, highlighting that detailed metrics and transparent reporting force systemic inefficiencies to come to light, thereby motivating targeted and effective policy reform.
- 4. Investing in Academic Talent is as Crucial as Modernizing Infrastructure:** The most advanced research will falter without dedicated, well-trained individuals. Prof. Spies emphasizes that “our greatest asset is the people driving academic inquiry,” urging institutions to invest continuously in training, modern tools, and professional development. This investment in human capital ensures that innovations in infrastructure are matched by the capabilities of those who use them.
- 5. Collaboration Strengthens the Fabric of Academia:** A unified approach that leverages the diverse expertise of government bodies, academic institutions, and private partners creates a more resilient educational ecosystem. “A collaborative approach leverages varied strengths, ensuring that our academic institutions remain agile and innovative,” Prof.

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Spies shares, stressing that shared responsibility fosters an environment where collective progress is maximized.

“Rigorous academic inquiry is the cornerstone of progress.” – **Prof Phillip Spies**

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



Published: 18th June 2023

Chapter 85

Governance Lessons from a Young Mandela Award Recipient, Eon Hendricks

Introduction

In this chapter, Eon Hendricks, CEO and founder of the Idas Valley Community Trails, explores his journey of overcoming adversity, his passion for community development, and his innovative approaches to conservation, education, and social justice. Eon shares his motivations, the importance of Ubuntu, and his vision for inclusive and sustainable communities in Stellenbosch.

Overcoming Adversity

Eon's life story is a testament to resilience and determination. His family was forcibly removed from the centre of Stellenbosch during apartheid under the *Group Areas Act*, a traumatic event that shaped his outlook on life. Reflecting on this history, Eon shared, "My family was removed from the centre of Stellenbosch to Idas Valley. Instead of being angry at the past, I chose to make peace and move forward." Despite the systemic injustices, Eon used his experiences to fuel his passion for community upliftment and development.

A defining moment in Eon's life came in 2019 when he survived a near-fatal gang attack, being stabbed 11 times. This traumatic experience became a turning point, leading him to question his purpose and reaffirm his commitment to community leadership. "Surviving made me question my purpose. I realized God had a plan for me, and I want to prevent others from going down the hard road before reaching success," he explained.

Ubuntu and Dancing with Change

Eon embraces the philosophy of Ubuntu, which emphasizes interconnectedness and shared humanity. He explained, “Ubuntu means humanness. Bishop Tutu described it as being open and available to others, affirming others, and knowing you belong to a greater whole.” For Eon, Ubuntu is not just a concept but a way of life that drives his community-focused initiatives. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Eon demonstrated his ability to adapt to change and create opportunities for those left behind. He remarked, “Resilience and creativity should not happen in isolation; we must take people with us.”

Idas Valley Community Trails

Eon co-founded Idas Valley Community Trails in 2020 with Etienne Basson. The organization uses Idas Valley’s 230-hectare nature area for recreational and educational activities, promoting mental well-being and community empowerment. Eon shared: “We focus on job creation and education. Our Idas Valley Ranger program provides skills like conservation, first aid, and computer literacy. We also host afterschool programs, tree planting events, cycling initiatives, and major events like the Cape Epic and Wordfees.”

One of the unique aspects of the organization is its dual focus on job creation and education. Through the Idas Valley Ranger program, young people are equipped with essential skills while actively contributing to conservation efforts. Additionally, the organization’s afterschool programs use bicycles to engage children in activities like plant identification, wildlife observation, and climate change education. These initiatives not only provide recreational opportunities but also foster environmental awareness and lifelong learning.

Eon highlighted the importance of educating communities about climate change and its implications. He remarked, “Our people are uninformed, not because they’re not interested, but because they’re focused on surviving day-to-day challenges. I want to be a voice for the voiceless when it comes to these issues.”

Role in Local Government

As a ward committee member, Eon plays a vital role in advocating for community needs and ensuring that municipal processes align with the interests of residents. He explained, “The ward committee dictates what comes and goes in your area. Young people should join ward committees to serve their communities, not chase political positions.” Eon’s involvement allows him to familiarize himself with processes like the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), which is crucial for prioritizing projects and addressing service delivery backlogs. Eon emphasized the importance of managing relationships and building trust with the municipality and local councillors. “Good relationships and communication are key to making progress,” he noted.

Challenges

Despite his successes, Eon has faced significant challenges in his journey as a community leader. One of the most pressing issues is the deeply entrenched legacy of apartheid, which continues to manifest in systemic inequalities and limited access to resources for marginalized communities. He shared: “The forced removals and spatial planning of apartheid still dictate where people live, work, and play. Bridging these divides is a constant struggle.”

Another challenge is the lack of funding and resources for community initiatives. Eon explained, “Many of our projects rely on donations and goodwill. It’s difficult to sustain programs when funding is uncertain.” This financial constraint often limits the scale and impact of his work, forcing him to prioritize certain activities over others. Eon also highlighted the difficulty of engaging youth in his community.

“Many young people are disillusioned and lack hope for their future. Convincing them to participate in programs and believe in change is not easy,” he remarked. Addressing this disillusionment requires patience, creativity, and a deep understanding of the challenges they face.

Vision for 2030

Looking ahead, Eon envisions an integrated Stellenbosch where people of all backgrounds enjoy nature together. He shared, “I see success stories from our organization, an increase in people of colour cycling, and hopefully a mountain bike team from Idas Valley. By 2030, Stellenbosch aims to be the mecca of mountain biking, and we will contribute to making it inclusive.”

Eon’s vision reflects his commitment to fostering inclusivity, sustainability, and community empowerment. He believes that nature has the power to unite people and create opportunities for growth and development.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Resilience and Innovation:** Overcoming adversity requires resilience and creativity. Eon shared: “Surviving made me question my purpose. I realized God had a plan for me, and I want to prevent others from going down the hard road before reaching success.”
- 2. Community Engagement:** Transparent communication and accountability build trust and foster community development. Eon advocates for inclusive access to nature and recreational spaces, saying, “We want our community to use the nature area for exercise, education, and overall well-being.”
- 3. Vision and Leadership:** Effective leaders empower their teams and inspire confidence. Eon shared, “I see success stories from our organization, an increase in people of colour cycling, and hopefully a mountain bike team from Idas Valley.”
- 4. Environmental Awareness:** Addressing climate change creates opportunities for growth and development while protecting vulnerable communities. Eon emphasized, “Climate change exacerbates poverty and unemployment. Tackling it now can benefit unemployed youth.”
- 5. Active Citizenship:** Eon’s involvement in local government demonstrates the importance of active citizenship and community leadership. He said, “Young people should join ward committees to serve their communities, not chase political positions.”

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“Surviving made me question my purpose. I realized God had a plan for me, and I want to prevent others from going down the hard road before reaching success.” – **Eon Hendricks**

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Chapter 86

Wayne Duvenage on OUTA's Role as WatchDog and AttackDog

Introduction

In this chapter, Wayne Duvenage, CEO of the Organization Undoing Tax Abuse (OUTA), explore the powerful role of civic activism in holding government to account. This conversation focuses on the journey of OUTA, the need for active citizenship, and how civil society organizations can be both watchdogs and attack dogs in the fight against corruption and maladministration.

From Business Leader to Civic Activist

Wayne Duvenage's professional background began in the corporate world, particularly in the travel and tourism industry. He started his career at Avis, working his way up from cleaning cars to becoming CEO. "Avis had a management development program where you started at the bottom, learning the core functions of the business before moving up," Duvenage explains. His experience at Avis taught him critical skills in:

- Operational efficiency and financial discipline
- Customer service, budgeting, and business strategy
- Leadership, strategic planning, and organizational transformation

Duvenage later served on tourism industry boards, where he was actively involved in steering conversations on policy and governance. It was during this time that he first challenged irrational government decisions, a skill that would later become instrumental in his activism work. "Leadership allows you to steer

conversations and challenge irrational decisions and this is how OUTA was born,” Duvenage recalls.

The Birth of OUTA: From a Tolling Protest to a National Watchdog

OUTA was originally formed in 2012 as the Opposition to Urban Tolling Alliance (OUTA), a coalition of industry bodies that challenged the government’s decision to implement the Gauteng e-toll system. The organization was established to legally challenge e-tolls, arguing that: The public engagement process was inadequate, decisions were made behind closed doors, the policy was irrational and unenforceable, relied on outdated infrastructure, inaccurate billing systems, and an inefficient postal service, and finally that the costs were inflated, road upgrades were overpriced, and collection costs were excessive. OUTA successfully delayed the rollout of e-tolls through legal action, sparking widespread public resistance to the system.

Expanding the Mandate: Holding Government Accountable Beyond E-Tolls

By 2016, OUTA had expanded its mandate beyond e-tolls, transforming into the Organization Undoing Tax Abuse (OUTA). “We realized corruption and maladministration were everywhere, not just in e-tolls. We needed to broaden our fight,” Duvenage states. OUTA now tackles state capture, municipal governance failures, irregular contracts, and wasteful government spending through investigative research into corruption and inefficiencies, legal action against government departments officials and public awareness campaigns to inform citizens of their rights. It employs more than 42 employees and is supported by thousands of citizens committed to holding government accountable.

The Cost of Challenging Government: Facing Pressure and Isolation

While OUTA originally received business support, companies soon withdrew funding under government pressure. “Government leans on business and bullies them into submission if they take a stance against corruption,” Duvenage explains. Business

leaders who initially backed OUTA were forced to cut ties, fearing retaliation from government agencies. As a result, OUTA had to transition to citizen funding, relying on small monthly contributions from ordinary South Africans. Duvenage reflects on the harsh realities of business-government relations, noting that companies fear political backlash and many would rather stay silent than challenge corruption. “The blessing in disguise was shifting to citizen funding: we now represent the interests of ordinary South Africans, not business elites,” Duvenage explains.

Beyond Being a Watchdog: Actively Challenging Corruption

Many civil society organizations monitor corruption but do not act on it. OUTA takes a different approach—investigating wrongdoing, exposing corruption, and actively pursuing legal action. “We didn’t just want to be a watchdog; we wanted to be an attack dog,” Duvenage states. OUTA combines multiple tactics to ensure government accountability such as legal action against corrupt officials, public awareness campaigns to mobilize citizens and media engagement to expose fraud and governance failures. By taking decisive action rather than merely reporting misconduct, OUTA has forced policy changes, overturned corruption schemes, and pressured government to respond to citizen concerns.

Challenges in Holding Government Accountable

Duvenage noted these government accountability challenges:

- 1. The High Cost of Litigation:** Taking government to court requires significant financial resources, making legal action inaccessible for many communities.
- 2. Intimidation and Political Pressure:** Activists face threats, smear campaigns, and political retaliation, making it difficult to sustain their efforts.
- 3. Resistance from Government Officials:** Many officials refuse to engage with civil society, dismissing activism as opposition politics rather than constructive governance.
- 4. Lack of Citizen Awareness and Engagement:** Many South Africans are disengaged from governance issues, limiting their ability to challenge corruption effectively.

OUTA has demonstrated that citizens can challenge corruption, force policy changes, and reshape governance through collective action. “We live in a time where we don’t have the luxury of complaining; we must participate, challenge, and make a difference,” Duvenage asserts.

Duvenage concludes that as South Africans, “we must move beyond passive frustration and actively engage in governance discussions, hold leaders accountable, and demand ethical leadership in all sectors.”

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Persistence and Resilience are Key:** Activism requires long-term dedication; change does not happen overnight. “We were very close to shutting down several times, but resilience kept us going.”
2. **Civic Engagement Must Expand Beyond Protests:** Legal action, research, and policy influence are essential tools for challenging corruption. “Citizens must stand together, alone, we are weak, but together, we are unstoppable.”
3. **Business has a Responsibility to Challenge Corruption:** Companies must support democracy by holding government accountable. “If business does not defend democracy, it will suffer under its collapse.”

“We live in a time where we don’t have the luxury of complaining; we must participate, challenge, and make a difference.” – **Wayne Duvenhage**

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



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Chapter 87

Collaborative Partnerships and the Makhanda Circle of Unity with Sakhe Ntlabezo

Introduction

Makhanda (formerly Grahamstown) has long struggled with municipal inefficiencies, service delivery breakdowns, and infrastructure decay, leading citizens, local businesses, and civil society groups to step forward and take action. In this chapter, the work of the Makhanda Circle of Unity is explored in dialogue with Sakhe Ntlabezo, the program manager leading efforts to foster civic partnerships and create collaborative governance frameworks in the city.

The Origins of the Makhanda Circle of Unity

The Makhanda Circle of Unity was born out of a multi-stakeholder approach, bringing together diverse groups, including the local municipality, educational institutions, businesses, and grassroots organizations to solve pressing local challenges through shared purpose partnerships. “We can’t just stand by and watch our city fall apart. We must actively contribute to rebuilding and improving our communities.” Makhanda has frequently been in the news due to water shortages, governance failures, and infrastructure collapse. However, beyond these headlines, there has always been a strong civic movement willing to address local problems rather than wait for government intervention.

In 2019, after prolonged governance struggles, community leaders and local stakeholders convened to answer the question: How do we stop being passive witnesses to municipal failure and instead become active contributors to the city’s revival? These

discussions led to the formation of the Makhanda Circle of Unity, a non-partisan, multi-stakeholder initiative dedicated to fostering collaboration across different sectors. “We knew that no single entity could fix the city on its own, not government, not business, not civil society. It had to be a collective effort.” The initiative was spearheaded by Rhodes University’s Vice-Chancellor, Dr Mabizela, who emphasized the importance of the university being embedded in the local community and not existing in isolation.

How the Circle of Unity Works

The Circle of Unity operates as an umbrella structure in which organizations maintain their autonomy but work together under a shared vision of community upliftment. Rather than functioning as a rigid organization, the circle facilitates collaboration, creates networks, and enables local groups to align their efforts towards common goals. “I like to think of the Circle of Unity as a language, a shared purpose that guides how we work together without stripping anyone of their independence.”

Self-Directed Clusters and Focus Areas

Initially, the Circle worked through thematic clusters, each focusing on a specific area of community development. Over time, these have evolved based on pressing local issues and available resources. Some of these clusters include:

- **Local Economic Development (LED):** Supporting small businesses, attracting investment, and tackling unemployment.
- **Food Security:** Addressing hunger in the community and promoting urban farming initiatives.
- **Education Development:** Strengthening basic education through partnerships between schools, universities, and NGOs.
- **Narrative Building & Civic Pride:** Changing negative perceptions of Makhanda by celebrating local successes and talents.

Each cluster works in a self-directed way, which allows stakeholders to volunteer their expertise and time without hierarchical constraints.

Overcoming Competition and Distrust Among NGOs

Community organizations often compete for funding and visibility, making collaboration difficult. Many NGOs operate within their own silos, reluctant to merge efforts or share resources. To counter this, the Circle of Unity supports collective benefits over individual interests, ensuring that projects serve the broader community rather than a single organization.

This builds trust through sustained engagement, proving that collaboration leads to greater impact and, finally, encourages transparency and open communication and a culture of cooperation rather than competition.

Working With (Not Against) Local Government

One of the toughest challenges in civic governance is balancing cooperation with local municipalities while maintaining accountability. Despite its inefficiencies, the municipality remains a critical enabler of governance, meaning the Circle must engage government constructively rather than work outside or against it. “We can create alternative pathways, but we cannot work in isolation from the municipality. We must find ways to collaborate, even when government is slow to act.” While the Circle has successfully mobilized community efforts independently, it continues to push for better municipal responsiveness, ensuring that government sees civic organizations as allies rather than adversaries.

Challenges

Although the Circle of Unity has made significant strides in fostering civic partnerships, several challenges persist. First, there is resistance from government institutions that remain defensive when civic organizations critique municipal inefficiencies. Local government officials often cite legislation such as the *Municipal*

Systems Act (MSA) and the *Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA)* to justify inaction, creating bureaucratic roadblocks.

Second, community organizations struggle with capacity issues, as volunteers are often stretched thin. With only one operational staff member coordinating efforts, it is difficult to manage administrative duties while mobilizing stakeholders effectively. Third, political dynamics within communities sometimes hinder collaboration. While the Circle aims to be apolitical, grassroots organizations still experience competition, distrust, and ideological divisions, making it challenging to build sustained partnerships. Finally, funding constraints remain an obstacle, limiting the ability to scale projects and provide consistent support to various initiatives. Without long-term financial backing, many promising projects remain underdeveloped or entirely reliant on volunteer labour.

The Makhanda Circle of Unity stands as a model for shared purpose partnerships, demonstrating how communities can mobilize themselves to drive change, even in the absence of strong government leadership. Through a collaborative, apolitical approach, the Circle brings together universities, businesses, civic organizations, and local residents, creating a framework for sustainable governance and community upliftment.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Local Civic Action Can Drive Change:** Community-led initiatives like the Circle of Unity prove that citizens do not need to wait for government to intervene, they can take action themselves. “Government exists because we put them there. They don’t happen to us. We must actively shape our communities rather than passively complain.”
- 2. Collaboration Requires Clear, Shared Purpose:** Many civic initiatives fail because stakeholders operate in isolation. “We must put community impact above organizational interests. The work must benefit the collective, not just a few entities.”
- 3. Universities Must Play a Role in Local Development:** Rhodes University actively supports local governance efforts, making it a key player in the Circle of Unity’s success. “Universities should not happen to cities; they should be embedded within

them. When higher education invests in communities, real transformation happens.”

4. **Political Neutrality is Difficult But Necessary:** Maintaining an apolitical stance in civic governance is challenging, especially when local government sees independent initiatives as threats rather than collaborators. “We critique, we advocate, but we do not play politics. Our work is about solutions, not political battles.”

“We are more than just potholes and broken dreams.
We are a city of hope, resilience, and possibility.”

– Sakhe Ntlabezo

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview
on this chapter.



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Section C

Active Citizens Business

This section highlights the role of business leaders and entrepreneurs in shaping governance, economic transformation, and community development. It features inspiring stories of individuals who have overcome barriers to create lasting change, such as farm workers turned vineyard owners, social entrepreneurs driving digital citizenship, and professionals advocating for ethical trade and employment equity. The lessons emphasize the intersection of business, governance, and social good, offering insights into how private-sector partnerships, ethical entrepreneurship, and innovation contribute to sustainable local governance.

Chapter 88

From Farm Worker to Vineyard Owner: The Story of Paul Siguqa and Klein Goederust

Introduction

The agricultural sector, particularly the wine industry in South Africa, has long been marked by systemic barriers for black entrepreneurs. Paul Siguqa, the owner of Klein Goederust, shares his inspiring journey from being the child of farm workers to owning a boutique winery in Franschhoek. This chapter explores the themes of resilience, innovation, and the drive to change the narrative of black participation in the wine industry. The challenges, lessons learned and a vision for the future are discussed in depth, offering valuable insights into the transformative power of determination and strategic thinking.

Limited Access to Land

Access to land remains one of the most significant barriers for black entrepreneurs in the wine industry. Siguqa explains: “The biggest barrier to black people participating in the agricultural sector, especially in the wine sector, is access to land. Land is expensive. In Franschhoek, you don’t pay anything less than a million rand per hectare.” To overcome this challenge, Siguqa and his wife invested in a rundown farm, which they rebuilt from the ground up. “We bought our own farm with our own money, but to get in, we had to buy a rundown farm because land here is very expensive,” he recounts. The farm required extensive renovations, including repairing boreholes, replacing diseased vineyards, and restoring heritage buildings.

Systemic Challenges and Negative Perceptions

Siguqa acknowledges the systemic challenges that have historically hindered black success in agriculture. “In agriculture, you would read a lot of stories of black guys like me where the government granted them a farm, and in no time, the farm is gone,” he notes. He highlights the negative stereotypes associated with black ownership, such as selling off assets or failing to maintain infrastructure. Determined to change this narrative, Siguqa emphasizes the importance of self-reliance and meticulous planning. “This is not a government-funded farm. We invested heavily, saved for over 15 years, and used every cent sparingly and responsibly to get the best value,” he explains. He saved for 15 years to purchase the farm, a goal he pursued with unwavering determination. “Failure was never an option,” he states. Reflecting on his upbringing, he adds, “If I didn’t fail then, why would I fail now? Fear of failure shouldn’t terrorize you to the point of inaction. We need to change that narrative.”

Restoring Heritage and Infrastructure

The farm’s infrastructure was in disrepair when Siguqa purchased it. He describes the state of the property: “When we got here, there was no fencing, boreholes were not working, the infrastructure was not in place, and the vineyards had a disease, so you couldn’t make wine.” To address these issues, the team conducted soil analyses to determine the best crops for the land and replaced the old vineyards with new, healthy vines. The farm’s historic buildings, dating back to 1905, were restored with great care. “We kept the structure and the important parts of the buildings, restoring the original doors and windows while adhering to heritage regulations,” Siguqa explains.

Mentorship played a crucial role in Siguqa’s journey. He credits Hein Koegelenberg of La Motte for guiding him through the complexities of the wine industry. “He took me under his wing and said, ‘I don’t want you making the same mistakes I did when I started off,’” Siguqa shares. This mentorship helped him avoid costly errors and navigate the challenges of running a boutique winery. Siguqa emphasizes the importance of hiring local talent and promoting black excellence. “If you look at the team, 99%

are black South Africans. We did not import a chef from France. We've got Aunty Linda, who makes delicious South African food, from lamb on the spit to roosterbrood," he proudly states. This commitment to local hiring and authentic South African cuisine sets Klein Goederust apart from other wineries in the region. One of Siguqa's key principles is the importance of owning the means of production. "If you do not own the means of production, you will always be left behind," he asserts. His vision for the farm includes building an on-site cellar to process grapes and produce wine directly on the property.

Inspiring Future Generations

Siguqa's journey is deeply rooted in his desire to inspire future generations. Growing up as the child of farm workers, he witnessed firsthand the limitations imposed by systemic inequality. "When you live on a farm, your world is very small. The role models are only farm workers, so that's what you aspire to," he explains. By establishing Klein Goederust, Siguqa aims to show that black excellence in agriculture is possible. "We want to push the narrative of black excellence—that it is alive and happening. Just drive out to Klein Goederust and get a feel of it," he invites.

Siguqa's vision extends beyond his farm to the broader community. He emphasizes the importance of supporting local economies by hiring locally and encouraging youth to pursue opportunities in agriculture. "Our bursary structure is designed so that people don't have to leave their communities to look for opportunities elsewhere," he explains. Siguqa's fearless ambition is a driving force behind his success. Reflecting on his journey, he states: "Some people ask me, 'Don't you think you've bitten off more than you can chew?' If I only took the bites that I'm told are enough for me, I would still be on the farm."

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Overcoming:** Paul Siguqa's journey from farm worker to boutique winery owner is a powerful example of resilience, determination, and the transformative potential of black excellence.

2. **Inspiration:** His vision for Klein Goederust is not just about producing high-quality wines but also about inspiring future generations and supporting local communities.
3. **Mentorships:** Through learning from established farmers and the willingness of the established farmer to impart knowledge, new partnerships were established.

“The biggest barrier to black people participating in the agricultural sector, especially in the wine sector, is access to land.” – **Paul Siguqa**

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



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Chapter 89

Promoting Ethical Trade and Sustainability: The Role of Fair Trade in Local Governance with Musa Mpofo

Introduction

Fair Trade offers a transformative framework for fostering sustainability, ethical business practices, and local economic resilience. Musa Mpofo, Project Manager of the World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO), shared her insights on how Fair Trade principles align with governance, empower local businesses, and create sustainable economic systems. This chapter explores the challenges of implementing Fair Trade in South Africa, its role in governance, and the lessons learned from Mpofo's experiences in promoting this global movement.

The Role of Municipalities

Municipalities play a pivotal role in promoting Fair Trade by prioritizing local businesses that align with these principles. Mpofo explains: "The municipality can actively choose to prioritize entities who follow these principles. If a local municipality is prioritizing the local community, then they are definitely going somewhere economically." Becoming a Fair-Trade city also connects municipalities to a global network of Fair-Trade towns, offering opportunities for collaboration and learning. Mpofo highlights, "Becoming a Fair-Trade town puts you into contact with many other Fair-Trade cities, allowing you to learn from their experiences and benefit from their systems."

The Ten Principles of Fair Trade

Mpofu outlines the ten principles of Fair Trade, which serve as a guide for businesses and municipalities to become more sustainable and resilient:

1. **Opportunities for Disadvantaged Groups:** “If municipalities take tenders or suppliers from disadvantaged groups, they’re improving the economy.”
2. **Transparency and Accountability:** “Auditors come through to check, are you sticking to what you said you’re going to do?”
3. **Fair Trading Practices:** “Good buyer-supplier relations ensure fair practices, such as paying 50% upfront to producers.”
4. **Fair Payment:** “Paying a living wage allows workers to live a decent life, going beyond the bare minimum.”
5. **No Child or Forced Labour:** “Ensuring ethical labour practices is a cornerstone of Fair Trade.”
6. **Gender Equity and Women Empowerment:** “Fair Trade prioritizes women-led organizations and skills development.”
7. **Good Working Conditions:** “Facilities must be safe, ventilated, and equipped with necessary tools like fire extinguishers.”
8. **Capacity Building:** “Producers should gain skills over time, leaving better equipped than when they started.”
9. **Promotion of Fair Trade:** “Encouraging businesses to adopt these principles strengthens local economies.”
10. **Respect for the Environment:** “Production processes must minimize harm to the environment and promote climate justice.”

Challenges in Implementing Fair Trade

A significant challenge in promoting Fair Trade in South Africa is the lack of awareness among businesses and consumers. Mpofu explains, “Fair Trade is not a concept that is well known in the global south.” This unfamiliarity hinders the adoption of Fair-Trade principles and limits the potential for local businesses to align with its framework. To address this, the WFTO is working on outreach initiatives to educate communities.

Another challenge lies in consumer preferences, particularly in Southern Africa. Mpofo notes, “In the southern tip, we look outside more than we look within as consumers ... We decide, ‘I would rather have a Gucci than a locally made handbag.’” This preference for international brands over locally produced goods undermines the growth of local businesses. Mpofo contrasts this with the patriotism observed in other parts of Africa, where consumers take pride in using locally made products. She emphasizes the need for entrepreneurs to shift their focus from exporting goods to meeting the needs of local consumers. “Entrepreneurs here are producing so they can export; they are not really looking at servicing the local market,” she adds.

Mpofo draws a strong connection between Fair Trade and governance, emphasizing its potential to foster transparency, accountability, and sustainability. She explains, “Fair Trade, within its definition, is the answer to getting good governance because it is a trading partnership based on dialogue, transparency, and respect that seeks greater equity in international trade.” Fair Trade principles provide municipalities with a roadmap for promoting ethical practices and supporting local businesses. Mpofo elaborates, “If municipalities proactively seek to give opportunities to disadvantaged population groups, they’re improving the economy.” Mpofo emphasizes the power of consumers in driving change. “If you and I are going to demand Fair-Trade products, it quickens the process. If we require businesses to become more ethical, they will change their ways.”

This consumer-driven demand can accelerate the adoption of Fair-Trade principles and create a more sustainable economy. One of the key takeaways of Mpofo’s discussion is the importance of building resilience among local businesses. By adopting Fair-Trade principles, businesses can withstand economic challenges and create sustainable livelihoods for their workers. Mpofo notes, “When a business chooses to take the journey of becoming a Fair-Trade enterprise, there is an assurance of sustainability.”

Aligning Local Markets with Consumer Needs

Mpofo underscores the need for entrepreneurs to align their products with the needs of local consumers. “There’s space for

entrepreneurs to flourish as long as they're able to hear the needs of the local consumer and make products that the consumer would be willing to buy." Collaboration is key to raising awareness about Fair Trade and its benefits. Mpofo highlights the WFTO's efforts to partner with municipalities, businesses, and media outlets to promote the concept. "We speak on community radio stations, engage in live events at malls, and work to get more products to become Fair Trade so that consumers can identify them."

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Alignment:** By aligning with the ten principles of Fair Trade, municipalities and businesses can foster good governance and empower local communities.
2. **Collaboration:** Mpofo's insights emphasize the importance of collaboration, consumer awareness, and municipal leadership in driving the Fair-Trade movement.
3. **Partnerships:** Partnering with municipalities and ongoing outreach initiatives, the WFTO is paving the way for a Fair-Trade movement that has the potential to reshape local governance and economic systems in South Africa and beyond.

"The power is in the consumer. If we demand ethical practices and Fair-Trade products, we can create a more sustainable and equitable future."

– **Musa Mpofo**

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Chapter 90

Exploring Digital Citizenship with Dale Simmons

Introduction

Dale Simmons is a visionary social entrepreneur and Managing Director of MIDO Technologies. This chapter delves deep into the transformative power of digital citizenship, an essential concept for thriving in a connected and rapidly evolving world. Simmons candidly shares his journey from corporate IT to launching MIDO, a social enterprise rooted in empowering communities through technology. His inspiring story reveals how digital literacy, innovative partnerships, and bold initiatives can bridge inequalities and foster sustainable community transformation.

The Journey into Social Entrepreneurship and MIDO Technologies

Dale Simmons embarked on his entrepreneurial journey in 2012, leaving behind a lucrative corporate IT director role. He envisioned building a traditional IT company serving industries like agriculture. However, life had other plans. His path took a turn when he began assisting schools by fixing computer labs and providing basic IT training. “Initially, I thought I would create an IT business serving industries I understood,” Simmons reflected. “But teachers would reach out to me asking for help with labs that weren’t functioning. What began as a side hustle quickly evolved into something with a far greater purpose, helping our youth access a quality education using technology.” Dale’s determination to leverage technology for good led to the founding of MIDO Technologies in his living room in Jamestown, Stellenbosch. By 2013, he secured his first major contract with the

Rupert Education Foundation, focusing on project management and community technology initiatives in Franschhoek schools.

Establishing the MIDO Foundation

While MIDO Technologies began as a for-profit IT business, Dale saw the need for a complementary non-profit arm to address community-focused initiatives on a larger scale. In 2018, he founded the MIDO Foundation, guided by its mission to “change lives through technology.” “Although my heart was in community work, my head reminded me that sustainability was key,” he explained. “The foundation allows us to focus solely on community projects, while the for-profit side ensures we have the resources to drive meaningful change.”

Understanding Digital Citizenship

Digital citizenship, as described by Simmons, encompasses far more than basic computer skills. It’s a framework for thriving in today’s digital economy and democratic society, covering a broad spectrum of competencies and responsibilities. “Ten years ago, people thought digital literacy meant being able to use Excel, Word, and email,” Dale noted. “But today, digital citizenship goes beyond that; it’s about how we use tools like YouTube and Google to connect, create, and contribute meaningfully.” Digital citizenship also addresses critical needs specific to South Africa, including digital security, online rights and responsibilities, and digital health. He emphasized its significance: “By transforming people into digital citizens, we’re not just teaching them how to use tools. We’re empowering them to engage with the world and strengthen our democracy.”

Challenges on Digital Inequalities

According to Simmons, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed and deepened the digital divide in South Africa. Former Model-C schools were able to transition seamlessly to online learning, while under-resourced schools struggled to keep students connected. “We saw teachers innovating under challenging circumstances, using WhatsApp as an affordable tool to reach students. Instead of focusing on what schools lacked, we

highlighted these methods, trained other teachers, and created platforms for sharing knowledge.” MIDO also worked to make online educational content more accessible by advocating for zero-rated resources—websites and applications that wouldn’t incur data charges, ensuring learners could access vital materials despite financial constraints.

Challenges in Bridging the Digital Divide

Despite Simmons’s efforts, significant challenges remain in closing the gap. Simmons pointed out several obstacles, including lack of internet connectivity, outdated curricula, and insufficient training for teachers. “Communities without access to technology or networks are being left further behind,” Simmons explained. “Access isn’t a luxury; it’s a necessity. Whether it’s writing a CV, applying for university, or starting a business, technology should be enabling opportunities.” Another key challenge lies in addressing adult digital illiteracy. “Even adults who used computers 20 years ago might find themselves left behind today,” Simmons shared. “Becoming digitally proficient now requires much more, like creating presentations, designing websites, or collaborating using digital tools.”

Transforming Communities with Digital Hubs

To address barriers to digital access, MIDO introduced digital hubs, innovative spaces designed to foster creativity, collaboration, and learning. These hubs provide access to essential resources like computers, tablets, and high-speed internet in environments that mirror modern workplaces rather than traditional, rigid computer labs. “Digital hubs focus on the learner. They’re not just rows of computers; they’re dynamic, collaborative spaces where students can experiment with coding, compose music, or even build robotics.”

Since its inception, MIDO has established nine hubs in South Africa, including locations in underserved township schools such as Nomzamo, Gordon High, and Luckhoff. Each hub is tailored to provide students with the skills they need to thrive in the digital age. “Our hubs aim to shift the role of the teacher,” he explained.

“Instead of leading from the front, educators play a supportive role, allowing students to take ownership of their learning.”

Opportunities for Collaboration with Local Government

Simmons highlighted the potential of collaborating with municipalities to improve service delivery and community engagement through digital solutions. “Ward councillors and committee members could benefit tremendously from digital training,” Simmons noted. “With better access to information, they could streamline decision-making processes and connect with communities more effectively.” He also proposed incorporating MIDO’s digital hub model into Thusong Centres, existing government facilities aimed at providing access to services. “Thusong Centres are an untapped resource. If we could bring freedom of expression and innovation into these spaces, they could transform how communities solve problems locally.”

The Future of Technology and Digital Citizenship

Looking ahead, Dale sees technology as a catalyst for scaling community-driven solutions and unlocking untapped economic opportunities. “South Africa has unique strengths, like our sense of community and Ubuntu,” he remarked. “If we use technology to amplify these strengths, we can scale small businesses and take local products to global markets.” Dale is also optimistic about how technology can create rather than destroy jobs. “We don’t need to fear technology,” he stated. “By using it strategically, we can uplift communities and create pathways out of poverty.”

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Digital Citizenship is Essential for Democracy and Development:** Empowering individuals to thrive digitally contributes to economic growth and democratic participation. “Educating people as digital citizens strengthens our democracy and builds resilience.”
2. **Education is Key to Bridging Digital Inequality:** Access to technology and skills is critical for inclusion, particularly in underserved communities. “Empowering disadvantaged

communities requires targeted investment in education and infrastructure.”

3. **Creative Spaces Foster Innovation:** Digital hubs provide a collaborative environment for youth to experiment and grow as creators. “Learner-centric hubs prepare students for the future of work by fostering creativity and critical thinking.”
4. **Local Government Collaboration is Transformative:** Partnering with municipalities accelerates service delivery and builds connected communities. “Digitally enabling ward councillors and Thusong Centres can empower citizens and strengthen governance.”
5. **Technology is an Enabler of Opportunity:** When used strategically, technology creates jobs and scales local innovation for global markets. “We must embrace technology as a tool to uplift and empower communities, not as a disruptor.”

“Access isn’t a luxury; it’s a necessity. Whether it’s writing a CV, applying for university, or starting a business, technology should be enabling opportunities.” – **Dale Simmons**

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Published: 23rd February 2022

Chapter 91

Entrepreneurship and Innovation Hubs with Dr Phumlani Nkontwana

Introduction

In this chapter, Dr Phumlani Nkontwana uncovers the role of innovation hubs in fostering entrepreneurship, the structural barriers preventing youth-led businesses from thriving, and the complex governance dynamics affecting economic participation in Kenya, Ghana, Rwanda, and South Africa. This chapter explores the mindset shift required to mainstream entrepreneurship, the failures of existing innovation hubs, and how governments must intervene to create enabling environments for young entrepreneurs.

The Youth Unemployment Crisis: From Joblessness to Unemployability

South Africa faces one of the highest youth unemployment rates globally, with millions of young people unable to find formal employment despite holding qualifications. The problem has evolved beyond just job availability—many young people who remain unemployed for too long become economically unemployable, meaning their chances of ever securing a stable job diminish significantly. “We’re not just dealing with unemployment; we are facing unemployability. A young person without work for two years or more is often excluded from the economy entirely.”

The South African economy is failing to absorb youth into meaningful work, making entrepreneurship a crucial alternative. However, while many young South Africans look to government or corporate jobs, their counterparts in Kenya and Ghana are far

more proactive in business formation, embracing self-enterprise rather than waiting for employment opportunities.

Comparative Perspectives: Entrepreneurship in Kenya, Ghana, Rwanda, and South Africa

Kenya: A Nation of Start-Up Founders

Kenyan youth have fostered a strong entrepreneurial culture, actively seeking technology-driven start-up opportunities and venture-capital funding rather than relying on government or corporate employment. “Kenyan youth understand that their economic future is in their own hands; they don’t sit around waiting for companies to hire them.” This mindset shift has accelerated Kenya’s rise as a leader in ICT innovation, particularly through hubs such as iHub Nairobi, which has incubated numerous successful start-ups, including mobile payment solutions like M-Pesa, now used across Africa.

Ghana: Entrepreneurship Efforts in a Struggling Economy

Despite economic challenges, Ghana has begun embracing entrepreneurship as a solution to its stagnation, with government-backed initiatives promoting self-employment and business development programs. However, Ghana still lacks the widespread entrepreneurial drive seen in Kenya, as many young people remain sceptical about business viability due to unstable financial markets and regulatory barriers. “Ghana is shifting its economic focus, but young entrepreneurs still face hurdles like unreliable financial backing and policy uncertainty.”

Rwanda: A Nation Rebuilding Through Business

Rwanda’s youth entrepreneurship landscape is shaped by its historical context, as many young people left during the 1994 genocide and are only now returning to rebuild industries. However, weak industrial development means limited opportunities for business integration, forcing government-driven interventions to accelerate entrepreneurship efforts. “In Rwanda, many young people are returning home after decades

in exile, but the industries they need to integrate into don't fully exist yet.”

While Rwanda's government actively supports entrepreneurship, the absence of strong private-sector investment means business growth remains largely dependent on state initiatives rather than market-driven innovation.

Are Innovation Hubs Fulfilling Their Role?

The 643 innovation hubs across Africa are positioned to support young entrepreneurs through mentorship, funding access, and skill development. However, their effectiveness is increasingly questioned, as many hubs have become corporatized, prioritizing company-driven innovation rather than holistic business incubation. “Hubs are supposed to support entrepreneurs, but many have become spaces where corporates dictate innovation for their own benefit.”

Despite their prevalence, innovation hubs struggle to effectively nurture young entrepreneurs, largely due to:

1. **Short-term, Transactional Approaches:** Most hub programs last only a few weeks or months, failing to offer long-term business support.
2. **Corporate-led Funding Models:** Many hubs rely on corporate sponsorships, meaning entrepreneurs must develop ideas aligned with corporate interests rather than market needs.
3. **Barriers to Inclusion:** The most successful African start-ups are often led by founders with Ivy League educations, elite business networks, or international corporate experience, making it difficult for local entrepreneurs to break into the ecosystem. “When you examine successful start-ups across Africa, you often find one of three things: the founder is a white male, attended an Ivy League school, or has corporate backing.”

According to Dr Phumlani Nkontwana South Africa and Africa as a whole must rethink their approach to youth entrepreneurship by addressing systemic barriers and creating development-focused innovation hubs.

Governments must move beyond a hands-off approach and actively regulate and direct hubs toward national development priorities. Additionally, financial institutions must offer more inclusive funding models, allowing young entrepreneurs to access capital without requiring collateral or elite connections.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Entrepreneurship Must be Introduced in Schools and Universities:** Youth must be exposed to business creation early, shifting their mindset towards self-enterprise instead of employment-seeking. “By the time young people reach university, they already believe they must work for a company—we must change that at the school level.”
- 2. Innovation Hubs Must be Development-Oriented, Not Just Corporate-Driven:** Hubs should focus on building self-sustaining businesses rather than extracting innovation for corporate partners. “Hubs are producing innovations tailored for corporate funders rather than supporting broad-based entrepreneurship. It’s time to rethink the model.”
- 3. Governments Must Actively Regulate and Fund Innovation Spaces:** Entrepreneurship must be guided by national strategies, ensuring hubs prioritize market-driven solutions rather than corporate-specific innovations. “Governments must regulate innovation hubs to ensure they produce solutions that serve national economic priorities, not just corporate interests.”
- 4. Financial Models Must Be More Accessible for Young Entrepreneurs:** Funding must shift away from collateral-backed lending, allowing youth-led businesses to access alternative investment models. “The biggest challenge for young entrepreneurs isn’t just capital; it’s the lack of financial models that work for asset-less youth.”

“We’re not just dealing with unemployment; we are facing unemployability. A young person without work for two years or more is often excluded from the economy entirely.” – **Dr Phumlani Nkontwana**

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Chapter 92

The Future of Work with Professor Natasja Holtzhausen

Introduction

Professor Natasja Holtzhausen, Director of the Centre for the Future of Work at the University of Pretoria, shares her insights into the changing dynamics of work, particularly in local government. With a background in political science, public administration, and ethics, Professor Holtzhausen explores the competencies required for the future, the importance of work-life balance, and how municipalities can prepare for the evolving workplace. Her reflections offer guidance for organizations navigating the challenges of the future.

Background and Vision of the Centre for the Future of Work

Professor Holtzhausen describes herself as “a jack of all trades,” with expertise spanning political science, public administration, and education. Her career has been shaped by a deep interest in ethics and employability, as well as a commitment to addressing corruption. She explains that the Centre for the Future of Work was conceived of as early as 2018, with the aim of exploring the implications of the future of employment in areas such as human resources, labour law, policy, and regulation.

The Centre officially launched in April 2023, following a soft online launch in November 2022. Its objectives include examining the future of learning, the psychological and social impacts of work, and the implications of new technologies. Professor Holtzhausen emphasizes the need to create “harmony between human beings and work,” ensuring that work becomes fulfilling

again. She notes that the Centre's interdisciplinary approach addresses critical questions about the future organization of work, the needs of current and future employees, and the integration of ageing and younger workforces.

Challenges in Local Government and the Future of Work

Professor Holtzhausen identifies several key challenges that local government and organizations face as they prepare for the future of work:

- **Siloed Work Environments:** Municipalities often operate in silos, which hinders collaboration and innovation. Holtzhausen stresses that “the more we function in silos, the less we are together ... together we do more.” Breaking these silos is essential for fostering cooperation and efficiency.
- **Fear-Based Leadership:** A culture of fear and control, characterized by micromanagement, remains prevalent in the public sector. Holtzhausen notes that this approach stifles trust and accountability, making it difficult for employees to thrive in hybrid or flexible work environments.
- **Resistance to Change:** Many organizations are reactive rather than proactive, waiting to be pushed into change instead of anticipating and preparing for future challenges. This mindset limits their ability to adapt to evolving workplace dynamics.
- **Work-Life Imbalance:** The increasing availability of technology has blurred the boundaries between work and personal life, leading to overwork and burnout. Holtzhausen warns that “it’s not good for us to be working 18 hours a day,” emphasizing the need for balance and psychological well-being.

Competencies for the Future of Work

Holtzhausen highlights the importance of both technical and social competencies in preparing for the future of work. While technological skills are essential, she stresses that “the future of work is not a sci-fi movie,” and people should not fear technology.

Instead, she encourages organizations to focus on data-driven decision-making and fostering autonomy among employees.

In local government, she believes that core competencies will remain relevant but must be supplemented by the ability to adapt to digitalization and agile work environments. “We always manage to adjust,” she says, reminding people of how society adapted to cell phones and other technological advancements.

Preparing Municipalities for the Future

Professor Holtzhausen acknowledges that while training does occur in municipalities, it often involves outdated models and repetitive courses. This lack of innovation in training prevents employees from becoming “future-fit” and limits their ability to adapt to new challenges. She calls for innovative approaches, urging municipalities to consider whether their employees are “future-fit.” This involves assessing the needs of the organization and ensuring that employees are prepared to function in agile, collaborative environments.

The Centre for the Future of Work aims to play an advocacy role, raising awareness and fostering proactive collaboration. Holtzhausen notes that municipalities often fail to address future challenges until they are forced to do so. She sees the Centre as a catalyst for reskilling public servants and creating partnerships to prepare organizations for the future. “We want to play a proactive collaborative role,” she explains, adding that each municipality’s needs may differ, but certain characteristics remain universal.

Hybrid Work Models and Work-Life Balance

The hybrid model of work, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, is here to stay, according to Holtzhausen. However, she cautions that its implementation must be tailored to the specific needs of organizations and job roles. She points out that while some organizations may benefit from a four-day work week, others may require different arrangements.

Holtzhausen stresses the importance of ethical behaviour in hybrid work environments, where employees must remain accountable even when working remotely. She also warns against

the dangers of being constantly connected, advocating for a balance between work and personal life. “At some stage, switch off the technology,” she advises, emphasizing the psychological and physical toll of overwork.

The Centre embraces the concept of Society 5.0, a Japanese philosophy that envisions “smart people in smart sectors,” rather than just smart cities. This holistic approach underscores the importance of interconnectedness and intersectionality in creating sustainable and fulfilling work environments.

Professor Natasja Holtzhausen’s insights provide a compelling vision for the future of work, particularly in the context of local government. By embracing innovation, fostering collaboration, and prioritizing ethical behaviour, organizations can prepare for the challenges ahead. Her emphasis on work-life balance, interdisciplinary approaches, and trust-based leadership offers a roadmap for creating sustainable and fulfilling workplaces.

Key Governance Lessons:

1. **Break Down Silos:** Collaboration and teamwork are essential for innovation and efficiency. Municipalities must move away from siloed work environments to achieve shared goals.
2. **Invest in Future-Focused Training:** Training programs must be forward-thinking, equipping employees with the skills needed for agile and digital workplaces. Outdated models should be replaced with innovative approaches.
3. **Foster Trust-Based Leadership:** Leaders must move away from fear-based management and micromanagement, instead building trust and accountability within their teams. “We need to reconsider the working model that is punitive and creates fear,” she asserts.
4. **Embrace Work-Life Balance:** Organizations must prioritize employee well-being, ensuring that technology does not encroach on personal time. A balanced approach to work is critical for long-term sustainability.
5. **Adopt Ethical Hybrid Models:** Hybrid work arrangements must be implemented with accountability and ethical

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behaviour in mind, ensuring that employees remain productive and engaged.

“Let’s all do work that matters.”

– **Prof. Natasja Holtzhausen**

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Chapter 93

Ubuntu Economics and the Building Blocks to an Inclusive Economy with Dr Arno van Niekerk

Introduction

Dr Arno van Niekerk is a senior lecturer at the University of the Free State and a passionate economist. Dr van Niekerk's book, *The Inclusive Economy*, provides a value-based framework for addressing South Africa's economic challenges, including inequality, unemployment, and poverty. This chapter explores the concept of an inclusive economy, the integration of ubuntu as an economic principle, and the systemic changes needed to create sustainable growth that benefits all.

Personal Journey

Van Niekerk's career is driven by the belief that economics can be a powerful tool for transformation when paired with a moral and inclusive approach. "I've always been passionate about finding solutions for South Africa's challenges." "My first book, *Enough*, looked at the historical progression of our country and provided broad pointers for redirection. But with *The Inclusive Economy*, I wanted to focus on the details of the economy and offer a blueprint for sustainable, inclusive growth." For van Niekerk, the intersection of his career and his calling has fuelled his drive to create meaningful change. "It's not just about fixing the economy; it's about creating a system that works for everyone," he explained.

The late Professor Sampie Terblanche, a renowned economist, has had a major influence on his work. Terblanche's books, *The History of Inequality* and *Lost in Transformation*,

highlight the systemic roots of inequality in South Africa. “Prof. Sampie Terblanche was an absolute legend,” van Niekerk said. “His strong stance on economic inequality is more valid today than ever. The gap between the rich and the poor is growing, not just in South Africa but globally. This is why we need an inclusive economy—to reduce inequality and ensure that everyone can benefit from economic progress.”

He emphasized that inequality is not just a moral issue but an economic one. “High levels of inequality make the economy unsustainable. We’re heading for a social crisis if we don’t address this.”

What Does an Inclusive Economy Look Like?

South Africa remains the most unequal country in the world, according to the World Bank. This inequality is deeply entrenched in the country’s history and economic systems. “The rich continue to thrive while the poor are excluded from the mainstream economy.” He described an inclusive economy as one driven by “inclusive growth.” “It’s not just about GDP growth or output,” he explained. “It’s about how growth happens and who benefits from it. An inclusive economy ensures that the poor are not just consumers but also producers—what I call ‘prosumers.’” He elaborated on the concept of prosumers: “In a circular economy, we reuse, recycle, and upcycle resources to create new value. For example, waste materials like plastic can be turned into assets.”

This approach not only benefits the environment but also creates economic opportunities for marginalized communities.” He stressed the importance of creating access points in the economy. “We need to move away from a trickle-down model where the rich get richer and the poor live on scraps. Instead, we must include the poor in the process of growth, creating equal opportunities and broad-based benefits.”

Ubuntu Economics: Africa’s Contribution to the World

Van Niekerk introduced the concept of “ubuntu economics,” which he described as a uniquely African solution to the global economic crisis. “Ubuntu means ‘I am because we are,’” he

explained. “It shifts the focus from individual gain to collective wellbeing. In an ubuntu economy, my quality of life improves when my community thrives.” He argued that Africa has the potential to lead the way in creating sustainable, inclusive economies. “The world is facing a crisis of individualism, where some benefit at the expense of others. Ubuntu economics offers a collaborative approach that prioritizes both people and the planet.”

Resistance to Change

The shift towards an inclusive economy requires systemic change, which often faces resistance from those who benefit from the status quo. “There’s a perception that inclusive economics is socialism or communism, but that’s not the case,” Van Niekerk explained. “It’s about decentralizing the economy and empowering communities, not taking away from businesses.” With youth unemployment rates among the highest in the world, South Africa faces a ticking time bomb. “Young people are the future, but they are being left behind.”

Inclusive Business Models vs Wealth Tax

He proposed the development of inclusive business models as an alternative to measures like a wealth tax. “Inclusive business means involving the poor in both the supply and demand sides of the value chain,” he explained. “It’s about creating partnerships between businesses and communities to generate sustainable economic benefits.” He acknowledged that while a wealth tax could provide short-term relief, it is not a long-term solution. “A wealth tax might level the playing field temporarily, but it doesn’t empower the poor. Inclusive business models, on the other hand, create lasting value and economic sustainability.”

Van Niekerk’s vision for an inclusive economy offers a compelling blueprint for addressing South Africa’s economic challenges. By focusing on inclusive growth, ubuntu principles, and innovative business models, he provides practical solutions for reducing inequality, creating jobs, and fostering sustainable development.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Inclusive Growth is Essential:** Economic growth must be inclusive, ensuring that the benefits are shared broadly and that marginalized communities have access to opportunities.
2. **Prosumers Can Drive Change:** Empowering individuals to become both consumers and producers creates new value in the economy and fosters sustainability.
3. **Ubuntu Economics Offers a Collaborative Model:** By prioritizing collective wellbeing, ubuntu economics provides a sustainable alternative to individualistic economic systems.
4. **Decentralization Empowers Communities:** A decentralized economy allows communities to take control of their resources and create bottom-up growth.
5. **Africa Can Lead the Way:** Africa's unique principles, such as ubuntu, position it as a leader in developing sustainable, inclusive economies.

“It’s not just about fixing the economy; it’s about creating a system that works for everyone.”

– Dr Arno van Niekerk

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Chapter 94

Governance Lessons on Robin (Robbie) Brandt’s Journey: Over 30 Years as a Street Businessman

Introduction

Three decades after South Africa’s democratic transition, questions remain about whether freedom has delivered on its promise. In this chapter Robbie, a longtime street entrepreneur explore the realities of economic freedom and survival in the informal business sector. Robbie shares his journey from hardship to entrepreneurship, providing a candid look at the challenges of street trade, the role of faith, and the impact of government policies on small businesses.

Early Influences and the Start of a Journey

Robbie’s entrepreneurial journey began under difficult circumstances. “I grew up as a foster child, and by 17, I had no parents, no family. I had to provide for myself.” With no safety net, he turned to informal trade, learning from fellow vendors and taking inspiration from successful businessmen who built their enterprises over decades. “I started by selling fruit, hustling on the streets, and gradually made my own stand. It wasn’t easy, but I had to survive.” Despite the setbacks, Robbie’s faith played a central role in his resilience. “I had no family to guide me, so I took God as my guidance. Every morning, I pray and ask God to bless my business.” Over time, he built relationships with suppliers and customers, relying on seasonal trends to adapt his sales strategy.

Challenges in Local Government

While entrepreneurship has kept Robbie afloat, he acknowledges that street trading comes with major difficulties. “Government talks about supporting small businesses, but on the ground, we see little help. We are left to fend for ourselves.” Robbie expressed frustration over the lack of infrastructure for street vendors, noting that basic amenities like proper shelters and designated trading spaces are largely absent. Street vendors operate in a high-risk environment. “Every day, I need to make at least R1,000 to keep my business running, pay rent, provide for my family, and reinvest.” With fluctuating income and limited access to financial assistance, many traders struggle to sustain themselves. Robbie believes that government funding intended for small businesses rarely reaches its intended recipients. “There are players in the municipalities, guys intercepting the money meant for small businesses. That’s why we never see it.” He argues that political interference has made economic empowerment inaccessible to many informal traders.

The Reality of Economic Freedom

Despite political freedom since 1994, Robbie questions whether economic freedom has truly materialized for street traders. “Politicians talk about transformation, but when you look at people hustling on the streets, little has changed. We are still fighting for survival every day.” He also raised concerns about the exclusionary nature of government empowerment programs, which often prioritize certain groups while leaving others behind. Robbie strongly believes that entrepreneurship should be treated as a valuable skill from a young age. “We need academies where children can learn business. Not everyone needs a university degree, some of us learn business by living it.” By passing knowledge from seasoned vendors to younger generations, he hopes informal trade will gain greater recognition as a legitimate economic sector.

Robbie calls for more ethical leadership in government, emphasizing the need for equitable support for all entrepreneurs. “Government should understand our struggles. The people making policies have never hustled on the streets, so they

don't know what it takes.” He advocates for leadership that listens to small businesses and takes tangible action to support economic inclusion.

Robbie's reflections paint a picture of resilience, survival, and the challenges of economic inclusion. While political freedom has been achieved, economic empowerment remains an ongoing battle for many informal traders.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Building Relationships is Key:** Success in street trade relies on strong relationships with customers and suppliers. “On the street, this is my office. I have my customers, and I must build relationships with them.”
2. **Economic Freedom Requires More Support:** While political freedom was achieved in 1994, economic empowerment remains a challenge. “Politicians talk about transformation, but when you look at people hustling on the streets, little has changed.”
3. **The Street is a School for Entrepreneurs:** Informal trade serves as a training ground for future business leaders. “Each one teaches one. The street is a school for business.”
4. **Practical Education is Essential:** Robbie advocates for academies to teach young people the skills of entrepreneurship. “We need academies where children can learn business, not just colleges and universities, but practical training from experienced vendors.”
5. **Hard Work Creates Opportunities:** Robbie's philosophy underscores the value of effort and dedication. You never know when God will send someone your way with an opportunity.”

“Hard work makes you lucky. If we create a culture where small businesses are supported, maybe we can finally say freedom has delivered on its promise.”

– Robbie Brandt

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Chapter 95

Chris Bosch on Empowering Communities in Mafube Municipality

Introduction

Chris Bosch is a seasoned engineer and community leader who has dedicated decades to improving energy infrastructure in the Free State. Bosch, the founder of Rural Free State, shares his passion for advancing service delivery in Mafube Municipality, encompassing Frankfort, Villiers, Tweeling, and Cornelia. Chris reflects on his extensive career, the challenges and successes of energy initiatives under Rural Free State, and the critical role of collaboration in reshaping energy management systems. His approach highlights the untapped potential of municipalities to drive change and create sustainable solutions tailored to local needs.

The Journey into Energy Solutions

Chris Bosch's career in engineering began in 1992 when he graduated from the University of Pretoria with an engineering degree. He became a registered professional engineer in 1996 and is also a qualified installation electrician. "Like all engineers in South Africa, I started at Eskom," Chris shared. "But what sets my journey apart is that I've worked on both sides of the fence—the public and private sectors. This perspective has allowed me to understand the complexities of energy systems and identify gaps that need urgent attention."

The Formation of Rural Free State

In 2004, Chris co-founded Rural Maintenance, a utility services company that operates in both private and public sectors. Rural

Free State was subsequently established within the framework of Rural Maintenance to focus specifically on addressing energy challenges in Mafube Municipality. “This is the entity closest to my heart,” Chris stated. “Through Rural Free State, we’ve been able to improve electricity service delivery in rural towns, often working under challenging circumstances. Our successes demonstrate the power of community-driven initiatives.”

Understanding the Energy Crisis

South Africa’s energy crisis is multi-faceted, encompassing infrastructural decay, inadequate management, and a growing demand for electricity that far exceeds supply. Chris explained that while national efforts such as Eskom’s interventions are critical, they often fail to address the specific needs of rural municipalities. “The energy crisis isn’t just about load-shedding,” Chris explained. “It’s about the systems that underpin service delivery—if these systems are failing, the entire framework collapses. This is where localized solutions can make a significant difference.”

Why Localized Systems Matter

Chris argued that municipalities should have greater autonomy over their energy management systems. This approach allows for tailored interventions that are responsive to local circumstances and challenges. “In Mafube, we’ve proven that decentralizing energy management empowers communities. Local systems foster accountability, enable quicker responses to issues, and ensure that resources are optimized to benefit residents directly.”

Transformative Projects

One of Rural Free State’s most innovative initiatives has been the implementation of self-load-shedding measures in Mafube Municipality. Chris described this strategy as a game-changer for optimizing limited resources and mitigating the impact of energy shortages. “Self-load-shedding is not about cutting power arbitrarily; it’s a calculated approach to ensure that critical areas remain operational while encouraging smarter energy usage,” Chris explained. The project has involved close collaboration with

community leaders, local businesses, and residents to ensure transparency and buy-in. This has been accompanied by efforts to modernize infrastructure, integrate renewable energy sources, and build resilience in the face of systemic challenges.

Community Engagement and Collaboration

Chris emphasized the importance of involving local communities in energy initiatives. Through workshops, public meetings, and educational campaigns, Rural Free State has fostered a sense of ownership among residents. “When people understand the ‘why’ behind our initiatives, they’re more likely to support them,” Chris shared. “Community involvement is critical, not just for the success of individual projects, but for creating a culture of accountability and collaboration.”

Challenges in the Energy Sector

Decades of underinvestment and neglect have left South Africa’s energy infrastructure in a precarious state. Chris highlighted that this issue is particularly acute in rural areas, where outdated systems struggle to meet basic energy demands. “Without significant upgrades to infrastructure, the energy crisis will persist,” he warned. “We need to prioritize modernization to create a stable foundation for service delivery.” While Rural Free State has received initial support, including access to municipal fields for energy projects, securing sustained funding and partnerships remains a significant challenge. “Collaboration with government and private stakeholders is crucial,” Chris admitted. “But it hasn’t always been easy. Funding gaps limit the scale and impact of our initiatives, even when the potential for success is evident.”

Chris Bosch’s journey and work through Rural Free State offer a beacon of hope for addressing South Africa’s energy challenges. His commitment to localized solutions, community engagement, and innovation has transformed service delivery in Mafube Municipality and laid the groundwork for replicable models in other regions. “Energy management isn’t just about solving today’s problems—it’s about creating sustainable systems for the future,” Chris concluded. “By working together,

we can empower communities and drive meaningful change across the country.”

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Decentralized Systems Empower Communities:** Localized energy management provides municipalities with the autonomy needed to tackle unique challenges effectively. “Decentralization puts decision-making power back into the hands of communities, where it belongs.”
2. **Modernizing Infrastructure is Essential:** Outdated systems undermine efforts to improve service delivery and must be replaced. “Upgrades to infrastructure are the foundation for sustainable solutions.”
3. **Community Collaboration is Key:** Transparent communication and active engagement build trust and ensure the success of energy initiatives. “Involving communities fosters a sense of ownership and accountability.”
4. **Innovation Drives Sustainability:** Strategic measures like self-load-shedding optimize resources and build resilience. “Adaptation transforms challenges into opportunities for growth.”
5. **Localized Solutions are Scalable:** The lessons learned in Mafube can inspire broader adoption of community-driven models across South Africa. “Tailored solutions offer a pathway to addressing energy challenges on a national scale.”

“Decentralization puts decision-making power back into the hands of communities, where it belongs.”

– Chris Bosch

Chapter 95

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Chapter 96

Nomfundo Mogapi on Addressing Collective Trauma

Introduction

Nomfundo Mogapi is the CEO of the Centre for Mental Wellness and Leadership. The discussion delves into the intersection of governance, trauma, and leadership in South Africa, exploring how collective trauma impacts society, institutions, and leaders. Mogapi shares insights on the importance of trauma-informed approaches to governance and leadership, emphasizing the need for inner work to drive sustainable change.

Understanding South Africa's Violent Society

The Centre for Mental Wellness and Leadership supports South African leaders in integrating trauma approaches into their work so that trauma does not hinder the success of their programs or policies. I asked Nomfundo about the nature of the violence in South African society. Nomfundo explained that trauma is a significant contributor, alongside other factors such as poverty, inequality, unemployment, and systemic dysfunctions. She shared that there has been a lack of public discussion on the nature and depth of trauma in our society and how it contributes to violence.

Nomfundo emphasized that poverty is not merely an economic issue but is deeply intertwined with emotional and psychological pain. "Being stuck in poverty is almost as if people are stuck in the same trauma their parents were stuck in," she remarked. Addressing poverty and unemployment requires tackling both the hardware (economic systems) and the software (emotional and psychological architecture) of society.

Damaged Psychological Architecture

Nomfundo introduced the concept of “damaged psychological architecture,” explaining that “Multi-layered levels of trauma have infiltrated the very landscape of our society.” Trauma exists at personal, collective, generational, and structural levels, and these layers impact how individuals and institutions function. She shared insights from the field of trauma, including the transfer of trauma across generations and the embedding of trauma within systems and institutions. “Trauma can be transferred genetically, structurally, and culturally,” she explained. This damaged architecture shapes social behaviours and decision-making processes.

South Africa’s history of colonialism, apartheid, and the disappointments of democracy has created layers of collective trauma. Nomfundo explained: “Democracy raised hopes but destroyed them in a traumatized society, adding another layer of trauma.” She highlighted how recent events like COVID-19 and loadshedding have compounded this collective trauma. “Signs of collective trauma are evident in increased levels of anxiety, depression, suicide, divorce, and substance abuse. We are a deeply, deeply traumatized society.”

Institutional Trauma

Nomfundo highlighted how trauma can become institutionalized, using the example of the police force. “The very architecture of the police force was highly racialized during apartheid, and this trauma still drives its culture,” she explained. Despite training new recruits, the underlying culture shaped by trauma remains unaddressed. She emphasized the need to transform the psychological culture of institutions, saying, “The relationship with power and force within the police, shaped during apartheid, must be completely transformed.” Institutions must address the trauma vortex, where unresolved social trauma infiltrates their operations.

Challenges

Nomfundo identified several challenges to addressing trauma within governance and leadership:

- **Institutional Resistance:** Many leaders prioritize service delivery over mental wellness, failing to recognize the alignment between the two. Nomfundo shared: “There is a lack of appreciation that service delivery is tied to mental wellness.”
- **Cultural Norms:** South Africa’s culture often promotes aggressive and toxic leadership styles. “The louder and more violent you are, the more power you wield,” she remarked. This culture undermines empathy and collaboration.
- **Unprocessed Trauma:** Leaders often carry unresolved trauma, which impacts their decision-making and relationships. “There is nothing as dangerous as a highly traumatized person given power and leadership,” Nomfundo warned.
- **Collective Disappointment:** The failure to deliver on the promises of democracy has created widespread disillusionment. “Every election raises hopes only to destroy them,” she explained.
- **Lack of Resources:** Institutions often lack the resources and frameworks to implement trauma-informed approaches effectively. Nomfundo emphasized that “Budgeting for mental wellness and leadership training is essential but often overlooked.”

Wounded Leadership

Nomfundo introduced the concept of “wounded leadership,” explaining how leaders carry unprocessed trauma into their roles. “Trauma interrupts self-leadership,” she shared. Leaders who have not addressed their trauma are more likely to be triggered by challenges, leading to destructive behaviours. “A leader who is a trauma carrier might have the skills but lacks the capacity to manage their emotions and responses effectively. On the other hand, a peace-carrier understands the trauma in society and works on themselves to lead from a space of mindfulness and empathy.” Nomfundo emphasized the importance of self-

governance, saying, “For you to be a good leader, you need to learn how to govern yourself.”

She emphasized that addressing trauma is not a once-off intervention but a journey. “Service delivery is aligned with your own mental state and the mental state of the people in local government,” she explained. She recommended budgeting for leadership training and trauma-informed programs, saying, “Leadership training must focus on understanding trauma, appreciating it, and responding differently.” She also encouraged leaders to seek personal coaching or counselling to awaken their awareness and work on themselves.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Trauma Awareness:** Leaders must recognize the multi-layered nature of trauma. “Awareness is the first step in transforming the damaged psychological architecture of our society.”
2. **Empathy and Collaboration:** Trauma deactivates empathy, but leaders must work to restore it. “Empathy is critical for understanding the impact of decisions and fostering collaboration.”
3. **Addressing Toxic Cultures:** Institutions must transform toxic cultures shaped by historical trauma. “We haven’t trained our leaders on how to manage themselves and transform institutional cultures,” she explained.
4. **Budgeting for Mental Wellness:** Mental wellness must be integrated into governance frameworks. “Budgeting for leadership training and trauma-informed programs is essential for sustainable change.”
5. **Transforming Leadership Styles:** Aggressive and toxic leadership styles must be replaced with mindfulness and peace-orientated approaches. “The coping strategies of fighting during the struggle cannot sustain democracy,” she remarked.

“Trauma interrupts self-leadership.”

– Nomfundo Mogapi

Chapter 96

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Chapter 97

Transforming Bloemfontein's Rose Garden with Boeta Swart

Introduction

In this chapter, Boeta Swart from the organisation Anchor of Hope organisation in Bloemfontein shares his conviction about why active citizenship matters. “For too long, we’ve blamed all responsibility on the government,” Swart emphasizes. “It’s time we take ownership as citizens and create the city we want to live in.” His journey is one of redemption, leadership, and community empowerment, proving that ordinary citizens have the power to reclaim neglected spaces through strategic partnerships and collaborative engagement.

A Journey from Personal Redemption to Community Impact

Swart openly shares his struggles with substance abuse, painting a vivid picture of the reckless life he once lived. “I did everything wrong that you can do, whether it was drugs, alcohol, or making bad choices,” he recalls. “I was hurting myself, but I didn’t realize how much I was hurting the people around me.” The moment of realization arrived one night after a rugby event when he stumbled home intoxicated, shouting in the house. “My wife pulled me aside and said, ‘Come and see what you’re doing to the children.’ That’s when I saw my little girl, just three years old, sitting in a corner, praying to God to save me.” It was a painful awakening.

That night, everything changed. Swart made an instant decision to quit drinking and using drugs, but he told no one about it. “I stopped everything. No rehab, no announcements; I just knew if I carried on, I was going to lose everything.” Two

weeks later, his wife noticed a change. “She asked, ‘Don’t you drink while cutting the lawn anymore?’ and I just told her, ‘No. I don’t want to drink anymore.’ That was it.” However, healing was not immediate. “Before I was married, I thought drinking, drugs, and partying would make the pain go away. Then I believed that marriage would fix it. When that didn’t work, I thought having children would finally heal me. But I realized the pain was still there.”

Creating Anchor of Hope: Giving Second Chances

Swart and his wife knew that real healing had to come before helping others. “How do you heal others when you’re still broken yourself?” Their journey took them to Columbus, Ohio, where, for the first time, they confronted their struggles together. “We were alone in a country we never knew. We had to sit down, face each other, and speak honestly. That was my healing, admitting my mistakes to my wife and children.” Upon returning to South Africa, Anchor of Hope was born, not just as an organization, but as a symbol of redemption. “I got a second chance, and that’s why it’s called Anchor of Hope, because I want to give others the same second chance I got.”

Building a Sustainable Model for Change

Swart identified a major flaw in South African NPOs, their dependency on donations, which made them financially unstable. “In South Africa, only 5% of NPOs are sustainable. That’s a crisis,” he says. “We needed a model that wouldn’t rely on handouts.” Drawing inspiration from American non-profits, which operate at 75%–80% sustainability, Swart built Anchor of Hope using a dual-revenue model:

1. **Business-Oriented Revenue Streams:** “We generate income through manufacturing furniture, corporate gifts, garden maintenance, street cleaning, and waste management.”
2. **Community-Based Support Programs:** “Every cent we earn goes back into pregnancy counselling, food distribution, and youth empowerment projects.”

Unlike traditional businesses that pay out dividends, Anchor of Hope reinvests all profits into expanding its social programs. “Our profits don’t go into shareholders’ pockets. Everything is reinvested into the community.” Today, Anchor of Hope operates at 80% sustainability, making it one of South Africa’s few self-sufficient NPOs.

The Challenges of Transforming the Kingspark Rose Garden

When Anchor of Hope first began restoring the Kingspark Rose Garden, many residents doubted the project’s viability. “People said, ‘You’re wasting your time. No one cares about this place. Criminals will destroy it.’” Changing that perception required visible and consistent improvements. “We knew we had to prove it wasn’t just another abandoned initiative,” Swart recalls. “Once people saw real progress—the roses blooming, the lawns maintained, and the space coming to life—they started helping. First, they donated manure, then tools, then even more roses.”

While private sector partnerships played a crucial role, securing ongoing financial support was one of the biggest hurdles. “Businesses don’t want to donate blindly, they want to see where their money goes,” Swart explains. “That’s why we structured this as a service, not just a funding request.” Through measurable impact, companies like Free State Cheetahs Rugby Union and Free State Knights Cricket Club committed monthly financial contributions, ensuring the garden’s sustainability.

Working With Local Government Instead of Against It

Rather than blaming local authorities for the park’s neglect, Swart pursued collaborative solutions. “I went to the head of parks and said, ‘Let’s work together.’ That’s how we got the municipality to fix the sprinkler system while we restored the garden.” By strengthening the hands of good officials, he reinforced how civil society can supplement government resources rather than replace them. Swart’s story embodies active citizenship, not waiting but acting. “Governance isn’t just for politicians. If you care about your city, you are responsible for it.” His work proves

that civic engagement, financial sustainability, and collaborative leadership can restore public spaces and change lives. By transforming Bloemfontein's Kingspark Rose Garden, Swart shows what's possible when everyday citizens stop complaining and start acting.

Swart's initiative in Bloemfontein offers insights into how communities can drive change without solely relying on government intervention. These lessons are not just about urban renewal; they reveal principles of leadership, resilience, and the power of collaboration.

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Citizens Must Take Ownership of Their Cities:** Swart believes that waiting for politicians to act is counterproductive. "Stop waiting for politicians. If you care about a place, take responsibility for it."
2. **Financially Sustainable NPOs Last Longer:** Anchor of Hope's dual-revenue model ensures stability. "Donations come and go. We built Anchor of Hope to survive without them."
3. **Public-Private Partnerships Create Measurable Impact:** Businesses are more likely to invest when they see tangible results. "Businesses won't donate blindly. Show them real results, and they'll invest in your project."
4. **Trust is Earned Through Action:** Public scepticism can be overcome through visible improvements. "People doubted us. But we showed them results, and now they're planting roses themselves."
5. **Government Can be an Ally, Not an Obstacle:** Collaboration with local authorities strengthens efforts. "Not everyone in government is corrupt. If you strengthen good officials, you strengthen the whole system."

"For too long, we've blamed all responsibility on the government. It's time we take ownership as citizens and create the city we want to live in."

– Boeta Swart

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Chapter 98

Unpacking Social Innovation with Prof Erwin Schwella

Introduction

In this chapter, Prof. Erwin Schwella, an expert in governance and social innovation explores the transformative nature of social innovation, examining how it can redefine governance, influence entrepreneurship, and create solutions for systemic social challenges. “We are past the age of ideology; we must focus on pragmatism, where things work because they are practical, adaptable, and applicable,” Schwella asserts.

The Formative Influences Behind Schwella’s Work

Prof. Erwin Schwella’s fascination with governance and social innovation is deeply rooted in his upbringing. Raised in Tiervlei, he was influenced by his father’s role as a trade unionist, a railways artisan, and a local government councillor. “My father looked after the interests of workers, citizens, and his own trade. Those three things shaped my worldview,” Schwella reflects. His father’s commitment to serving the community, advocating for labour rights, and contributing to municipal leadership instilled in him a deep understanding of governance and civic responsibility.

Alongside his mother’s dedication to family values and education, Schwella was raised in an environment that emphasized the importance of education in personal and social development, a commitment to ethical leadership and fairness in governance and the role of faith in fostering compassion and collective responsibility. This multidimensional upbringing, one that blended trade unionism, skilled labour, governance, and

ethical leadership formed the foundation of Schwella's approach to social innovation and governance transformation.

Defining Social Innovation

While technological innovation often dominates discussions around progress, social innovation shifts the focus toward human-centered solutions that address social challenges. "We are surrounded by technological advancements, apps, digitalization, artificial intelligence, but social innovation ensures that technology serves society rather than controls it," Schwella explains. Social innovation integrates ethical leadership and governance principles, community-driven initiatives for sustainable development, and business models that prioritize equitable wealth distribution and inclusivity. In essence, social innovation involves using science, technology, and governance structures to create practical, ethical, and compassionate solutions for society.

The Role of Values in Social Innovation

Unlike traditional innovation, which may prioritize profit or efficiency, social innovation relies on values such as empathy, reciprocity, and integrity. "Technology is not neutral, it can be used for good or harm. Social innovation ensures that advancements serve humanity," Schwella states. By embedding ethical considerations into governance, entrepreneurship, and social development, social innovation enables communities to solve problems while maintaining fairness, accountability, and inclusivity.

Is Social Innovation the Same as Social Entrepreneurship?

Although both concepts overlap, social innovation is a broader framework, while social entrepreneurship is a specific economic model that applies social innovation to create sustainable business solutions. Social innovation focuses on:

- Transforming governance structures to serve community needs

- Developing ethical business models that prioritize people over profit
- Encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration to address systemic problems

Social entrepreneurship applies these principles by using entrepreneurial methods to solve social challenges while ensuring financial sustainability. “Social entrepreneurship involves risk-taking, innovation, and creating new economic models, but the goal is to balance profit with ethical impact,” Schwella explains. Unlike traditional profit-driven entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship reinvests wealth into communities rather than concentrating it among the elite.

Schwella’s New Book: A Deep Dive into Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Schwella’s new book is divided into three sections that explore case studies of social enterprises, governance principles, and lessons on ethical leadership.

The book highlights 11 successful social enterprises, illustrating how organizations have transitioned from traditional charity models to sustainable business frameworks. These cases demonstrate how social innovation fosters resilient, adaptable organizations, ensuring that charitable initiatives remain sustainable despite economic constraints. The final chapter provides an A to Z framework for building successful social enterprises, offering insights into hybrid business models that balance profit and social impact, adaptive market mechanisms that ensure equitable resource distribution, and entrepreneurial strategies that foster ethical leadership and community development. “We need to move past the age of ideology and focus on practical, applicable solutions,” Schwella emphasizes.

Social innovation provides a powerful framework for transforming governance, entrepreneurship, and community development. By prioritizing human-centered solutions, ethical leadership, and interdisciplinary collaboration, organizations can build sustainable, equitable societies. “We must move from government to governance, partnering with business, civil

society, academia, and policymakers to create lasting public value,” Schwella asserts. Through the practical lessons presented in his book, Schwella encourages leaders, entrepreneurs, and policymakers to embrace innovation, take calculated risks, and forge partnerships that benefit society as a whole.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Social Innovation Combines Ethics with Practical Solutions:** Technology must serve society, ensuring advancements align with human needs. Governance structures must foster collaboration between municipalities and communities. “We need science and technology for society, not just for profit.”
- 2. Government Must Transition from Control to Facilitation:** Local government should enable innovation, rather than dictate rigid policies. Public-private partnerships create sustainable governance solutions. “Communities must take ownership of solutions: government should be a facilitator, not the sole provider.”
- 3. Financial Sustainability Requires Innovation:** Social enterprises must balance profit and ethical responsibility. New funding models help organizations remain independent from unstable government resources. “Charitable organizations must think like businesses while maintaining their core mission of service.”

“We need to move past the age of ideology and focus on practical, applicable solutions.”

– Prof. Erwin Schwella

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Chapter 99

Meet the Legal Boeremeisie, Katli Nguane

Introduction

Katli Nguane, also known as South Africa’s Legal Boeremeisie, challenges biases and stereotypes, highlighting why agriculture should be viewed as a shared industry, not one confined to a particular racial or cultural group. In this chapter, she explores her unconventional career path, the intersection of law and agriculture, and her advocacy for diversity and inclusivity in farming. “I keep saying that I’m fixing South Africa one day at a time through the agricultural sector, a space that is closed off but should be open to everyone.”

A Childhood on the Farm and the Journey to Law

Nguane’s connection to agriculture began in childhood. She grew up on a farm, though she initially resisted the farming lifestyle imposed by her grandmother. She recalls waking up at dawn to tend to animals, considering the work tedious at the time. “At the time, I hated it. Waking up at 5 AM to do farm work? It wasn’t something I ever saw myself doing in the future.”

As she matured, Nguane pursued law rather than agriculture, studying for an LLB degree. However, her mother, a lawyer herself, encouraged her to specialize in something unconventional within the legal field to ensure future job security. Mining law initially seemed like an option, given her family’s background in mining in Rustenburg, but her coursework in sustainable development drew her back toward agriculture. This legal background, particularly in environmental law, proved crucial. While South Africa lacks a specific agricultural law

discipline, sustainable development addresses the governance of land, water, and environmental conservation, all key elements of the agricultural sector. “South Africa doesn’t have a law specifically called ‘agricultural law,’ but sustainable development touches on all those principles, land use, environmental protection, compliance, it all goes together.”

Reimagining the Role of Law in Farming

Nguane now works in agriculture governance compliance, helping farmers meet legal requirements, navigate environmental laws, and resolve disputes around land and labour practices. Her legal expertise covers critical areas such as water rights, land tenure disputes, farm worker rights, and compliance with food safety standards. “If farmers don’t understand compliance, it affects their entire operation. You can’t just take water and assume it’s yours. You can’t ignore environmental laws. All these legal frameworks exist for a reason.”

Challenging Biases in Agriculture

Agriculture in South Africa is historically linked to colonialism and apartheid, making it one of the most racially polarized industries. Many black professionals gravitate towards careers in law, medicine, or finance, but agriculture remains overlooked. Nguane disrupts this narrative by proving that agriculture isn’t just for white farmers, nor is legal expertise within the sector limited to land restitution cases. “People assume that law is just about courtroom battles, but law is everywhere, even in farming. Compliance, governance, contracts, land ownership—it all requires legal expertise.”

The Complex Ethics of Farm Evictions

Farm evictions have long been controversial in South Africa, often regarded as remnants of apartheid-era land dispossession. Nguane sees both sides of the issue. While the Constitution has strengthened human rights protections, making arbitrary evictions more difficult, legal evictions still occur, especially in cases involving criminal activity on farms. “If a farm worker is involved in crime, selling drugs, or harming the community,

then eviction might be legally justified. But you cannot just kick someone out without due process.” However, municipalities often claim their responsibility ends at the farm gate, arguing that private land limits their intervention. However, Nguane challenges this perception, asserting that local government must protect human rights, even on private property. “Municipalities can’t just shrug off responsibility and say, ‘It’s private land; we don’t care.’ If human dignity is at stake, then intervention is necessary.”

Challenges in the Agricultural Sector

Government agricultural programs often lack cohesion, offering fragmented support like seed funding or equipment grants without addressing critical infrastructure needs such as access to water. “What good are seeds if there’s no water? How can a farmer succeed if they have no infrastructure? The government’s approach is incomplete.” She argues that many black professionals view land ownership as property investment, rather than farming opportunities. While urban migration has expanded career choices, farming is still seen as a low-status profession. “We need black people to take farming seriously, not just land ownership, but actual farming as a business. That’s how you build generational wealth.”

Nguane’s story challenges long-held biases about who belongs in agriculture. As an advocate for legal governance within farming, she is helping farmers navigate compliance laws, championing inclusivity, and redefining the industry’s racial and professional stereotypes. “Agriculture is for all South Africans. If I can help open doors for others, then I’m doing my part in fixing South Africa, one farm at a time.”

Key Governance Lessons

1. **Kill Your Biases to Open Up Opportunities:** Nguane’s journey into agriculture highlights the importance of challenging social and professional biases. “I’ve had farmers tell me, ‘What do you know about farming?’ I’ve had people look at me like I don’t belong in this space. But if I had let those biases affect me, I wouldn’t be where I am today.”

2. **Agricultural Law Is Critical, Even If it's Overlooked:** “Agricultural law is often neglected, yet it plays a crucial role in regulating land ownership, water rights, and environmental laws. Without legal knowledge, farmers risk losing their land, water rights, and businesses.”
3. **Government Must Provide Holistic Support to Emerging Black Farmers:** While land reform remains a priority, fragmented government programs often fail because they do not offer comprehensive support. “Giving someone seeds won't help if they don't have water. A tractor won't be useful if there's no infrastructure. The government's approach needs to be holistic—it's not just about handing out equipment.”
4. **Local Government Cannot Ignore Human Rights on Private Land:** Municipalities often claim their responsibility ends at the farm gate, but they have a constitutional duty to uphold human dignity. “Private property doesn't mean you can do whatever you want. If human dignity is violated, municipalities have a duty to intervene, whether the land is privately owned or not.”

“I keep saying that I'm fixing South Africa one day at a time through the agricultural sector, a space that is closed off but should be open to everyone.”

– **Katli Nguane**

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Chapter 100

Mediation vs Litigation: Advocate Alan Nelson Explores Effective Dispute Resolution Alternatives

Introduction

In this chapter, Advocate Alan Nelson (SC), a distinguished legal expert with decades of experience in litigation and conflict resolution, unpacks why mediation, a structured, consensual approach to conflict resolution, is far more effective, equitable, and transformative than litigation. From labour disputes to community conflicts and municipal governance struggles, South Africa faces escalating tensions that often end up in legal battles, violent protests, or prolonged unresolved issues.

Nelson believes that mediation can radically shift how individuals, businesses, and government entities resolve disputes, moving them away from adversarial confrontation towards collaborative problem-solving. His insights present a crucial opportunity to rethink governance strategies and introduce a more people-centred approach to justice and conflict resolution.

Early Influences and the Transition to Mediation

Nelson built his career in the courtroom, fiercely advocating for clients through litigation. “I spent a lifetime in conflict, believing that fighting and winning cases was the way to serve justice,” he recalls. However, his views changed dramatically when he attended a mediation training course ten years ago. “I didn’t even believe in mediation when I started the course. But by day four, I had what I call my Damascus experience: I looked up and said, ‘God, what have I been doing with my life?’” He realized that litigation often fails to resolve real disputes; instead, it prolongs

them, increases costs, and deepens hostility between parties. Mediation, by contrast, facilitates mutual agreement, enabling disputing parties to focus on solutions rather than blame. “Mediation doesn’t try to decide who was right in the past; it helps people figure out how to move forward.”

Challenges in Conflict Resolution

Nelson argues that conflict itself is not the problem; it’s a natural human experience. “Conflict is everywhere. It’s in families, workplaces, businesses, governments, and social movements. The issue is how we deal with conflict.” He identifies three major problems in conventional conflict resolution.

The Adversarial Nature of Litigation

Litigation is fundamentally designed to establish right versus wrong, but Nelson points out that this approach often causes more harm than good. It forces parties into opposing positions, making resolution harder. It is costly, requiring years of legal fees that financially strain individuals and governments, and it is time-consuming, often taking years to reach final judgements. “Lawsuits drag on, businesses suffer, families endure emotional stress, and municipalities stall on key service delivery projects. Mediation is faster, cheaper, and produces real resolutions.”

The Psychology of Conflict Escalation

Nelson explains that when individuals engage in conflict, their brains enter a heightened emotional state. “We say their brains are on fire. People in conflict often act irrationally, prolong disputes unnecessarily, and sometimes make decisions against their own best interests.” This leads to destructive behaviours, such as violent protests or unnecessary legal battles. “When people feel unheard, they burn buildings, they strike, they escalate the conflict. Mediation provides them with a structured way to be heard and work towards solutions before things spiral out of control.”

Misconceptions About Justice and Resolution

Many people assume that going to court guarantees justice, but Nelson challenges this notion. “Litigation is uncertain. We have multiple court levels, with appeals often overturning previous rulings. The law itself is subject to interpretation; it doesn’t always deliver a fair outcome.” Mediation, on the other hand, allows people to shape their own resolutions without relying on unpredictable court rulings. “A judge can grant financial compensation, but mediation allows for much more creative solutions tailored to the needs of both parties.”

The Role of Mediation in Local Government

Municipal governance is rife with conflict, from disputes over service delivery to disagreements between local officials and community members. “Municipalities are in conflict with communities all the time, over housing, land, water, electricity, and governance policies. Too often, officials only listen when the tires are burning.” Nelson believes that municipalities must institutionalize mediation to prevent unnecessary lawsuits, community protests, and governance delays.

Nelson believes that mediation can be integrated into municipal governance through the establishment of municipal mediation teams, dedicated mediators that can help resolve conflicts before they escalate into full-blown crises. In addition, municipalities should train local government officials in order to equip them with the skills and competencies to navigate disputes through mediation rather than legal or violent confrontations.

He argues that laws should require that municipalities attempt mediation *before* escalating issues to courts. Nelson highlights examples from China, Singapore, and India, where mediation is standard practice in handling disputes. “In China, mediation is used on the streets, in traffic accidents, in business disputes, and in local governance. Judges mediate thousands of cases efficiently.”

The Role of Education in Mediation Awareness

Despite its effectiveness, mediation remains underutilized in South Africa due to lack of awareness and misconceptions. “Most people don’t understand mediation or think it’s the same as arbitration, but it’s not. Mediation is entirely consensual, unlike arbitration, which is adjudicative.” Nelson believes that public education is essential to shifting attitudes. “We need mediation awareness programs in government, business, and communities. People must recognize that litigation should be the last resort, not the default option.” Nelson argues that local governments must be proactive in adopting mediation practices to create ethical, responsive leadership. “South Africa’s governance struggles aren’t just about corruption; they are about conflict-resolution failures. Government officials need mediation skills to engage with communities before protests erupt.”

He urges judicial reform to incorporate mediation into legal frameworks. “Judges should encourage mediation before litigation. Right now, courts are clogged with cases that should have been resolved consensually.”

Nelson’s reflections challenge conventional approaches to conflict resolution, arguing that mediation is not just an alternative to litigation; it’s a superior method. “We need to rethink how we handle disputes in this country. Mediation is cost-effective, efficient, and transformative.” He believes that mediation aligns with traditional African conflict resolution practices, which emphasized dialogue and consensus-building long before colonial legal systems introduced adversarial models.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Municipalities Must Integrate Mediation into Governance:** Service delivery protests often arise because communities feel unheard. “We must engage with citizens before conflicts escalate.”
- 2. Mediation is Faster, Cheaper, and More Effective:** Instead of opposition, mediation fosters collaboration and future-oriented solutions. “If parties work together, they can resolve disputes quicker and at lower costs.”

3. **Public Education on Mediation is Essential:** Many people don't understand mediation's benefits. "If we educate the public, mediation can replace litigation as the preferred resolution method."
4. **Judiciaries Should Promote Mediation before Court Proceedings:** Judges should encourage parties to mediate first. "If the legal system embraces mediation, it will reduce case backlogs and improve efficiency."
5. **Mediation is Deeply Rooted in African Traditions:** Historically, African societies resolved disputes through dialogue, not adversarial lawsuits. "Colonialism introduced litigation. We must reclaim traditional conflict-resolution models."

"Before colonialism, conflict resolution happened under a tree, with conversation, not lawsuits. We must return to our roots."
– Advocate Alan Nelson (SC)

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



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Chapter 101

Has Freedom Delivered on its Promise? Reflections on 30 Years of Democracy

Introduction

In this chapter, Dirk Breytenbach, Denise Stubbs, Llewellyn McMaster, and Katli Nguane explore the journey, successes, disappointments, and lessons learned over the last three decades. Through a mix of historical reflections, individual experiences, and critical perspectives on the nation's progress, the panellists offer an honest assessment of South Africa's democratic journey.

This conversation touches on experiences of 1994, reflections on transformation, the evolving role of civic activism, and challenges facing South Africa today. "We fought for democracy, but 30 years later, many South Africans feel disillusioned. Where did we go wrong, and what must we do to reclaim the ideals that once united us?"

Looking Back: Where Were You in 1994?

Katli Nguane: A Child Witnessing History

"I was just five years old, but I remember the excitement in my home. My grandmother was watching Mandela on TV, and there was joy in her eyes—something I only understood later in life. Voting day was important to her, and now I realize why." While Katli was too young to vote, she witnessed the profound emotions surrounding South Africa's transition to democracy, particularly in her grandmother's generation, who had waited decades for this moment.

Llewellyn McMaster: A Revolutionary Perspective

“I was in my mid-30s at the time, and I spent voting day driving across Cape Town, watching people line up to cast their ballots. I was so overwhelmed that I didn’t even vote on April 27; I was just absorbing the moment.” As a former SRC president at the University of the Western Cape, McMaster had been actively involved in anti-apartheid movements, including the UDF (United Democratic Front). He recalls the idealism, the hope, and the belief that South Africa would truly become a non-racial, democratic state.

Denise Stubbs: Witnessing Transformation First-Hand

“I voted in Pniel, and I remember the long queues. There was excitement but also hesitation, people were asking, ‘Is this real?’ But something inside me knew that everything was about to change.” Denise speaks about the psychological weight of apartheid, how people internalized exclusion, and how democracy offered them the promise of inclusion and transformation.

Dirk Breitenbach: An Afrikaner’s Awakening

“I was 40 years old in 1994, and truth be told, it was a culture shock for me. Growing up as an Afrikaner, I never truly understood apartheid; I lived in a world that ignored the realities faced by black South Africans. When Mandela was released in 1990, I realized that I had a choice: to be part of the solution or resist the inevitable change.” Dirk speaks candidly about how many white South Africans were shielded from the realities of apartheid and had to rapidly adjust to the new democracy.

Reflections on South Africa’s Democratic Journey

The panellists acknowledge that while democracy was achieved, many of its promises remain unfulfilled.

Llewellyn McMaster: The Disillusionment of Former Activists

“We fought for a democratic, non-racial South Africa, but today, racial divisions persist. The ANC, the party that once represented

liberation, has abandoned the ideals of the Freedom Charter. Corruption is rampant, and our people suffer.” McMaster expresses deep disappointment with the state of South Africa, particularly regarding:

- The erosion of non-racialism
- Political corruption and self-enrichment
- Poor governance and lack of accountability

Dirk Breitenbach: Understanding Ubuntu and the Rainbow Nation

“In 1994, I didn’t fully understand concepts like Ubuntu or the Rainbow Nation. Over time, I’ve learned that they represent something beautiful, something we need to revive.” Dirk speaks to the decline of the spirit of unity and why South Africans need to rekindle the values of reconciliation and inclusivity.

Denise Stubbs: Transformation in Business and Agriculture

“When I see where we were 30 years ago compared to where we are today, I know transformation is possible, but it requires hard work, commitment, and leadership.” Denise highlights her experience leading Thokozani Wines, an empowerment initiative that integrates farmworkers into business ownership. She argues that transformation needs to go beyond political slogans; it must result in meaningful economic inclusion.

Katli Nguane: The Challenges of Racial Narratives in the Western Cape

“I never knew what it felt like to ‘not belong’ until I moved to the Western Cape. Here, racial identity is deeply entrenched, and people use labels to separate each other. Johannesburg was different, we never questioned our belonging there.”

Katli shares her experience navigating racial biases, social stereotypes, and exclusionary language in Paarl and the broader Western Cape. She challenges South Africans to stop reinforcing divisions and embrace true diversity.

Challenges in Building a Truly Inclusive Democracy

Despite the achievements of 1994, numerous obstacles continue to hinder South Africa's democratic progress. Corruption and government failure remain significant concerns, with political elites often prioritizing self-enrichment over public service, leading to deteriorating service delivery and growing frustration among communities.

Racial division and a lack of social cohesion also persist, as apartheid-era spatial planning still dictates residential patterns and cultural misunderstandings reinforce segregation instead of promoting unity. Economic inequality remains stark, with black entrepreneurs facing difficulties in accessing funding and business networks, while many white-owned businesses have yet to fully embrace meaningful transformation.

Additionally, deficits in education and awareness hamper democratic engagement, civic education is inadequate, and many citizens lack a full understanding of their rights. Youth participation in governance is also low, limiting the development of new leadership.

South Africa's democracy is still evolving, and while these challenges are substantial, there remains hope for the future. The panellists emphasize the need to revive non-racialism and national unity, hold the government accountable through civic activism, and foster transformation in business, education, and leadership.

Key Governance Lessons

- 1. Democracy is an Ongoing Process, Not a Destination:** Transformation requires continuous commitment, not just a once-off event. Citizens must stay engaged in governance beyond elections. "We must actively shape our democracy; it does not progress on its own."
- 2. Political Will is Key to Meaningful Change:** Leaders must prioritize people over politics. Corruption and inefficiency must be confronted without fear or favour. "Leadership without accountability is exploitation."

- 3. Racial Identity Must be Reframed:** South Africans must see beyond racial categories and embrace a shared national identity. Ubuntu must be revived as the foundation of social cohesion. “South Africa belongs to all who live in it; we must stop dividing ourselves.”

“Democracy requires participation. We cannot be passive. Each of us must contribute to building a South Africa where everyone belongs.”

– **Denise Stubbs**

Scan the QR code to access the full podcast interview on this chapter.



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Section D

Governance Frameworks

This collection of governance insights presents key themes from various frameworks relevant to South African local government. It emphasizes the importance of ethical governance and effective leadership in fostering integrity and accountability, alongside performance accountability through evidence-based decision-making. Collectively, these governance frameworks highlight the significance of transparency, collaboration, and continuous improvement in ensuring effective local governance.

Introduction

The overarching theme of this book is celebrating great governance. In this final section I share some of the frameworks that can be used to ensure that you adhere to the principles of great governance. Remember, the organisation is not yours; you are merely passing through. You are not married to the organisation; you are a steward of the organisation, and you have an opportunity to bring to the organisation your gifts and your talents. My go-to SDGs are SDG16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnerships). I encourage you to use the frameworks and to check in with me on how you are applying them.

The following 5 frameworks are presented:

1. Institute of Directors' King V
2. Governance5iQ
3. Organisational Governance Culture
4. The 7C Implementation Protocol
5. The Future's Triangle

The Institute of Directors and King V

Together with colleague Fanie Cloete (we come from different sides of the railway line but from the same clan), we defined governance as the relationship between the governors (elected or appointed officials) and those being governed (the end users of services). It encompasses both the process of governing (the how, e.g., is it transparent, fair, accountable, collaborative? Does it foster procedural correctness, responsiveness, etc.?) and the outcomes of that processes (is it equitable, leading to development, growth, care, and/or sustainable?). Since it is essentially a behavioural framework, governance can be considered good or bad. Governance is therefore based on ethical and effective leadership that is grounded on formalized norms and standards/criteria.

The Institute of Directors in February 2025 introduced the 5th governance framework to achieve four outcomes, namely, **ethical culture** (promoting integrity, fairness, and

transparency); **performance** (ensuring long-term value creation within economic, social, and environmental contexts; **conformance** (upholding compliance with laws, regulations, and standards); and **legitimacy** (building trust and responsible corporate citizenship). The governance outcomes is the exercise of ethical and effective leadership by organisations to ensure an **ethical culture, high performance, sound control systems, and legitimacy** in the eyes of stakeholders. This is achieved through the application of the following 12 principles:

1. **Ethical and Effective Leadership:** Governing bodies must lead with integrity, competence, responsibility, and accountability
2. **Organizational Ethics:** Ethical culture must be supported, monitored, and integrated into strategy and operations
3. **Corporate Citizenship:** Organizations must act as responsible citizens, socially, environmentally, and economically.
4. **Strategy, Performance, and Sustainability:** Strategy should be integrated with performance management, risk, and sustainability objectives.
5. **Reporting and Transparency:** Reporting must be balanced, accurate, and meaningful to stakeholders, reflecting true performance.
6. **Board Role and Composition:** The board must act as the governance custodian with the right mix of skills, independence, and diversity.
7. **Delegation and Accountability:** Effective delegation to management with clear oversight and accountability structures.
8. **Risk Governance:** Risk must be proactively managed and aligned with the organization's strategic direction.
9. **Technology and Information Governance:** Information and technology must be managed as strategic assets, and attention given to cybersecurity and innovation.
10. **Compliance and Remuneration Governance:** Legal compliance and fair, responsible, transparent remuneration practices must be in place.
11. **Assurance and Internal Controls:** Assurance functions must support effective internal controls and reliable reporting.

- 12. Stakeholder Inclusivity and Engagement:** Stakeholder needs must be considered in decision-making, with consistent communication and responsiveness.

Governance 5iQ

Governance 5iQ is a strategic implementation framework, adapted from Michael Barber,¹ is based on five questions, as depicted in Table 1. The implementation framework is applicable at the micro (municipal) and macro (stakeholder) level and is based on decision making according to concrete evidence as opposed to “gut feeling” or ideology. The framework gives rise to the institutionalization of the organizational processes to ensure that evidence-informed policy and programme decisions are made. This critical organizational paradigm shift is a move away from process (inputs) towards outcomes and is considered important for the long-term sustainability of the organization in line with SDG 16 – peace, justice, and strong institutions. This will ensure that governance outcomes (ethical culture, good performance, effective controls and legitimacy), as envisaged by the South African Constitution, are achieved.

Table 1: Governance 5iQ

The Five Questions	Processes
Why do we do what we do? (Vision)	Defines the unique contribution and impact through specific, measurable goals and clear priorities that are clearly communicated to all levels of the organization.
How is it being done? (Mission)	Clear practical plans that are implemented and regularly updated through standard operating procedures and policies. This section explains day-to-day tasks, the development of a change management plan, and the identification of resources.

¹ Barber, M. (2015). *How to Run a Government So That Citizens Benefit and Taxpayers Don't Go Crazy*. London: Penguin.

The Five Questions	Processes
How will we know at any given moment that we are on track? (Monitoring and evaluation)	A reliance on good, steady, real-time data (evidence) on key indicators with analysis, and monitoring routines involving all key stakeholders. This could include key performance indicators for all managers.
If we are not on track, what is being done about it? (Consequences management)	Agreement on corrective actions to be taken that is continually refined with a focus on innovative approaches to problem-solving.
How do we lead and learn? (Knowledge management)	Organizational commitment to innovation, lifelong learning, and building lessons back into the system. A relentless pursuit of continuous improvement and high performance.

The 5P Organisational Governance Culture Framework

Organisations such as municipalities exist to create public value. Public value refers to the value that an organization provides to the public or society as a whole, beyond just its internal operations or financial performance. It encompasses the broader social, economic, and environmental impacts that an organization has on its stakeholders and the community. In order to function optimally, the organisation needs:

- People (with passion and competencies),
- Policies (how to create value and operate),
- Partnerships (internal and external to create value),
- Politics (process and standard operating procedures to get the organisation to work) and
- Polity (structural and who reports to who).

The effective alignment of people, policies, partnerships, politics, and polity gives rise to the organizational governance culture illustrated below:

Governance Frameworks



Figure 1: Organisational Governance Culture (adapted from Keggelman, 2024)

The 7C Implementation Protocol

Najam (1995) argues that implementation is complex and dynamic and influenced by multiple actors and operates at multiple levels. De Coning, Cloete & Burger, 2018 developed the 7-C's protocol for policy implementation, as presented below in Figure 2.

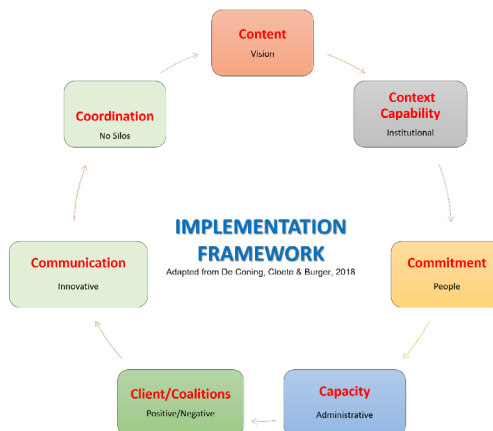


Figure 2: Implementation Framework (Adapted from De Coning, Cloete & Burger, 2018)

1. **Content:** The policy content includes normative aspects such as mission, vision, and goals (desired future state). The three elements mentioned above matter for the policy content, as they have a direct bearing on the other policy implementation variables.
2. **Context:** The context in which policy processes occur is a critical factor in determining their implementation success or failure. The nature of the institutional context and culture, the way things are conducted, are sometimes structured as standard operating procedures.
3. **Commitment:** The foundation for successful policy changes begins with a strong political, managerial, and financial commitment to achieving efficient and effective outcomes. The dedication of those implementing the policy is crucial in determining whether the policy is conducted and whether it ultimately succeeds or fails.
4. **Capacity:** The capacity of the organisation refers to the structural, functional, and cultural capability to execute the government's policy objectives. This capacity refers to the ability to effectively deliver public services intended to enhance citizens' quality of life, as planned and sustainably over time. It encompasses availability and access to tangible resources such as human, financial, material, technological, and logistical assets.
5. **Clients/Coalitions:** Successful implementation of policy is also dependent on the ability of the project manager to build coalitions. The support of clients/coalitions, whose interests are enhanced or threatened by the policy, and the strategies they employ in strengthening or deflecting its implementation is critical.
6. **Communication:** Successful implementation of policy is dependent on the ability of the organisation to communicate the policy meaning, goals, objectives, roles, and responsibilities to those stakeholders responsible for policy implementation. South Africa has 12 official languages and communicating effectively is a crucial component of effective policy implementation.
7. **Coordination:** This variable involves evaluating both intra- and inter-organizational coordination and cooperation in

policy implementation. Intra-organizational coordination refers to the working relationships among departments and agencies within the same organization, while inter-organizational coordination refers to the relationships among different organizations, such as coordination between government departments (Robinson, Hewitt & Harris, 2000).

The Futures Triangle

Inayatullah (2023) offers a framework that analyses the dynamics influencing the future. The Futures Triangle is effective as the start of an organisational strategic conversation that can assist in strategic contexts, facilitating policymaking and decision-making. According to Inayatullah, “the preferred vision of the future is crucial for nations, institutions, and organizations to adapt to the changing future, but in creating radical possibilities.” The approach outlines three main forces:

- **The Pull of the Future (Foresight):** This represents the compelling vision of where the organisation or individual wishes to be.
- **The Push of the Present (Insight):** This represents the identification and articulation of the quantitative factors and patterns shaping the preferred future. It also involves all the enablers, contemporary trends, and/or drivers for change (internal and external) that need to be navigated in order to ensure change.
- **Weight of the Past (Hindsight):** These include the obstacles/blocks or historical constraints that may hinder progress and/or resist change or the achievement of the future vision (Inayatullah, 2023). The framework connects historical patterns, current trends, and desired future outcomes.

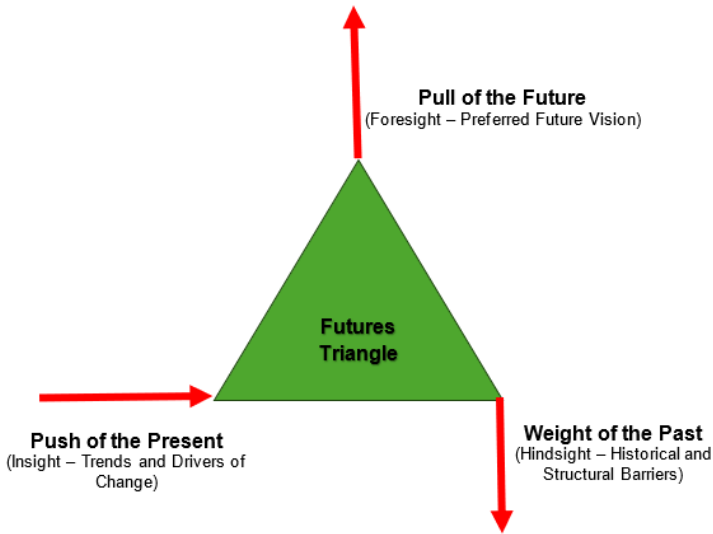


Figure 3: The organisational futures triangle (adapted from Inayatullah, 2023)

The Futures Triangle’s framework is considered applicable to managerial development. Managers in particular can use the tool to reflect on past experiences (weight of history), assess their current situation (push of the present), and articulate their future aspirations (pull of the future). Through this action, they can identify personal barriers, recognize opportunities for growth, and create actionable plans to achieve their goals.

The benefits of the Futures Triangle are that it is a user-friendly, easy way to map the future in that it can be used to compare different scenarios of the future (preferred and worst case). Secondly, it can be used to develop strategy and policy-making, because once the preferred future is mapped and identified, the change facilitator can develop strategies to clarify the vision, lighten the weights, or navigate drives for change.

2 Inayatullah, S. (2023). Investigating the Futures Triangle with ChatGPT. *World Futures Review*, 15(2–4), 213–218.

The Futures Triangle can also be combined with the Governance 5iQ Framework (Cloete, 2023³) and Organisational Governance Culture (Keggelman and Cloete, n.d) explained earlier.

Conclusion

I think in any organisation, family, and or friendship circle you will find two types of people: talkers and doers. To implement policy and to move the needle in the organisation, you need people in your organisation with very high **GTSD** scores – People that can **GET THE S--- DONE**. At the risk of causing offence, I leave the interpretation of the S--- to you. But for goodness' sake, get people in your corner with high GTSD scores.

3 Cloete, H. (2023). Perspectives on Municipal Readiness Municipalities-Quo Vadis?



UJ Press

It is my hope and prayer that the stories and lessons shared in this book will galvanise you into action. South Africa, its municipalities, and the world need people who are both angry and courageous. Too often, the middle class are master moaners yet lack the moral courage to do something about their anger. They forget the anger and courage of those who birthed our democracy through blood, sweat, and tears. I encourage you to get involved in defining South Africa, just like the men and women on these pages.

Dr Harlan Cloete

"This book is like a breath of fresh air and is not your typical run-of-the-mill textbook, it offers novel perspectives on lessons and best practices from the world of work that can supplement and even refute existing scholarly assumptions. As such, it provides highly valuable insights from practitioners upon which further scholarly inquiry can be built."

Prof. Gerrit van der Walddt, Research Professor in Public Governance, North-West University (NWU)

