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Editorial

Zuma's Cabinet reshuffle inaugurates South Africa's Zimbabwe moment

Vishwas Satgar



There is a groundswell of opposition to Jacob Zuma's tight control of the presidency and his increasingly autocratic rule. Photo: Hanna Brunlöf

Introduction

Historians reviewing the recent short span of history, the past 50 years, or even the *longue durée*, over 200 years, would agree that national liberation movements fit into a larger pattern of historical change that has not yielded a fundamental break with colonialism and, in the case of South Africa, with apartheid as well.

The movements have brought more of the same or even degeneration, to their societies. Southern Africa has a litany of examples but President Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe is considered a classic case of revolution derailed by its own leadership.

President Jacob Zuma's recent Cabinet reshuffle has inaugurated our Zimbabwe moment. It has

haunted our subconscious, but now it looms large on the national stage. The morbid signs have been there for a while as the looting and state capture has intensified. But the reshuffle has sunk the Zuma ship, hurtling it to the bottom of the ocean, with the ruin of all in sight.

One would have expected the oldest national liberation movement in Africa, with its intergenerational experience and strong traditions, to have prevented a single individual from substituting for the nation, the state and the party.

But, on the other hand, the Zuma bandwagon, with its origins in his rape trial more than 10 years ago, portended a constitutional and political crisis, particularly with his brand of



patriarchal, ethnic and authoritarian populism and by engendering a vicious intolerance in the ranks of the ANC-led tripartite alliance.

Zuma's rise fitted in perfectly with the power concentrated in the presidency, both because of constitutional fiat and because of former president Thabo Mbeki's centralizing approach.

Zuma's control of the presidency and his factional hold on the ANC has given him the confidence to sink South Africa for his own selfish interests.

But is this the endgame for us all? Are we going to live through the destruction of our young democratic institutions and the rolling back of our rights? Are we condemned to live through more than three decades of kleptocratic takeover of the state and economy, as in Zimbabwe, and its eventual collapse?

South Africa is not exceptional but it is also not Zimbabwe. Many commentators have begun to suggest that Zuma has it all worked out strategically. This is an all-knowing and calculating strongman who will not be pushed back by any social force.

Pallo Jordan, one of the most brilliant intellectual minds in the ANC, said a few years ago that South Africa has a well-developed private sector and civil society, which distinguished it from Zimbabwe, and that these will serve as a bulwark against regression. There are also other features such as our geopolitical relations, the complexity of the interlocking political relationships in the ANC-led alliance and our robust intelligentsia.

Geopolitically, under Zuma, South Africa has been isolating itself from the broader African context through a state practice that is increasingly xenophobic in managing refugees, migrants and immigrants.

But a backlash is growing in the continent, which will limit how far Zuma can retreat into the old boys club in Africa.

In the Brics (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) bloc, we are a small player among mega-states that have been skewing our economic priorities.

China is content with not over-reaching or compromising its neomercantilist interests with South Africa. On the other hand, Russia has been gaining a global reputation as a mafia state, which is disposed to meddling even in Western democracies. This will have widespread implications for a Zuma regime in bed with Russia on nuclear energy, for example. It is very likely the entanglement will be about reducing the Zuma regime to a client state, further constraining the president's choices.

But, most crucial at this stage in terms of geopolitical relations is the unplugging of foreign investment. An exodus out of government bonds, equities, real estate and from the productive economy will be calamitous for an economy struggling to reboot. An economy in recession will mean lower revenue collection, continued high unemployment and limited economic room to maneuver.

Fiscal populism in this context will not work but will merely bankrupt the state, deepening its legitimacy crisis.

The private sector, though enjoying immense structural power because of a globalized economy, has had a contradictory relationship with the post-apartheid state. It has not been able to lead the state and neither has the state been able to direct the sector's capital, despite huge concessions made to capital.



Although black economic empowerment has deracialised parts of the economy, this has been a shallow process, involving politically connected elites. In the main, there is no direct control over the trillions of rands sitting on balance sheets, which could be invested — and this investment strike is likely to continue.

A Zuma regime will drive more capital offshore either legally or illicitly, and a hollowing out of the economy will aggravate the regime's legitimacy.

South Africa's intelligentsias, professional and organic, are generally critical about the state of affairs. A whole genre of literature has proliferated in just over 20 years of ANC rule with titles such as: *Unmasked: Why the ANC Failed to Govern* (Khulu Mbatha), *Recovering Democracy in South Africa* (Raymond Suttner), *We Have Now Begun Our Descent: How to Stop South Africa Losing its Way* (Justice Malala), *How Long Will South Africa Survive?* (RW Johnson) and *Turning Point: South Africa at a Crossroads* (Theuns Eloff), among others.

Black and white intellectuals capture the zeitgeist of our times. But inter-subjective conversations about what we have become and where we are going have also captured the national imagination.

The ANC-led tripartite alliance has been both strength and a constraint on the party. As a crystallization of social forces across all classes, strata and popular forces, it has provided deep roots for the ANC.

But its interlocking and overlapping relationships have also worked against the ANC. For instance, the undermining of trade union federation Cosatu as an independent worker voice has led to enormous realignments, particularly in the wake of the Marikana massacres and the development

of new trade unions, including the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union and the new labour federation, the South African Federation of Trade Unions.

Workers in Cosatu clearly did not put their weight behind the ANC in the recent local government elections.

As for the South African Communist Party (SACP), it has moved from being a principled and strategic force of the left to being one of Zuma's staunchest allies, opening up a big space to the left of the ANC.

For the ANC more directly, the overlapping of membership with Cosatu and the SACP also means a turn against Zuma could also mean a massive rupture inside the ANC. Although these forces are beginning to shrug off their loyalty to Zuma and are calling for him to step down, they are not going far enough to push back the web of kleptocratic rule, anchored in the conflation of the ANC and the state. Zuma might be pressured to go but the rot inside the ANC–state nexus is deep.

Finally, civil society, although not homogenous or progressive in all quarters, has been the hotbed of progressive forces.

Post-apartheid, South Africa has been through two cycles of resistance and has thrown up important movements such as the Treatment Action Campaign, the Landless People's Movement, the Anti-privatisation Forum and now, more recently, the Right2Know Campaign, the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign, the Inyanda National Land Movement, various nongovernmental organisations and campaigns involved in defending constitutional rights, the #FeesMustFall movement and many more.



Former finance minister Pravin Gordhan was correct in stating publicly that “South Africa has a long history of mass mobilisation”, and residues of these live on in civil society.

The world has also taught South Africa about nonviolent civil resistance. From Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King to Solidarity in Poland, the People’s Power Movement in the Philippines, the unemployed and homeless in Europe, the Occupy movement in the United States and many others, they have given South Africans an appreciation of nonviolent mass power as a strategy to transform society.

Since Ahmed Kathrada’s funeral and the sharing of the letter he wrote calling for Zuma to resign, this message has been gaining widespread support across society.

Memorial services for Kathrada, occupations outside the treasury, shutdowns and marches, including to the Union Buildings, are now all coming to the fore in the best spirit of who we are — in the spirit of Madiba and Kathrada.

Zuma has placed the ANC and the state on a collision course with society. His forces will play various moves but there will be mass counter moves in coming months, and very likely even into the general election in 2019, if he does not resign. The ANC is also likely to be destroyed by Zuma if it does not act against him now.

In many ways, although our Zimbabwe moment has arrived, we are also back in the 1980s, fighting a regime with the same moral and political outrage that won us our democracy.

South Africa will not be Zimbabwe as long as we refuse to submit.

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International News

Reflections on a Visit to Cuba's Urban Cooperatives

Christina Clamp – cross-posted from GEO news

Let me start by summarizing why I wanted to go to Cuba now. My learning objectives were the following:

1. It seemed important to me to visit Cuba before it is overrun with American tourists and global businesses entering its economy.
2. I wanted to understand the impact of years of the American economic blockade.
3. I wanted to gain an understanding of the role of cooperatives in the Cuban economy.
4. I hoped to conduct an assessment of how feasible it would be to bring Southern New Hampshire University students to Cuba either for short courses or study abroad.

Cuba has been of interest to me for many years. I lived in Guatemala and Costa Rica from September, 1974 to December, 1975. During that time, Guatemala was experiencing a low level civil war. As Americans, we were not threatened by what was happening in the countryside. Still we were aware of the violence that was occurring at the time. Costa Rica in contrast was “bucolic” by comparison. My undergraduate senior research paper was on the overthrow of the Ubico dictatorship in Guatemala. Through that research, I learned much about the recent political reality. People in the course of oral history interviews about the past, would at times share stories of the death squads roaming the country in search of dissidents and the armed guerrillas.

Cuba represented a place that had successfully freed itself from corrupt old style dictators (caudillos) and a place with a clear commitment to universal healthcare and education. I did not expect that

we were visiting a “workers' paradise.” But I had expected that there would be a broad based commitment to basic needs. What we found on this trip was a work in progress. For many, there is not adequate housing. Race is still a determinant of life chances for many. The socialist “project” has not accomplished what it had promised. We were to hear that the revolution is not done. The US blockade was severe and has prevented Cuba from realizing its economic goals for its people.

The Cubans are in a significant transition to allow for private property, sale of real estate, proprietary businesses that are family-owned (self-employment) and worker cooperatives. Our visit was to learn firsthand about this transition and the economic reality that is responsible for this change.

Presentations and co-op visits during the first week

During the first two days morning presentations were delivered by Olga Fernandez Rios. Olga had served as a diplomat in Washington before she served as the director of the Instituto de Filosofia. She is now affiliated with the Institute and with the university but no longer is directing it. Olga spoke the first day on the topic of the Complexities of Socialist Transition.

In the afternoon, we visited a cooperative, Confecciones Modelos that is a “cut & sew” operation where they make clothing. The work area was dingy and lighting was not great. All the work was being done by women. This was a conversion of a failed government-run operation that is two years old. It reminded me of a 2010 Venezuelan film, Habana Eva, about a seamstress who wanted to become a fashion designer. The main product



is Guayabera shirts and dresses. According to the manager, everyone is earning the same. There are 40 employees.

On Tuesday, we started the day again at the Institute of Philosophy. This session was an overview of the Cuban political system. Throughout the two weeks, I felt that the Cubans were not engaging us except in the presentation of their work. Q&A's were dominated by the Americans even in the second week which was supposed to be a collegial "encounter." I only observed one instance where a Cuban asked questions.

The meetings with the cooperatives across the first week sounded consistently the same in their description of their co-op and its operation even though the business activities varied. The exception was the Bamboo Center which is a "project" not a co-op and from the description by the director, I would characterize it as a workforce development organization with aspirations to operate as a social cooperative. The workforce challenges reminded me of the study tour I organized to northern Italy and the cooperative, La Rupe near Bologna. Both are working with populations that need basic skills development to work in a business including addressing issues of emotional wellbeing and personal hygiene. The Bamboo Center has 6 – 8 employees (currently 6) and a division of labor with operators and assistant operators in the production work. Operators earn 10,000 CUP (400 CUC) and assistants earn 1000 pesos. Design work is done by students from two partners, a US group from a Virginia state university and a Cuban school of design.

Wednesday had the best set of presentations. We heard from Humberto Miranda, who has been working with cooperative development. After his talk in the morning, we had lunch at a cooperative

restaurant and then visited Cooperative Rutera 2 which is a bus transport co-op. After the visit to the bus co-op, we returned to the restaurant and had a presentation by the manager of the restaurant and then four young men who are starting a bakery co-op.

The co-op speaker came to us at the Instituto on Thursday morning and spoke to us about his construction co-op, CREA. The presentation on diverse forms of management was cancelled. Also cancelled were the talk on Women, Social Justice and Sustainable Development and the visit to an information technology co-op.

On Friday, the Institute staff, Olga, Roberto and Humberto conducted a Q&A with us. The most interesting segment was the discussion of racism in Cuba. Olga started the response by saying that there are no problems in Cuba. When she finished, Humberto said that since she is white, she does not know. He then proceeded to deliver a passionate counterpoint. He indicated that Cuba was a rigidly racist society. While things have improved, there is more that needs to happen. Occupational segregation by race still is an issue. "If you are poor, you are probably black. Police will ask Black tourists for their ID and leave whites alone." During his explanation, both Roberto and Olga left the room. Regarding our observations of the co-ops, he indicated that the developments of co-ops are still in their infancy. "We don't know yet how we will make the baby."

There were two meetings with co-ops. Due to a sprained ankle, I did not participate in the visit to the accounting co-op. Many members of our group considered it the best of the co-ops visited. The National Cooperative Business Association delegation also visited this co-op and spoke highly of their understanding of what it means to be a



cooperative. People indicated that there was signage in the office about themselves and about what is a co-op.

The final visit was to El Biky for a discussion of how it was formed as a co-op. Questions from group members with little understanding of the business resulted in a number of odd questions that reflected badly on us as a group. The one problem that I saw and experienced with the restaurant is that waiters are compensated based on how much they are able to sell items from the menu. I had observed problems with our dinner order on two separate occasions. In both instances, the order that arrived was incorrect and more expensive than what we had ordered.

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Clamp (2017). Reflections on a Visit to Cuba's Urban Cooperatives. *Grassroots Economic Organizing (GEO)*

The Economics of Community: Addressing member financial needs in intentional communities

By Laird Schaub – Cross-posted from GEO news

It's endlessly fascinating to see what kaleidoscopic patterns can be generated by shining light on a single facet of intentional communities, and then slowly

rotating the focus from one group to the next. As this issue of Communities drills down on cooperative economics, I want to look at what emerges when the lens is trained on how communities organize financially.

Intentional communities sort broadly into two kinds: those where members share income (roughly 10-12 percent of the North American field today), and those where they don't (the vast majority).

In the case of the former, the community takes primary responsibility for the economic welfare of its members. In consequence, most such communities roll up their sleeves and develop community-owned businesses, and take advantage of collective purchasing power to leverage economies of scale to make ends meet. In addition to the day-to-day, this kind of community also provides for member vacations, health care, and retirement. It's cradle to grave coverage. Members put everything they earn (though not necessarily everything they own) into the pot. In return, the group picks up the tab for all expenses—within whatever boundaries the community sets.

For non-income-sharing communities, however, the collective tends to leave the economics of member households untouched. This is a huge difference. As someone who lived in an income-sharing community for four decades (1974-2014) and was a delegate to the Federation of Egalitarian Communities for two (1980-2001), I have deep familiarity with how the collective can partner with individual members to address economic imperatives. In addition, as FIC administrator for 28 years and as a group process consultant for three decades I have visited and worked with more than 100 non-income-sharing communities and thus have first-hand knowledge of the economic realities



in that milieu as well.

Both because most intentional communities don't share income and because the potential there is less explored the primary focus of this examination will be the economic relationship between the collective and the individual in non-income-sharing groups. I'm going to first describe what's extant, and then attempt to make the case for shifting it to something else.

The Community Lens

For the community, it's much simpler if its financial focus is narrowly defined: the group will manage the collective assets and liabilities (such as property taxes, infrastructure, and common facilities) and member households will manage themselves. Not only does this protect individual privacy (getting the right balance between group and individual can be tricky) but it's less work. Members may do a fair bit of expense-sharing and collective purchasing, but the group's interest in member finances tends to be limited to whether the checks for HOA dues clear and members don't default on their mortgages.

To be sure, if a member gets into financial trouble, the group may rally around them—either collectively or as neighbors—but it isn't obliged to.

The Individual Household Lens

For the member this hands-off policy cuts two ways. On the one hand it means that information about their financial reality (beyond whether they qualify for a loan if one is needed to buy or build their unit) and their household budget is entirely their business, just as in the mainstream culture.

On the other hand it typically means forgoing one of the principal advantages of shared living: the active assistance from others in figuring things out.

On the expense side, there is considerable room

for sharing expenses in non-income-sharing communities, and a good bit of this happens. Perhaps the community has an internal food-buying club or has a link with a nearby CSA (community supported agriculture). Maybe the community owns a single pickup truck or wood splitter that is shared among all members. The group may build a swimming pool, a workshop, or an exercise facility—all of which are likely to be larger and better equipped than what members would build on their own.

But what about the income side? This part of the equation is largely unexplored.

My good friend Terry O'Keefe and I have been trying to bring a lantern into this cavernous, dark room. We think non-income-sharing communities are mostly missing an important opportunity to partner with their members, bringing community assets to bear. Our point is not that communities must do this, but that it is a possibility that is largely missed. Often communities are located in places where jobs are poor (which is the obverse of the cheap land coin). If prospective members had help solving their economic challenges it could make a substantial difference in community accessibility.

When Terry and I conducted a workshop bearing the same title as this article to a packed room at the 2015 National Cohousing Conference (in Durham NC), these questions bubbled up in the audience:

1. When does it make more sense for the community to own a business, and when does it make more sense for individual members to own it?

We suggest looking closely at two sub-questions:

a) What structure gives you the best chance of manifesting the management energy needed? Keep in mind that possessing a great commercial concept



is not the same as possessing great management skills, and neither is the same as business savvy (though there is definitely overlap). Thus, people with sound business ideas often need help (whether they know it or not) with:

- Developing a viable business plan
- Securing start-up money
- Finding a qualified manager or management team
- Creating a marketing plan
- Identifying personnel needs (how many and with what skills)

b) To what extent are you open to fellow community members as a potential labor force? This question excites us a lot because of the potential for entrepreneurs (the ones who cook up business ideas) to partner with their non-entrepreneurial neighbors (who are looking to supplement their income but are reluctant to start a business). These two segments coexist in almost all groups and are often at odds with each other, because of the strong tendency for entrepreneurs to be risk tolerant while non-entrepreneurs are risk averse. Here they can make common cause.

2. What advantages might communities businesses have in the marketplace?

- In communities of size there typically exists an amazing pool of skilled, motivated people available on site to help you with most aspects of business development. It's an untapped gold mine.
- Building (or at least enhancing) community can be an explicit byproduct of doing the work. Given that your people value the community (and the connections) this significantly boosts job satisfaction and morale (which translates

directly to better attention to detail, fewer mistakes, less absenteeism, more pride in the work, less turnover).

- If the business is owned by the community (and members are the workers) there will tend to be enhanced motivation and satisfaction from that fact alone. (There is any number of jobs I would gracefully do for my community that I would never do for wages.)
- Healthy communities tend to have superior skills at communicating and working constructively with conflict. This can make all the difference in terms of job satisfaction and can be readily parlayed into superior customer service.
- Communities tend to be more collaborative (and less hierarchic). To the extent that this obtains, problem-solving becomes an all-skate activity (not just something management tackles). In addition to enhancing morale, it leads to more creative ideas and better problem-solving.
- Community-based businesses can often be more fluid about part-time work, flex hours, day care on the job, costuming, and working at home.
- You'll tend to get more people who will volunteer, because of the values you represent and how it helps the community.
- There will also be an opportunity advantage among customers who value cooperation. Potential customers within your service area who value community will preferentially give you their business. While there will be limits to how much they will be willing to pay a premium for your product or service, they will at least prefer you when price and quality are



comparable.

- Your labor pool itself may give you an advantage. For example, my long-time community (Sandhill Farm) produces sorghum syrup. While our neighbors could grow sorghum just as easily as we, they didn't have the labor to do the work and couldn't afford to hire it. Thus there was virtually no local competition for our product and we'd get the business from all who prefer to buy locally (which is a growing market share). Not stopping there we pressed this advantage by inviting friends to join us for the labor-intensive three-week harvest each fall. Our numbers temporarily swell to three times their normal size and it's a madhouse harvest festival (a form of temporary community that we know how to manage). We're no more efficient working this way, but all the incoming labor is volunteered—guest campesinos are compensated with wonderful food and camaraderie.
 - To some extent people can substitute for capital and property. If people are a major resource, think about how to leverage that. Let me give another Sandhill example for how we applied this principle. Just like most of our northeast Missouri neighbors, we grew soybeans. If we sold them as a raw product (as our neighbors do) we wouldn't have any advantage. However, we added value to our soybeans by making them into tempeh, and selling that instead. While it wasn't a get rich scheme (we made about \$10/hour on tempeh), there were several advantages to this approach:
 - We could make tempeh year-'round and work when we wanted (when you're dealing with raw agricultural products you must work when the weather is right, not when it fits your schedule).
 - We set the price for local, organic tempeh. When you're selling raw products, you mostly have to sell for what buyers will pay.
 - We were selling a product that aligned well with our value for healthy living. Soy-based protein is easier on the land than meat-based protein and there's no cholesterol.
 - We could produce the same income from one acre of soybeans converted into tempeh that our neighbors could generate from selling 25 acres of raw soybeans. That allowed us to make the income we needed while farming far less land, which meant our operation needed far less capitalization.
 - Often communities develop expertise in an area to meet their own needs, and that knowledge can have commercial application in ways that home-scale experiences may not.
 - For example, Twin Oaks (Louisa VA) was a well-established community of about 90 adults that grew a significant fraction of its own food in extensive community gardens. When neighboring Acorn (Mineral VA) acquired Southern Exposure Seed Exchange (an heirloom garden seed business) in 1999, it was an easy adjustment for Twin Oaks to become a major seed grower for Acorn, thereby boosting income for both communities.
 - Communities frequently control land or have commonly held buildings that are underutilized. (Have you ever noticed how often the lights are out at the common house?)
3. *How tricky is it to navigate the dynamic where members are both peer/peer and employer/*



employee?

The hardest part is likely to occur when the employer gives the employee critical feedback about their performance as an employee—and these two are at the same time neighbors. This can be dicey, and a lot will depend on how well the culture of the community supports the expression of critical feedback and clean communication. If the community struggles to work through tensions among members then this does not bode well. Going the other way, where roles are clear and skills are sharp, it's just another of life's unexpected pleasures.

4. How can we encourage non-income-sharing communities to develop their potential as an economic engine?

We suggest groups think about this in two ways:

a) What can communities do to foster and support business development among entrepreneurial members? [See the replies to Questions 1a and 2 above.] If the collective skills of community members are seen as a pool, it's quite likely that there is expertise within the pool that can cover most of the needs for business expertise—especially at the advising or consulting level (as opposed to the regular job level)—without going outside the group. Canvass the group and put that skill to work! Not only will you be strengthening the economics of the community, you'll be strengthening relationships into the bargain.

Beyond that, the community may be a huge help with capitalization, perhaps through borrowing against capital reserves or by organizing a loan pool funded by members with deep pockets.

b) What can groups do to help new businesses create jobs for non-entrepreneurial members? We

touched on this above, and think the community's role in this may be crucial. Often small business owners are content to remain a one-person or single household operation. The owner may not be strong in social skills or is otherwise leery of the dynamics of hiring and firing neighbors. Thus, remaining a ma-and-pa outfit eliminates potential personnel headaches, and owners may not be that ambitious about growing the business.

However, the savvy community will know that a majority of its members are non-entrepreneurial; some fraction of which may well be eager for local work that has a good values match. By getting involved at an early stage, the community can be in a position to offer the carrot of helping to identify business assistance in exchange for job creation—including the offer to troubleshoot personnel concerns, on an as-needed basis. There can be a lot of good in this. The principle is simple: the more people you have eagerly hunting in the clover field, the more you're going to turn up specimens with four leaves.

To be clear, access to the community's "Chamber of Commerce" would be strictly voluntary; no one would be required to use this group, or to heed its advice.

5. To what extent is a focus on business development just buying into the (failed) paradigm that growth solves everything, and to what extent is it sensible to use traditional business tools to support alternative economies?

While I think there's a lot that can be done to dial down demand (and live happily on less), it nonetheless makes sense to be smart about analyzing prospects for new business ideas with time-tested traditional queries. For example:



- What's the market for your product or service?
- What's the competition?
- What do you do better than anyone else?
- What are you passionate about doing?
- Can you profitably produce or deliver your product or service at a price people are willing to pay?
- How is your business an expression of who you want to be in the world?
- How will you manifest the start-up capital you need to make a go of this business?
- How will you service debt and not go belly up?

6. How do you handle the tension between the non-entrepreneur (who tends to be risk averse) and the entrepreneur (who tends to be risk tolerant)?

Let's be real. This tension exists already, whether you have community businesses or not. Isn't it a better strategy to learn to deal constructively with the full breadth of attitudes among your membership than to attempt to eliminate or shy away from opportunities for those differences to manifest?

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Can communities afford to not explore their economic potential? I don't think so.

I'm not looking for Trump's jawboning to bring back the manufacturing jobs that were lost to outsourcing. I'm not looking for governments to bail us out at all. I'm looking at what we can do for ourselves, working together in values-aligned cooperative groups—the same kind of entities that impressed Margaret Mead so much for their potential to effect world change.

Article source: <http://www.geo.coop/story/economics-community>



National News

#ReclaimingSA: Outcomes of Conference for the Future of South Africa

On 18 July, Nelson Mandela day, the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation and Save SA, along with other supporting organisations, hosted a Conference for the Future of South Africa. The conference brought together over 600 delegates from 130 civil society formations across South Africa.

Among those who attended the conference were ANC MP Dr Makhosi Khoza, Pravin Gordhan, Mcebisi Jonas, Solly Mapaila, Zwelenzima Vavi and Dennis George. Civil society organisations present included Section 27, the SA Women's collective, Treatment Action Campaign, Equal Education, Johannesburg Against Injustice, Nelson Mandela Foundation and a number of Faith-based organisations, to name a few.

After day-long proceedings the conference resolved on a number of issues to fight state capture, corruption and to reclaim South Africa.

The conference affirmed that South African's have struggled against colonialism and apartheid for centuries, with unparalleled commitment and dedication, and as a result, South Africa has begun to build a society that is non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous, with a constitution that entrenches the rule of law and strengthens our commitment to a more just society. It was agreed that a government, based on the will of the majority must govern based on the majority must govern in a responsible and ethical manner, in the best social and economic interests of its people.

The conference developed a two-stage action plan



to begin a coordinated push against state capture, with the first phase focussed on protests around the parliamentary vote of no confidence on 8 August, and the second focussed on a broader set of initiatives to restore credibility in state institutions.

Following are the resolutions from the conference:

1. Campaign for the Vote of No Confidence on 8 August 2017. Foremost among the actions that civil society will undertake are the following:

- Call for and organise a national day of action which could include actions in which workers (except in essential services) will be on strike and businesses will be shut.
- All South Africans will be encouraged show support for MPs to vote in support of the Confidence Motion, in their respective places of work, play and worship.
- Call for and organise marches in all the major cities and towns in South Africa.
- Call for and organise a march on Parliament on



the day of the vote.

- Call for and organise for prayers or reflection on state capture on the days preceding the vote. important resolutions, the first, to make an immediate call for united action to demand the resignation of Zuma as part of a longer struggle to defend democracy.

2. Support all cases brought before court to combat corruption, strengthen public administration, improve accountability of politicians, stop wasteful expenditure of public funds and lay down rules for the impeachment of the president.

3. Adopt the People's Demands for Eliminating State Capture and Building State Integrity.

4. The conference further resolved that there must be a special campaign and measures to encourage public servants to combat corruption.

5. The Conference recognised that, to have a lasting effect, our campaigns must lead to meaningful reform, whatever the outcome of the No Confidence Vote.

“A united and active civil society is an essential ingredient of a democratic dispensation and has the capacity to strongly advocate and mobilise for the elimination of state capture and rebuilding the integrity of the state.”

Join a united people's struggle against state capture. The future of South Africa depends on it.

Source: COFUSA conference documents and press releases



The Food Sovereignty Campaign

The Thinking Garden

By Bellise Omondi

In a recent interview, Elizabeth Vibert and Basani Ngobeni discuss their work on short film called the Thinking Garden.



The film follows the birth of a garden, Hleketani – xiTsonga word for ‘thinking’ - initiated by elderly women in an attempt to help people in their immediate community. Elizabeth, a historian of gender and nature, discusses how she came upon the work in this garden by chance; having decided to redirect her studies and focus on food sovereignty in southern Africa. Basani was initially brought into the project as a language interpreter but had the potential to do so much more and so, Elizabeth hired her. Initially, Elizabeth’s work in the garden was voluntary and then became research-based; only once the research was complete and she returned to Canada did she consider making the film as an oral history project.

Basani and Elizabeth speak warmly of the women at Hleketani, about their excitement to make the film, not for the recognition but, as a record of their history and learning curve for people beyond their community. The elderly women speak about the loss of their children to the plague of HIV/AIDS and the effects of unemployment and undernourishment

of children in their communities. This garden, as the name suggests, was a strategy that sought to rethink the effects of change in the Joje community.

One thing that is hard to miss in the film is the ages of the women that work on this farm with the youngest being 40 and the more elderly women in their early 70’s or so. Basani states that this is because of the burdens placed upon older women in the community in the absence of their children and also because they feel that younger people are not dedicated. According to the women of Hleketani, younger people will not put in as much effort as they do because they want to be paid. The women have developed a system for irrigation and attend to everything in a formal manner; creating rosters and setting times that everyone should be present in the garden while still making time to care for their grandchildren and get them ready for school in the morning.

Elizabeth and Basani recognise the film as an integral tool in the documentation and preservation of indigenous knowledge. The women of Hleketani talk about the sounds seeds make so you know that the plant is ready for harvesting or, how to prepare native plants. These are all factors that contribute to the survival of food sovereignty and a film is a good platform to reach out to more diverse audiences, especially the youth, while storing irreplaceable knowledge.

It is encouraged that everyone make efforts to see this film when it is aired publicly early next year. It speaks to the essence and significance of Food Sovereign communities as well as their roles



in community upliftment and poverty alleviation.

Activists need to start considering film-making as the future of preserving knowledge as we move into the digital age. It is so important that we do not lose the efforts of those on the ground who work so hard to make something sustainable.

See <http://womensfarm.org/> for more details on the film

The Wits Inala Forum joins forces with the Let it Grow Foundation

Regan Van Heerden, Wits Inala Forum



The collaboration with Let It Grow started on 13th May this year and has been on-going for just short of 3 months now. On average, every 3rd weekend they have come to our garden to work in it or to give a workshop on some area of knowledge pertaining to permaculture. The mission of Let It Grow has been to share with enthusiasm, any knowledge that they have which will lead to us having a more successful garden.

The first workshop that took place was centered on soil and bed preparation; the foundation places emphasis on soil conditioning in the garden as the most important aspect to invest money and

attention into. They brought with them amendments for the creation of a new bed; these included various types of compost and manure, as well as rock dust, bone meal and effective micro-organisms. Since the foundations involvement in the garden, there have been noticeable improvement to the garden; there have been noticeable improvement to the garden; the composition of our beds have transformed to this nutrient and mineral-rich soil.

The next workshop involved learning how to plant both from seeds and seedlings. Even though it is winter (generally nothing grows in winter), the purpose was to have an actual comparison so that everyone involved could see the difference between what a well amended bed produces and looks like as compared to, what a nutrient and mineral poor bed produces and looks like. The benefits of the former became quite obvious as the season progressed and when we received positive results in the yields from the July harvest.

Other workshops that have taken place were on composting as well as worm farms. Again these involved all the theory, benefits and practical knowledge behind each aspect. The garden now has its own thriving compost heap with plans to build many more around the garden area. Even though there existed a worm farm prior to Let It Grow, it too has been developed and with the guidance of Let It Grow, it empowered us to plant worms into the garden for the benefit of the entire gardening environment.

This last weekend, the initial stage in the reconstruction of four new beds got underway. These new beds will be filled with all the required amendments, provided for by Let It Grow, before spring and in time for planting summer crops. The standard and direction of the garden has completely been lifted in the last few months. The vision that



is beginning to take shape is that of a fully self-sustaining garden that empowers people to produce nutritionally dense food.

We look forward to a continued partnership with the foundation as well as other organisations such as the newly-found student for environmental policy and food sovereignty at the University of Johannesburg.

Rustlers Valley Farmers Co-op host their first Harvest Festival

by Rustlers Valley Core Leadership Team

“A day of community, love and respect”.

The community of Naledi Village, Franshoek Village and Nebo Village formed an Agricultural Cooperative in 2015, after Rustlers Valley was purchased by Earthrise Trust. This was the beginning of a life changing experience for people who had lived on the farm for decades, working as farm workers, being evicted as the farm changed ownership, and being at the mercy of the new farmer owner. When Earthrise Trust bought the farm, what had been a hopeless era for the people unlocked possibilities beyond their imagination, bringing light and joy to the valley. The villagers, when asked by Earthrise trust what they would like to see happen on the farm, expressed amongst other things a desire to grow their own food for consumption as well as for selling.

In 2015/2016 the Cooperative planted and harvested tomatoes; green pepper; spinach; butternut; pumpkin; cabbages; onions; water melon and beetroot. Their journey in growing their own food was not without hurdles, such as water shortages (which they overcame with the irrigation system),

weather conditions and nut grass. The first crop was affected by frost, destroying 1000 seedlings of tomato and most of the butternut. These hurdles did not stop the Cooperative from pressing on; they persevered and it made them stronger.

In 2016, the Co-op planted sugar beans seeds on 20ha, which was harvested in 2017, yielding 2 tons of sugar beans. This was their first grain crop.

The Cooperative and community were extremely grateful for their produce; this resulted in their first Harvest Ceremony. As the community got together to make arrangements for this big occasion, with consultation and advice from the village elders, they came to the conclusion that this for them was a celebration to give thanks not only for the sugar beans but for all they were thankful for. The elders brought in the traditional and cultural way of how this kind of celebration is done. The Harvest Celebration was planned for 17 June 2017, from 10 am to 2pm, at Naledi Village. An invite was designed with a short message (in English and Sesotho). Invitations were sent out to family; friends; Cooperatives in surrounding area; neighbouring farmers; Municipality; Department of Agriculture (Free State). The turnout was impressive.

The preparations for the celebration (which according to the village elders is the most important part) started on Friday, 16 June 2017 at 12 noon with the elderly women from the village cleansing the space known as the heart of the village with “Impepho” (traditional incense), where gifts of thanksgiving and gratitude would be placed. The men cleaned up the place, brought fire wood and traditional pots, known as “3 legged pots” for cooking. The women (mostly young) cooked traditional steamed bread in the traditional pots, using flour which was donated by one of the neighbouring farmers. At 4pm everyone gathered around the heart of the village, the sacred space and placed their gifts of sugar beans and live



chickens. Ntate Anton, the leader of the Co-op and of Naledi Village opened the ceremony. This was a very special moment as early that day, Ntate Anton was attacked by a bull which the Cattle Farming Co-op had purchased from a neighbouring farmer. After Ntate Anton's moving speech, the villagers clapped hands to the beautiful rhythm of the drum beat, which carried into the night. The chickens were slaughtered, and prepared for cooking the next day.



On Saturday 17 June the villagers woke up early to a cold morning – with their warm hearts they went ahead and did what needed to be done. As the men (mostly young) erected a big tent, set up chairs and tables on the Naledi Village soccer field, set up the public announcement (PA) system, the women prepared the meal for the day at the heart of the village. By 10am, the day was warm and all was set and ready. The villagers worked together in unity and in communal spirit.

Ntate Anton, leader of Naledi Village and leader of the Co-op invited the guests to take their seats, and the program began with a prayer and song. The members of the Co-op took the stage looking absolutely proud and beautiful in their green Co-op uniform.

Ntate Anton introduced the Co-op members and

gave a speech, giving praise to God, thanking everyone who assisted the Co-op to achieve their success and encouraged the Co-op. Ntate Jappie, leader of Franshoek Village was next to speak. Before each speaker, songs of praise were sung, led by the members of the Cooperative. The mood in the village was joyous. Several speakers representing Village Elders; Co-op and Enterprise Members; Afrigrow; Agri Free State and Earthrise Trust gave messages of praise and encouragement. Like a true traditional celebration, the event ended with a cultural performance and handing over of sugar bean parcels to the community, Co-op and neighbouring farmers. The generous spirit of the Co-op was amazing, they gave packets of sugar beans to farmers who in the past employed them as farmer workers, evicted them from their land and had much more than they had – Spirit of Ubuntu at its best.

Lunch was then laid on the table for self-service – oh my, what a spread! The community outdid themselves. Guests were invited to help themselves first, then the community dug in. There was enough food for everyone and everything was cooked by the villagers themselves. Dessert was delicious cakes baked by the Village Bakery (one of the enterprises) under the supervision of their trainer, who took unpaid leave from his current employment to assist – that was the spirit.

The beautiful day ended with two soccer matches: women's soccer and men's soccer. Though the teams lost to the visitors, all was well. We guess that in the spirit of thanksgiving, the soccer teams gave the matches as well.

To sum it up in Sesotho, "Letsatsi la sechaba, lerato, lehlompho." – meaning it was a day of community, love and respect.



The Worker Cooperative Campaign

Seminar: Solidarity Economics as Transformative Politics

Michelle Williams & Vishwas Satgar

This Development Studies seminar titled "Transformative Politics and the Solidarity Economy" was given by Professor Michelle Williams and Dr Vishwas Satgar (School of Social Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa) on 2 February 2016 at SOAS University of London.

The talk draws on a book manuscript that Satgar and Williams are currently working on based on six years of fieldwork with visits to 15 countries to study worker cooperatives, worker cooperative-led economic networks and a new theoretical approach to transformative politics.

Professor Michelle Williams' work relates to debates around social movements and alternative economic and political systems. Most notably, her analysis of the development of participatory democratic practice in South Africa and Kerala, India in her book *The Roots of Participatory Democracy*, provides a provocative comparison of the role of solidarity economies, labour and social movements connecting India and South Africa. She was a member of the Centre for Indian Studies in Africa between 2007 and 2011, and is now the chairperson for the Global Labour University Programme (GLU) at the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa, where she is also a senior lecturer.

Vishwas Satgar is currently chairs the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC) board and is an Associate Professor at the University of Witwatersrand. His work as a grassroots activist in South Africa for the past three decades has

ranged across issues including the improvement of township communities, food sovereignty campaigns, and campaigns around climate jobs and defending popular democracy in South Africa. Williams and Satgar are currently working on a book project on the solidarity economy through an analysis of the linkages between producer cooperatives and consumer markets.

Source: <http://geo.coop/story/solidarity-economics-transformative-politics>

Activist Resources to Advance the Solidarity Economy From Below

Documentary: Can We Do it Ourselves?



Can We Do It Ourselves focuses on economic philosophy with an emphasis on the concept of economic democracy. The film helps viewers understand the difference between a market economy in which consumer demand drives a



company's supply of goods and services, and a capitalist economy in which private owners control production and hold a right to the profits.

There is strong support for the potential promise of a democratic economic model in which workers have more of a say in business operations than either market or capitalist models.

Input from European and American economic experts as well as general consumers helps to unveil the complexities of these economic models by presenting the potential benefits and pitfalls of each. Many of the interview subjects argue in favor of greater democracy in the workforce, highlighting a need to establish a system that emphasizes the importance of workers' welfare.

This film calls into question the fact that democracy prevails in so many models of world politics, yet not in economic spheres. By examining the key differences between market, capitalist and democratic economies, the filmmakers are able to present the many perceived benefits of empowering the working class and re-calibrating the scales of corporate influence.

The film can be watched at this link: <https://youtu.be/ZfaFriFAz1k>

Source: <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/can-we-do-it-ourselves/>



contact us

We invite organisations and activists to make contributions to the Newsletter by writing stories, contributing photographs or cultural contributions, such as poetry, art, songs etc.

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