



NEW AGENDA

SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

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by mudslides in Malawi.

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CONTACT US

Email: admin@ifaaza.org

Website: www.ifaaza.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/newagendaonline

Twitter: @IFAAC or @NEWAGENDAZA

Instagram: @newagenda_ifaa

Tel: +27 21 461 2340

Address: Community House, 41 Salt River Road, Salt River Cape Town 7925

IFAA STAFF

Director

Zunaïd Moolla

Guest Editor

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Production Manager

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Research and Events

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Publisher

Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA)

Layout

The Media Chilli

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Cover photo: Household takes refuge from the rain in central Malawi.
Photo credit: Stevie Mann, Wikipedia commons

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Editorial

By Martin Nicol



The world has been horrified by Russian President Putin's brutal invasion of Ukraine. The South African government's pusillanimous response allowed Kenya to provide a voice from Africa to condemn Russia, and to explain the meaning of the UN Charter's demand for states to "settle their international disputes by peaceful means". We publish the remarks made in the Security Council by Dr Martin Kimani, Kenya's UN ambassador, who introduced an African perspective into the discussion. Russia vetoed the resolution, and unleashed its dogs of war.

Our wish is to include more articles on African countries beyond South Africa and in this issue the IFAA editorial team presents an Africa 2021 timeline, reflecting on the events of another difficult year.

New Agenda looks closely at how Africa experiences climate change and we are reminded that it is the continent most affected by climate change even though it produces only 4% of global emissions. Roland Ngam is project manager of an initiative by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation to amplify the voices of African journalists around

climate justice issues. His article warns that climate change will put up to 50% of Africa's population at risk of undernourishment and the continent will lose 2-4% GDP by 2040.

Our cover story is on how the remote eastern areas of Zimbabwe still need to recover from the devastating floods and storms of 2019. Cyclone Idai struck the year before Covid arrived, making the struggle with lockdowns and the effects of the disease all the more difficult. This climate disaster revealed the lack of capacity to deal with crises. Mela Chitambo focuses on the struggles of women particularly. She presents insights and recommendations from a feminist participatory research project on how governments could better assist societies to adapt to climate change. This approach is in tune with the latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which says that adaptation is as important as prevention.

Turning to South Africa, Philippe Burger is understanding, but not forgiving, in his assessment of Minister Enoch Godongwana's first budget (with projections since challenged by the economic turmoil in the wake of the war in Ukraine). He reminds us that "The real question is how to get the economy growing so it can create jobs. The 2022/23 budget falls short in answering this question."

We feature three theoretical commentaries by South African academics. Prof Sam Ashman reminds us that the concept of "racial capitalism" originated in South Africa and looks at its varied uses over time. Dr Eddie Cottle considers the debate on whether South Africa has a "labour aristocracy"—and how wide worker militancy shows it does not. Odile Mackett criticises the traditional economic growth standard set by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and proposes an alternative approach.

A research note from authors at the

Computer Science and Information Technology Department at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, examines the experiences of graduates who were enrolled as interns, mainly with private sector employers. A quarter of the ICT interns found the one to two year internship opportunity worthwhile, but the majority said they did not. This indicates a need to improve the programme, not end it, and the research puts forward interventions in this regard. The salaries of the interns are paid by government, through the skills levy and the SETAs. Each internship represents a major investment, and the survey results, as reported, are certainly disappointing.

Finally, we share the sadness that came with the death of the Arch, but we remember him with such joy and appreciation. IFAA wishes to add its voice to the multiple tributes to Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Mpilo Tutu who passed away at the age of 90 on 26 December 2021. We would like to remember him with a story from *Learn and Teach*, one of the best journals from the years of the anti-apartheid struggle. In 1988 it published the following tale:

Archbishop Desmond Tutu loves to tell jokes — like the one about the time when he and P.W. Botha came together for a meeting. They didn't want anybody to hear what they were saying to each other. So they met in a small boat in the middle of a lake. Suddenly a wind blew Botha's hat into the water. Tutu said, 'Don't worry, I'll get it' — and he stepped over the side of the boat. To everyone's surprise, he just walked across the water to fetch Botha's hat.

The TV and newspaper people watched this miracle from the side of the lake. But the next day, the newspaper headlines read: 'Tutu kan nie swem nie' (Tutu can't swim).

Tutu must have loved that story. We remember his infectious roar of laughter, which always reminded us that there is light during even the darkest times. That is how we will remember the Arch. IFAA bids him farewell.

Minister Sisulu

Lindiwe Sisulu took an oath to respect and uphold the Constitution. Yet in January 2022, she launched a vitriolic attack on the Constitution and some members of the judiciary. As usual, in keeping with South African political tradition, there were no consequences for her.

Minister Sisulu has not *done* anything to make her a deserved target of “action against transgressors”, which is how the Auditor-General has defined ‘consequence management’.

She has *said* certain things – she called some black judges “mentally colonised” and “house negroes”, she was disdainful of rule of law. Offensive, obtuse, *dof* – to use a colonial colloquialism – but nothing beyond the right to freedom of expression set out in the Bill of Rights.

Consequence management cannot flow from what Sisulu has said, but it might be appropriate in the light of what she has not done – along with her trusted compatriots – to address the “triple challenges” of poverty, unemployment and inequality that were inherited in 1994.

Sisulu has been an MP since 1994 and has been a Cabinet Member and part of the ANC collective leadership in the NEC for most of those years. The masses of our people are still loyal to the ANC – or the idea of the ANC – but few are happy with the ANC.

The great failing of our democracy has been our inability to reconcile policies for economic progress with policies for social justice.

You are not going to get social justice unless you have policies for economic efficiency and economic success. The ANC has been unlucky, certainly, with the economic climate. But it has also pushed ‘transformative’ policies in ways that have built a new black middle class while holding back job creation.

And the ANC has been spectacularly bad at following its own advice. Policies are not implemented. The sensible recommendations of experts and commissions are piled and filed. Then there are the laws passed by Parliament and the regulations drafted by departments. Often simply not followed! Just look at procurement. Consider the repeated findings of the Auditor-General. Rules are ignored. And there are no consequences.

Some put it all down to cadre deployment – assigning party loyalists to positions they fail at. Cadre deployment can work. It has for China. The difference is that when party people in China do not perform, they get humiliated, demoted, jailed or executed. Here people go on suspension, job hop to a different municipality or just stay on. Like Lindiwe Sisulu – one department after another; abject failure in state security is compensated by a transfer to tourism.

Let’s call it consequence mismanagement. **NA**



Also from
the Institute
for African
Alternatives
a special edition
of *New Agenda*

Explores how Africans can utilise our own natural resources to develop in ways that do not repeat the combined violence of unequal exchange, exploitation and environmental degradation. [Read more](#)

Climate change disasters

Zimbabwe's vulnerable communities need a just recovery plan

By Melania Chiponda

Dr Melania Chiponda is a feminist popular educator and researcher who employs participatory action research methodologies to inform policy and advocacy for climate and gender justice. Melania holds a PhD in Development Studies.

This is a summary of a research project undertaken for the Institute for African Alternatives by DR MELANIA CHIPONDA. The intention was to explore a just recovery plan based on the voices of those most affected by these disasters, particularly the women. The full research report is available on the [IFAA website](#). The research found the dire economic circumstances of Zimbabwe are compounded by repeated climate-induced disasters together with the Covid-19 pandemic, and it is the women who are disproportionately affected.

The exposed Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe have still not recovered from Cyclone Idai which swept through the region in 2019 and Cyclone Chalane in 2020, which led to drastic loss of

life, destruction of infrastructure and disease. However, Zimbabwe does not have the capacity to cope with the massive social and economic disruptions caused by these disasters.

The research project examined Zimbabwe's response to climate disasters in the midst of the country's economic paralysis. It surveyed existing environmental vulnerabilities in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe, many of which can be attributed to human causes. The research focused on the following questions:

- What has the state's response been to the climate-induced disasters?
- What are the institutional and organisational requirements for the state to effectively deal with climate disasters?
- What are the material, human and financial resources needed to cope with natural disasters such as Cyclones Idai and Chalane?

Participatory action research was used to define community-driven solutions to the problems reported by local communities. Particular attention was paid to women in the context of the pandemic to demonstrate their vulnerabilities and the increasing burden of household

and care responsibilities. This women-centred research was able to build on alternative knowledge systems and community care, support and solidarity infrastructure. The research reflected on how the response to disasters during the pandemic revived and reinforced existing inequalities in terms of gender and class.

Poor communities in Zimbabwe are dependent on agriculture, which is in turn dependent on favourable weather conditions. The variability of the weather is a perpetual and universal problem for farmers and in the current era of global warming, extreme weather events have worsened and become more frequent. Zimbabwe faced its worst drought in 40 years during the 2018/19 agricultural season and more than half of the population required food aid (*The New Humanitarian*, 2019).

In the Eastern Highlands, along the border with Mozambique, Cyclone Idai left a trail of destruction in Zimbabwe's Manicaland and Masvingo provinces in 2019. There were 340 deaths and hundreds were reported missing, while 51,000 people were left homeless. A total of 270,000 people were affected (Chatiza, 2019) and bridges and 1,500km of roads became unusable.

The Manicaland province is not new to climate-induced disaster. Cyclone



Photo credit: GroundUp

Eline devastated the province in 2000. Floods resulted in 136 deaths, 59,184 houses and huts destroyed, 230 dams burst their banks and 20,000 heads of livestock were lost. The cyclone, which lasted over a week, was said to be the worst in living memory (Tsiko, 2015). More storms hit the province during the 2000s, bringing widespread damage and loss of life.

Cyclone Japhet hit Zimbabwe and Mozambique in 2003 (ReliefWeb, 2003) and in 2007 Cyclone Favio struck Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Tanzania, Malawi and Madagascar. In Zimbabwe alone, Favio destroyed 277,000 hectares of crops and downed 400 electricity poles (*The Zimbabwean*, 2007).

The world outbreak of Covid-19 arrived in Zimbabwe when the country was still struggling to rebuild the lives

of the victims of these natural disasters, restore infrastructure and rehabilitate land devastated both by drought and storms. With the onslaught of the pandemic the country's development came under new threats, and if not effectively and efficiently addressed the pandemic could fuel internal tensions and conflict.

To mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, Zimbabwe adopted a strategy aimed at avoiding severe illness and loss of life and reducing social and economic disruption. The country was placed under lockdown, and compulsory testing of suspected cases and contact tracing were introduced to try to contain the spread of the virus.

However, this has in turn created new forms of poverty, particularly for

the people of the Eastern Highlands who are still trying to recover from Cyclone Idai. This has raised questions about how the government should ensure a just recovery for the people of the Eastern Highlands, particularly in Chimanimani and Chipinge.

The research study used Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR), a methodology based on the ideas of the Brazilian philosopher and educationist, Paulo Freire (1970). Research is a political process comprising continuous planning, action, observation, reflection and re-planning. FPAR goes one step further in acknowledging that women lack power, compared with men of the same social group, in the family, community, school and university, religious bodies and within the state.

The research process was defined ➤

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The research process ... allowed women who were traditionally marginalised to participate in a way that empowered them.

by the concerns of the rural women who were actively involved. They contributed different perspectives and sought to create political, emotional and physical safe spaces for women so they could fully participate in the research process. This allowed women who were traditionally marginalised to participate in a way that empowered them.

Research participants were drawn from the rural districts of Chimanimani, Chipinge and Mutare, areas affected by Cyclone Idai in 2019. Participants were selected for their experience of Cyclone Idai and other climate-induced disasters that affected the Eastern Highlands.

Findings and analysis

Between the country's independence in 1980 and 2010, there were 35 natural disasters; six droughts, seven floods, two storms and 20 epidemics (Chikoto, 2004). Together they resulted in 6,448 deaths, which amounts to an average of 208 disaster-induced deaths per year (PreventionWeb, 2012).

Since 2010, Southern Africa has experienced the worst drought in 50 years (AFP, 2016). This was a “super” El Niño-induced drought, according to climatologists. El Niño's effects are felt across the world as droughts and floods, which are becoming more frequent and more severe. Scientists believe



Photo credit: Denis Onyodi

that with 1.5°C in global warming, the frequency of El Niño events are likely to occur twice as often (McSweeney, 2017). This means experiencing El Niño every 10 years rather than 20 years. African countries have been advised to prepare for more extreme weather conditions, yet the models of development adopted over the past 50 years have left the continent's ecosystems in a fragile state, unable to cope with the adverse impacts of climate change.

The most recent disasters have proved that governments in Africa lack the institutional capacity to adequately respond to climate change-induced disasters, and that the resilience of the communities is weak in the wake of such disasters.

While it is acknowledged that extreme weather conditions caused by climate change affect all countries in the world, those who shoulder the greatest burden are the citizens of poor countries (Hernandez-Arthur, 2017). Most poor communities live in disaster-prone areas and are hardest hit by climate change, despite being least responsible for the climate crisis.

Managing disasters

Disaster management involves preparing for, and responding to, disasters through strategically

organising the available resources to minimise the harm that they cause. Most people, particularly those living on the margins of society, find it difficult to cope with such events.

Countries in Africa need to have sound disaster management plans in place due to the continent's vulnerability to climate-induced disasters. Globally, Africa is considered the continent most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, despite its very low greenhouse gas emissions.

Zimbabwe's civil protection unit

In 1989 the government of Zimbabwe passed the Civil Protection Act to prepare for, and respond to, disaster situations. The Act is focused on protection (after a disaster has struck) and there is little mention of how the country should prepare for disasters, even in disaster prone areas such as the Eastern Highlands. Zimbabwe's ability to handle environmental disasters has often been criticised for its lack of preparedness. Experts describe government responses as “slow and extremely inadequate” (Gogo, 2014).

Preparing for disasters is a step towards reducing the severity of the crisis. This includes raising the community's awareness of potential

disasters and putting in place coordination mechanisms, preparedness planning and training of those who are going to be actively involved in the disaster management process. This could involve community drills to minimise potential panic and prevent unorganised and disruptive activities in the disaster-affected zones.

The Act also fails to provide for recovery after the immediate disaster, which means that any recovery process post-disaster is incidental.

The Act only mentions recovery of the expenses incurred by the state during a disaster. This top-down approach focuses on those who hold power and authority, in this case the National Civil Protection Committee, which falls under the executive and has the power to declare a catastrophic event or disaster. This committee is appointed by the minister and consists of the police commissioner, commanders of some army branches, the secretary of health, the director of prisons, the director of civil aviation, the secretary general of the Red Cross, representatives from the fire brigade and other individuals whom the minister believes have knowledge and expertise in disaster management.

The composition of the National Civil Protection Committee reflects the complex power relations in the Zimbabwean state and immediately the question arises: where are the people living in disaster prone areas represented in this body?

The Act refers to the position and roles of the 'Chairman' 13 times. This use of male-centred rather than gender-neutral language tends to normalise the exclusion and non-participation of women in the decision making and political processes. The use of male-centred language in an Act that seeks to protect people in disaster situations reflects the barrier that women face in their efforts to participate in political processes. When such exclusionary terms such as 'Chairman' are used,

they represent the system's structural violence in which women's participation is subsumed under the term 'man'.

The research project responded to this power-blindness by foregrounding the personal histories and knowledge of the women living in the Eastern Highlands. It focused on Chimanimani which, as a rural area, is ascribed a particular space within the system of power.

Gender blindness is regarded as the lack of awareness and appreciation of how women and men are impacted differently by the same phenomenon or situation as a result of their differences in roles, statuses, needs and priorities in society (Dharmapuri, 2017). Gender blindness in legislation and policies may negatively affect the goals of important processes and initiatives such as those covered in the Civil Protection Act because the failure to consider the differences between men and women often results in an incomplete and inadequate understanding of the organisation, the geographical spaces of operation and the needs of the groups that are supposed to benefit. This results in ineffective and inequitable provision of protection under the Act.

Policy and lawmaking in Zimbabwe are male-dominated (Hamandishe, 2018). The participation of women in disaster management is important as it is likely to drive not only a just recovery after disaster situations but also gender equality, women's independence, welfare as well as health.

The majority of the research participants in this study were women, dependent on agriculture, who had lived through at least five climate-induced disasters. The Eastern Highlands, particularly Chimanimani with its rich soil, is one of the country's major fruit suppliers. The women of Chimanimani produce bananas, which form part of the community's staple diet, along with pineapples, yams, mangoes and other local fruits, as well as maize and other grains. One participant stated:

It had never happened in my life that I would need food aid. I have always known myself to be the one who gives out food, but now the gods and our ancestors seem to be withholding their fruits from us. The land and the forests have been desecrated by people, particularly the commercial farmers and mines coming into our area, who fail to respect our sacred shrines and cultures.

Women imagine another way

After the destructive 2019 Cyclone Idai, the women in Rusitu Valley started imagining an alternative way of managing disasters that would ensure people are rescued from danger and brought together to respond to the disaster in ways that are informed by their needs.

Coordinating disaster management is currently too detached from the people who are affected by the disaster. The community of Chimanimani indicated that they get information late, sometimes two or three days before the disaster, when there is very little time for them to relocate. If the community does manage to move, there is usually much panic and the transport system becomes congested. Women in the Rusitu Valley stated that different disasters take different forms and they feel the government should consider the best response for each. The women want to assist instead of being told what decisions have been taken. Women accused the government of presenting information in ways that were incomprehensible to most women.

They should understand that some of these terms and words that they use are alien to us, so they need to break down the words and ➤

explain them to us in time. Women are often left in the dark because, as women, we are not involved in decision-making processes and therefore those women who are single, aged or widowed, without male kin to represent them, are often left in the dark. That needs to change.

The women found the government disaster response was managed by a “multi-sectoral team”. The issues of health, food, education, rescue efforts and other social services are quickly restored, and fewer lives are lost. However, information dissemination does not take language into account and English continues to be used to communicate.

The government’s risk management plans are insensitive to the fact that women are affected by disasters differently from men because they carry the burden of care work and household responsibility.

Women supported the disaster management plan used during Cyclone Chalane, which resulted in fewer losses. It was guided by the following principles:

- Be flexible and able to respond to the needs of those directly affected by the disaster, particularly women; respond to the context in which aid is going to be used.
- Information should be disseminated early. As soon as the government becomes aware of a looming disaster, they should translate data and present it to women and other vulnerable groups in a way that they are able to understand. The government should make sure that the information reaches everyone; information must not be a privilege for a few connected people because

people’s lives depend on it.

- Sanitary ware should not be considered a privilege – it is a necessity for all women affected by disasters. Lack of sanitary ware erodes women’s human dignity and therefore should be guaranteed.
- As soon as it is known that a disaster will strike, the needs of people with medical conditions such as high blood pressure, asthma, HIV, diabetes and others should be prioritised. Their medication should not be an afterthought but should be provided upon demand. Some people survive the disasters but then die from lack of medication needed for their respective conditions.
- Responses to disasters should focus on building a spirit of cooperation. Resources should be shared to benefit the collective and not individuals.
- Communities living in disaster-prone areas should be involved in disaster risk management policy and planning. The planning should focus on women as they form the majority of the rural population. They are caregivers, caring for the families, livestock and the land.
- It is critical to focus on access to food and other basic needs after disasters. Moreover, it is imperative to do that in empowering ways that involve the survivors of disasters. In addition to allocating food there should also be a focus on rebuilding and reconstruction.
- Trauma support should not be conducted by the government or NGOs that are funded by unreliable professionals, particularly those who prefer to use medication to treat social problems.
- A participant said: “We received

a lot of medication, the purpose of which we are not sure of since we do not have specific conditions. We do have conditions that require therapy that is informed by us, our culture and our collective beliefs. Part of the healing that we need involves:

- Understanding, from the government’s perspective, what caused the disaster.
- What can we do/not do so that we do not repeat the same disaster(s)?
- If these cannot be avoided, what should be done to protect lives, animals and nature?
- What do these disasters mean for the next generation, our children and their children?”

Women understand their communities and know how to navigate their way through disasters but the government has excluded them. Local knowledge systems are rooted in customs and traditions that can complement the work of technocrats, engineers and doctors.

Dealing with a twin disaster

Zimbabwe’s Civil Protection Act also covers disease outbreaks and plagues that threaten the lives and wellbeing of people as well as natural disasters. The people of the Eastern Highlands have had to face a “twin” disaster: recurrent cyclones and the Covid-19 pandemic. Cyclone Chalane occurred when there was a high rate of Covid-19 infections. The government of Zimbabwe diverted resources to dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, significantly reducing aid for the people of the Eastern Highlands who had been left homeless by Cyclone Idai of 2019 and desperately needed assistance. While it is critical to address the Covid-19 pandemic urgently, Zimbabwe is being devastated by climate-induced disasters that are more

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The most recent disasters have proved that governments in Africa lack the institutional capacity to adequately respond to climate change-induced disasters.

frequent and more severe.

The climate crisis needs to be treated as an emergency. Climate change, pandemics and conflict pose a significant challenge to Zimbabwe's development. The country's vulnerability to climate change-induced displacements and possible conflict should be acknowledged and addressed.

Zimbabwe's efforts to rebuild after Covid-19 should also consider the climate crisis, and address both at the same time. The recovery from Covid-19 cannot be tackled without dealing with climate change.

The plight of women

The current health and climate disasters impact women differently and also more severely than men. These crises have increased the already existing gender disparities in the distribution of resources, which affect the women's ability to bounce back. For the women of Chimanimani and Chipinge, the government's "one-size fits all" approach to the Covid-19 pandemic did not take their circumstances into account. Zimbabwe does not have social safety nets, so it is the women who end up carrying the



Photo credit: Humanitarian Coalition

load that the government is unable or unwilling to carry.

This is mainly due to the gender roles that are prescribed to women. Women's household burdens increased drastically during the Covid-19 pandemic as they had to carry the responsibility of child care and education as well as the other household duties that intensified when families were forced to stay at home to contain the spread of the virus. Women often have to carry out many functions that the government ought to do, such as the provision of social services.

The majority of women in Zimbabwe work in the informal and less formal sectors but the government imposed Covid-19 regulations that revealed the blind spots in many regulations with respect to gender roles. The official definitions of essential services excluded women as food producers, caregivers and informal workers. To enforce physical distancing, stalls at the markets where mostly women trade were destroyed. The markets were labelled super-spreaders as they are often quite crowded. The government closed down the women's markets without providing any rescue packages that would have enabled them to

maintain their small businesses.

The structural forms of violence perpetrated during natural disasters and pandemics appear to target women as a social class. They stem from the uneven distribution of power in society, which became quite pronounced due to the combined effects of the pandemic and the climate crisis.

Towards a just recovery

A Covid-19 recovery plan should take into consideration the fact that the pandemic occurred in the midst of a climate crisis. In a society with unequal power relations, mitigation should aim to free women from carrying the unjust burdens imposed by both the climate crisis and the pandemic. A fair and just recovery plan should be comprehensive and shift society away from patriarchy. A just recovery should be based on the needs of women and other vulnerable members of society, ensuring that their needs are met in ways that close the gender gap.

The communities' demands

Just recovery plans should include the following to ensure that existing poverty levels are not exacerbated:

- Rescue packages – to revive ➤

women's livelihoods. These should be made readily available and accessible to women. The process to access these funds should be user friendly and explained in a format and language that women and other vulnerable groups are able to understand.

- *Recognition of the informal sector/women's economies* – the recovery plans should acknowledge and recognise the informal sector and the contribution it makes to the survival of the poorest sections of society. If informal sector operations need to be registered, the administrative processes should be unbureaucratic, inexpensive and not exclude women living on the margins of society.
- *Value of women's labour* – women's contributions to society through their unpaid care work and household work should be recognised and given value. For example, women's unpaid work within the health services, their provision of water and fuel for cooking and heating, and the tasks of educating children and looking after the elderly should be valued accordingly, recognised and fairly remunerated as the country puts its recovery plans in place.
- *Redistribution of care work* – women should be freed from some of the care work and other reproductive work, and that work should be redistributed to other members of society in ways that are just and equitable. This should allow women to also participate in productive work. This implies that a just recovery should also focus on changing the attitudes and harmful cultural and religious

practices that discriminate against and exploit women.

- *Gender-just climate responses* – governments should recognise and appreciate that women are disproportionately affected by climate change and should place women's needs and aspirations at the centre. Disaster responses should restore women's livelihoods and lives in ways that are informed by principles of justice and the protection of women's human rights.
- *Dismantle patriarchy* – Recovery plans should move away from being male-centric by not assuming that women and men have the same needs and that these needs can be addressed by the same framework. Society has internalised patriarchy, as is reflected in the laws, policies, culture, belief system and other areas to the extent that for change to be realised there should be deliberate efforts to centre women's needs.

Conclusion

Climate-induced disasters and the Covid-19 pandemic concern not only health, social and economic issues. They also raise human rights issues, particularly women's rights. In other countries, the efforts to address the Covid-19 pandemic through financial commitments has shown us that governments can be capable of urgent, fast, decisive and multi-sectoral action in emergency responses that protect the economic, social and cultural rights of society. This is an opportunity for the Zimbabwean government to demonstrate leadership, and as the country moves from emergency to recovery, to create a "new normal" that also addresses the climate crisis. There is a need for the country to pass legislation for a just disaster recovery

plan that is centred on people and responds to the greater frequency and intensity of climate-induced disasters due to climate change.

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Adapt or die

Why are we not doing the right thing?

By Dr Roland Ngam

Roland Ngam is the Project Manager for Climate Justice at the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation – Southern Africa office. Before that, he was a postdoctoral research fellow in the Emancipatory Futures Studies Programme at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Scientists, indigenous people and activists have long warned about the devastating consequences of the hyper-consumerist logic that mankind has adopted in a world of finite resources, writes ROLAND NGAM. Now, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, we are currently living the effects of a human-induced 1.1° increase in global temperatures with an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events.

Since the beginning of industrial times, we have witnessed a sharp increase of the following greenhouse gases in the atmosphere: carbon dioxide (75%), methane gas (17%), nitrous oxide (7%) and fluorinated gases (2%). Ocean heat content and acidification reached record-setting highs with an average ocean heat anomaly of 228 zettajoules (Cheng et al., 2020: 137). For illustration purposes, just one zettajoule of energy can power 25 billion homes for a year (Kahn, 2015). Scientists estimate that the heat we are putting into the oceans

is the equivalent of five atomic bombs every second (Abraham, 2020). About 93% of the heat trapped by greenhouse gases is stored in the oceans (Kahn, 2015; Cheng et al., 2020).

With climate change comes ecosystem degeneration, malnutrition, pandemics and an increase in communicable diseases and other health conditions. Ecosystem degeneration is a factor in forced migration. It is pushing rural populations into urban areas, considered “safer havens”, and sometimes to different continents.

Our agriculture is already suffering

Africa contributes only 4% of global emissions and yet it is the continent most affected by climate change (AfdB, 2012: 6). Africa's 10 warmest years have all occurred since 2005. According to the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), climate change will put up to 50% of Africa's population at risk of undernourishment and the region will lose 2-4% GDP by 2040 (UNEP, n.d.). Precipitation rates in Southern Africa are trending downwards and the onset, duration and intensity of rain is also changing (Pereira, 2017: 9). When we consider that 50% of Sub-Saharan Africans depend on rain-fed agriculture for their food, climate change is a clear and present emergency. Going forward, the largest declines in agricultural

yields on the planet are anticipated in Southern Africa (AfdB, 2012: 5).

Food availability is also projected to be constrained in the Sahel, the Mediterranean, central Europe and the Amazon (IPCC, 2019 35-39).

Righting the ship

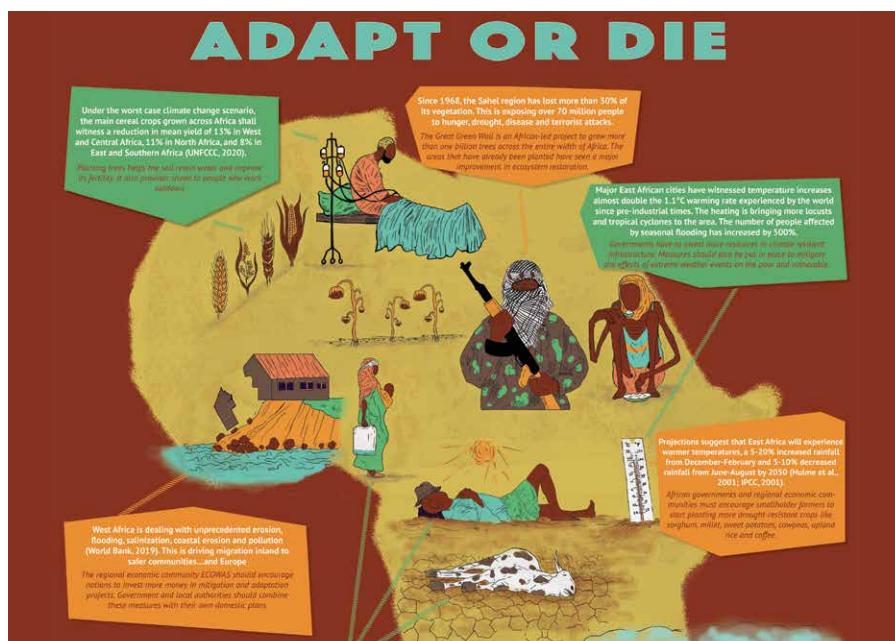
We have received so many warnings, we know the science well, and so why are we not doing the right thing? We must invest more in mitigation and adaptation now.

There are many things that we can do to cap global warming at or below 1.5° relative to preindustrial times. The first one is adopting legislative instruments that offer legal protections for the environment and our right to a clean environment.

Advanced economies should pay their fair share

Advanced economies must pay their fair share. They must respect the commitment enshrined in the Paris Climate Agreement to jointly mobilise \$100 billion per year by 2020, from a variety of sources, to address the pressing mitigation and adaptation needs of developing countries.

At least 600 million Africans lack access to regular, affordable electricity. Energy poverty makes it hard for people to access healthcare services or business opportunities. During the Covid-19 pandemic, it has also been extremely ➤



hard for children to access education material or connect with their teachers. We must end energy poverty the right way, by tapping into our abundant solar, wind and tidal resources. Major economies and corporations in the Global North can partner with African countries to advance this agenda.

Each in their own capacity, we can consume less and plant more crops and trees. The Great Green Wall is an African-led project to grow more than one billion trees across the entire width of Africa. The areas that have already been planted have seen a major improvement in agriculture. There has also been a major increase in bird life, insects and animals. This is an initiative we must get behind. The caveat here is that regenerating ecosystems has to be done the right way, by restoring only the type of vegetation where they were lost.

We must also start with what we have

We must write environmental protections into our constitutions. Take Section 24 of the South African Constitution for example. It says that:

Everyone has the right (a) to an environment that is

not harmful to their health or well-being; and (b) to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that:

- (i) prevent pollution and ecological degradation;
- (ii) promote conservation; and
- (iii) secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development.

Such clauses are important because they empower citizens to access their right to a clean environment.

Another thing we can do is adopt mitigation and adaptation measures at regional (SADC, ECOWAS, EAC, AMU, ECCAS), national and local level. We need to start fighting coastal erosion, salinisation of fertile agricultural lands, loss of vegetation biodiversity and agriculture yields more vigorously.

To avoid a deepening or perpetuation of the metabolic rift, national and local governments must

develop the necessary infrastructure to cut the number of passenger vehicles on our streets, reduce unnecessary imports (rice, sugar, second-hand clothes, etc.), stop deforestation for combustion fuel and ban most single-use plastics.

Some major destination markets for Africa's products, including the European Union, the United States of America, Japan and South Korea have begun imposing adjusted carbon border taxes. This requires companies in Africa, even foreign owned, to reduce their carbon footprint.

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This article was first published by *ClimateJusticeCentral*. The project was created by the Southern Africa regional office of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation to publish stories about climate crises from around the African continent. The website is a platform to amplify the voices of African journalists around climate justice issues.

The analysis is based on the artwork, *Adapt or Die*, (above) developed by Sphiwe Romeo as part of a book project on water crises by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. **NA**

An African view

But where does South Africa fit in?

Kenya is a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. As Russia invaded Ukraine in February, Kenya's UN ambassador made a remarkable contribution – from a clear African perspective. South Africa previously had similar chances – and blew it each time. In 2007, the General Assembly chose South Africa to serve a two-year term on the Security Council. During that time South Africa voted against a resolution condemning human rights abuses in Myanmar. It helped block a sanctions resolution against Zimbabwe's rulers for violating human rights, and it refused to support a resolution making rape a war crime.¹ In March 2022, now an ordinary member of the UN, South Africa abstained from a resolution deploring Russia's invasion. The UN resolution had further urged “the immediate peaceful resolution of the conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine through political dialogue, negotiations, mediation and other peaceful means.” Kenya had already stepped forward. Its ambassador to the UN, Dr Martin Kimani, made the following statement – note, this was before Russia invaded Ukraine.

Ambassador Martin Kimani Statement to the UN 21 February 2022

‘We meet tonight on the brink of a major conflict in Ukraine. The diplomacy we urged on the 17th of February is failing.

The territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine stands breached. The Charter of the United Nations continues to wilt under the relentless assault of the powerful.

In one moment it is invoked with reverence by the very same countries who then turn their backs on it in pursuit of objectives diametrically opposed to international peace and security.

In the two last meetings on the situation in Ukraine and the build-up of forces by the Russian Federation, Kenya urged that diplomacy be given a chance.

Our cry was not heeded, and more importantly, the Charter's demand for states to “settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such

a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered” has been profoundly undermined.

Today, the “threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine” has been effected.

Kenya is gravely concerned by the announcement made by the Russian Federation to recognize Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine as independent states.

In our considered view, this action and announcement breaches the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

We do not deny that there may be serious security concerns in these regions. But they cannot justify today's recognition of Donetsk and Luhansk as independent states. Not when there were multiple diplomatic tracks available and underway that had the ability to offer peaceful solutions.

Mr President, Kenya, and almost every African country, was birthed by

the ending of the empire. Our borders were not of our own drawing. They were drawn in the distant colonial metropolises of London, Paris and Lisbon with no regard for the ancient nations that they cleaved apart.

Today, across the border of every single African country live our countrymen with whom we share deep historical, cultural and linguistic bonds.

At independence, had we chosen to pursue states on the basis of ethnic, racial or religious homogeneity, we would still be waging bloody wars these many decades later.

Instead, we agreed that we would settle for the borders that we inherited. But we would still pursue continental political, economic and legal integration. Rather than form nations that looked ever backward into history with a dangerous nostalgia, we chose to look forward to a greatness none of our many nations and peoples had ever known.

We chose to follow the rules of the OAU [Organisation of African Unity] and ►►



Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons

the United Nations Charter not because our borders satisfied us but because we wanted something greater forged in peace.

We believe that all states formed from empires that have collapsed or retreated have many peoples in them yearning for integration with peoples in neighbouring states. This is normal and understandable. After all, who does not want to be joined to their brethren and to make common purpose with them?

However, Kenya rejects such a yearning from being pursued by force. We must complete our recovery from the embers of dead empires in a way that does not plunge us back into new forms of domination and oppression.

We rejected irredentism and expansionism on any basis, including racial, ethnic, religious or cultural factors. We reject it again today.

Kenya registers its strong concern and opposition to the recognition of Donetsk and Luhansk as independent states.

We further strongly condemn the trend -- in the last few decades -- of powerful states, including members of this Security Council, breaching international law with little regard.

Multilateralism lies on its deathbed tonight. It has been assaulted, as it has been by other powerful states in the recent past.

We call on all member states to stand behind the Secretary General in asking him to rally us to a standard defending multilateralism. We also call on him to bring his good offices to bear to help the concerned parties resolve the situation by peaceful means.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Kenya's respect for the territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

I thank you.'

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Dateline Africa

An uneasy year in review

The Institute for African Alternatives looks back on 2021, a year of much upheaval in Africa. The continent has been hit hard by the twin challenges of climate change and the pandemic, a combination of forces that has exacerbated political tension and deepened economic deprivation and already severe inequality.

Introduction

It was a tumultuous year in Africa, starting with the ongoing war in Ethiopia that broke out at the end of 2020. Tigrayan rebels retreated from their advance towards Addis Ababa, but military forces of the Abiy Ahmed government came under extreme pressure. The result was ongoing atrocities, hunger and civilian suffering. The year was also marked by ongoing conflict in northern Mozambique, which devastated villages and displaced people; Nigeria faced insurgents in the north; Somalia's armed conflict continued unabated. The continent as a whole tried to face down the threat of Covid-19 by imposing travel restrictions and lockdowns, all of which resulted in an unprecedented economic and social impact. IFAA's Africa diary looks at the year as it unfolded, including some lesser known events and some good news, which rarely gets much global media exposure.

January 2021

- After a rigged election, the electoral commission of Uganda announced Yoweri Museveni the winner, giving him his sixth term, which brings his total number of years in office to 34, so far. Opposition politicians, including Bobi Wine, were arrested and brutalised, and there were deaths too, in the run-up to an unfair decision.

February 2021

- Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, former Nigerian finance minister, was appointed director-general of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) -- the first woman and first African to lead it.

March 2021

- Makhtar Diop, a Senegalese economist and politician, was appointed managing director of the International Finance Corporation, the first African to hold the position. IFC, linked to the World Bank, has an investment portfolio of US\$64 billion.
- Mahamadou Issoufou, who stepped down as President of Niger after two five year terms, was announced the sixth recipient of the US\$5m Mo Ebrahim Prize, which recognises and celebrates excellence in African leadership. The candidates for the prize are all former African executive heads of state who have left office during the last three calendar years, were democratically elected and who served their constitutionally mandated term.
- Amia Suluhu Hassan was sworn in as the first female president of Tanzania. She took office after the death of former

president John Magufuli from a heart condition, and indicated a shift away from Magufuli's contentious and authoritarian rule by immediately having a Covid vaccination in public. Her predecessor was a firm denialist and had refused to allow Covid vaccinations in Tanzania.

- The president of the Republic of Congo, Denis Sassou-Nguesso, was re-elected with 88% of the vote. Africa's third-longest-serving president, behind the leaders of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, he has been in power for almost 37 years.

April 2021

- Chad was hit by a coup after long term "elected" leader Idriss Déby (who seized power in a rebellion in 1990) was killed in a battle. The military inserted his son, Mahamat Déby (see photo below) into the presidential seat, setting aside the constitution in doing so. The country's former colonial power, France, approved.

May 2021

- The elegantly curved Kazungula road and rail bridge over the Zambezi River between Zambia and Botswana was opened -- after two decades of planning and construction. ➤➤



Photo: Mahamat Idriss Déby

- Germany acknowledged it committed colonial genocide in Namibia and promised to pay reparations – although the total amount was immediately contested.
- For the second time in nine months, Col Assimi Goïta seized power in Mali through a coup.
- Kenya's president Uhuru Kenyatta formally launched the first berth of the new US\$5 billion port at Lamu in Kenya. Chinese funded and built, this is part of an even bigger project, the Lamu Port–South Sudan–Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor, which plans an oil and gas pipeline, as well as railways and roads linking Lamu Port to Ethiopia and the South Sudanese oilfields.

June 2021

- South Africa's Constitutional Court sentenced the former president, Jacob Zuma, to 15 months' imprisonment for contempt of Court. He had failed to obey an earlier order of the Court requiring him to appear before the Zondo Commission inquiry into state capture.

July 2021

- An "insurrection" broke out in South Africa. In the wake of the jailing of Jacob Zuma, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal were plunged into violent looting and unrest. More than 340 people died, damage exceeded R50 billion and 150,000 jobs were lost. To date no credible

insurrectionist has been held responsible.

- President Kais Saïed of Tunisia suspended parliament and grabbed power – in a move supported by many Tunisians fed up with their public representatives and the ineffectual government.
- South Sudan, the world's youngest country, marked the 10th anniversary of its independence – from Sudan.

August 2021

- Zambia reclaimed its democracy in a peaceful transfer of power following a general election. Support for Hakinde Hichelema was so large that vote rigging by supporters of the toxic incumbent Edgar Lungu failed.



- Journalists at risk: Al-Jazeera producer Rabie al-Sheikh was arrested before an interview with an Egyptian journalist who had posted a call on Facebook for Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi to resign. Al-Jazeera has been banned from operating in Egypt since 2013. Egypt was Africa's top prisoner of journalists in 2021, with 25 journalists incarcerated. Africa was a world leading oppressor of journalists in 2021 with 64 imprisoned. China was the leading country with 50.

September 2021

- Guinean president Alpha Condé, in power since 2010, was deposed in a successful coup d'état.
- China confirmed it would not fund a controversial coal-fired power station in Limpopo, South Africa. This is part of a world-wide policy announced by Xi Jinping. Question: Does Africa have much-needed plans in place to generate the necessary electricity?

October 2021

- A 25 October coup in Sudan unleashed wide popular protests, but a month later the ousted prime minister, Abdalla Hamdok, was back in "office," under the military. He resigned on 2 January 2022.

November 2021

- In Eswatini, four months of brutal and deadly oppression of peaceful pro-democracy protests ended when the king reluctantly agreed to a "national

dialogue" to be held in 2022. Cyril Ramaphosa, representing the Southern African Development Community, had attempted to intervene.

- Malawian voters elected the first MP with albinism.
- The African Union's peace mission to Somalia announced that a Ugandan court martial on 12 November found five of its soldiers guilty of killing seven Somali civilians in August 2021. Two of the soldiers were sentenced to death while the other three were each sentenced to 39 years in prison. They will be repatriated from Somalia to Uganda to serve their sentences.
- The 88-year-old president of Cameroon, Paul Biya, the oldest African leader in 2021, celebrated his 39 years in office. He won 80% of the votes in the last election held in that country in 2018.
- The 30-year old ceasefire between the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic/Polisario Front and Morocco ended, re-opening the potential for conflict between Algeria and Morocco. The Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic is a member of the African Union, and is supported by Algeria – and South Africa.
- Morocco hosted Israel's defence minister on a first official visit to that country. Morocco seeks to buy weapons from Israel as relations deteriorate with Algeria, mainly over the disputed Western Sahara.
- Senegal hosted the triennial Forum on China-Africa Co-operation (FOCAC). Félix Tshisekedi, president of the

Democratic Republic of Congo, said the partnership would be of greater benefit to Africa if African countries were given better access to the Chinese market.

December 2021

- Peaceful presidential elections in the Gambia entrenched democracy in the face of a failed challenge by the former president and 1994 coup leader.
- The presidential election in Libya, long scheduled for 24 December, was postponed, dragging out the protracted chaos bedevilling that country since the 2011 killing of Muammar Qaddafi by rebels, assisted by NATO.
- Sudanese protesters opposed to military rule faced live bullets, heavy teargas and a communications blackout in ongoing major demonstrations that followed the 25 October military coup. Demonstrators demanded that the military play no role at all in government during a long-agreed transition to free elections.

In addition, writers of African origin won a slew of international literary awards in late 2021: Abdulrazak Gurnah (Tanzania) won the Nobel Prize for literature; Damon Galgut (South Africa) won the Booker Prize for the best novel in English; Mohamed Mbougar Sarr (Senegal) won the Prix Goncourt, France's premier literary prize, the first African ever to do so and David Diop (Senegal) won the International Booker Prize for the best novel translated into English (see book review on pg 47). **NA**

The myth of a labour aristocracy in South Africa

By Dr Eddie Cottle

Eddie Cottle is a postdoctoral fellow at the Centre for Sociological Research and Practice (CSRP) at the University of Johannesburg. He is a former trade unionist and was the policy and campaign officer for Building and Wood Workers International (BWI), Africa and Middle East office. He also served as head of collective bargaining support at the Labour Research Service (LRS) in Cape Town.

Is the South African trade union movement in crisis because it is dominated by relatively privileged, better paid workers with permanent jobs? EDDIE COTTLE outlines the increase in worker militancy – across the board – since 2005, and highlights how structural changes in the economy have influenced trade unions. He argues that where reformism is seen within the working class, it is the trade union bureaucracy that is to blame, not the union membership.

In recent years the lack of a revolutionary movement and the persistence of reformism amongst workers in South Africa has led to disillusion and a claim that organised labour is a labour aristocracy. This claim has been made without substantiation,

often with vague reference to “higher paid workers”, “relatively privileged workers”, “permanent white-collar workers” and “permanent blue-collar workers” who make up the social base of trade unions to explain the reformism of the trade unions.

Bischoff (2015) argues that the Congress of South African Trade Union’s (Cosatu’s) composition changed from one that was blue-collar and working class to one that increasingly represents “lower middle-class” – white-collar workers (Bischoff, 2015: 233). In other words, the defenders of a labour aristocracy thesis claim that the reformism of sections of workers is because they are well-paid and largely white-collar and contrast this to the past where members of federations such as Cosatu were predominantly lower paid, blue-collar and militant (Lehulere, 2005: 12).

There are several errors with this line of inquiry and it is weakened in the face of substantive empirical evidence. This article will show that there is no historical evidence that workers who are well-paid and permanent are generally reformist and workers who are low paid are radical and revolutionary. I argue that to understand trade unions today one must account for the structural

changes of the economy, which altered the labour process and the skills composition of the workforce which in turn directly affected the composition of the trade unions. Finally, I will address the question of why reformism and conservatism persist despite opportunities for the working class to use their collective power to alter their social conditions.

It is well known that relatively well-paid industrial workers formed the social base of the Bolsheviks while low-paid textile workers were generally unorganised and were either apolitical or supported the Mensheviks until the beginning of the Russian Revolution. Throughout the 20th century well-paid industrial workers played a leading role in mass uprisings. In the US relatively well-paid workers led the struggles in auto, steel, rubber and other mass production industries, uniting workers regardless of skills and pay levels. The well-paid workers in trucking, auto, telecommunications, public education and postal services led the proto-revolutionary mass struggle in France, Italy, Britain, Portugal and the US between 1965 and 1975. In the Global South well-paid workers (in copper mining, metal and auto) in Chile,

Argentina and Brazil were the leading force during the 1970s and '80s (Post, 2010: 32).

The industrialisation of South Africa from 1939 coupled with the Great Boom of the 1960s saw the introduction of racial Fordist mass production technologies and divisions of labour requiring increased demand for semi-skilled and skilled workers to support the growth of manufacturing as the lead sector of the South African economy. By 1985, and in line with restructuring policies, the proportion of unskilled (which had been most of the workforce), semi-skilled and skilled was recomposed to 13%, 76% and 11% in manufacturing; 51%, 42% and 7% in mining; and in construction 19%, 65% and 16% respectively. The emergent black trade unions, including those in Cosatu, drew their membership mainly from *permanent*, semi-skilled and skilled workers (Gelb, 1991: 28) who adopted socialist ideas and formed part of the revolutionary movement to overthrow the apartheid capitalist state. The notion that *permanent* employment explains reformism is thus without empirical fact.

South Africa's post-apartheid neo-liberal model of growth moved from one that was predominantly based on manufacturing and mining (blue-collar workers) to one that is now dominated by the business services sector and public sector (white-collar workers) in terms of employment creation (Bhorat, et al., 2014: 3) which is fundamental in understanding the transformation of the composition of the trade unions. As any socialist would argue, the expansion and decent employment of workers in the public sector is central to the socialisation of the economy in the long-term struggle. It is rather perplexing that permanent employment, itself a product of

class struggle, is frowned upon by proponents of the labour aristocracy thesis rather than celebrated.

Statistics South Africa provides illuminating figures on income differentiation between different industries:

In 2019, the highest median monthly earnings were recorded among employees in the Utilities (R9 000) and Mining (R9 000) industries. The median monthly earnings increased in all industries except for Community and Social Services between the period 2014 and 2019 (StatsSA, 2019: vi).

The wage differential between blue-collar and white-collar workers (measured by sectoral median earnings) is surprising. The highest median earnings of R9000 are in the most strongly unionised (Department of Labour, 2019: 53 Fig 4.36) blue-collar industries such as utilities (including Eskom) and mining, not in the white-collar industries. The median earnings in both business and financial services and community and social services which are white-collar industries are much lower at R5000 per month. It could well be argued that the median wage of the public sector is distorted due to the recent inclusion of more precarious (intermittently employed) workers from the Expanded Public Works Programme in the figures.

Looked at differently the public sector has the highest trade union density rate of 69.2% compared to 24% for the private sector (Bhorat et al., 2015), yet the median salaries of public sector workers declined in real terms

between 2007 and 2019 (StatsSA, 2019). An analysis of collective bargaining outcomes between 2007 and 2019 in fact shows that on average, the outcome of strikes and collective bargaining in the public sector in terms of remuneration has been progressive and in favour of workers at the bottom end of the wage spectrum, providing real improvements of 1.9-3.2% compared with 0.6-0.9% at the top of the wage spectrum. Such collective bargaining outcomes, which favour the bottom end of the wage spectrum, do not correspond to a self-serving labour aristocracy.

If one breaks down the skills levels for the public sector, as opposed to just looking at occupational levels, the picture alters substantively. In 2015, the skills composition for the public sector was classified as unskilled (19%), semi-skilled (61%) and skilled (20%) (Bhorat and Khan, 2018: 10). Most public sector workers are therefore semi-skilled, white-collar workers. They are not lower middle class as Bischoff (2015) suggests but proletarian and disposable since they can easily be replaced. Except for agriculture, in all other industrial sectors semi-skilled workers make up 60-77% of the workforce. It is an error to use Fordist occupational categories to determine the class composition of workers instead of skill measures as neo-liberalism has diluted the skill, value and status of occupational categories.

The proponents of the labour aristocracy thesis assume that the permanent status of most Cosatu members implied secure and non-precarious forms of employment. On the contrary, the public sector in its entirety has been subject to restructuring with non-core activities being partially or fully outsourced ➤



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The notion that permanent employment explains reformism is thus without empirical fact.

to private entities posing a constant threat of further privatisation (read retrenchments) and fiscal restraint leading to most industrial action being undertaken by public sector workers (288 strikes between 2000 and 2014).

In its 2021 Budget Review, the government planned to reduce compensation of employees by 9% in real terms over three years. On 4 October 2021, a headline in the *Sowetan* newspaper read, “Government records largest employment drop in the country” as the public sector shed 65,000 jobs, more than any other sector of the economy. Contrary to popular belief the average “relatively privileged” permanently employed Cosatu members (of which public sector workers constitute one-third) find themselves in precarious employment, a condition workers have resisted. Without guaranteed long-term employment and social welfare, which requires a high-wage economy, the material basis for a labour aristocracy simply does not exist. The reformism of the working class and organised labour lies elsewhere in the capitalist labour market.

Labour market competition

Most of the time workers act as individuals in competition with other workers to sell their labour power on the capitalist market. Their main

priority is their own reproduction and that of their families and not radical change or the overthrow of capitalism. The daily struggle for survival, long hours of travel, working time and the additional reproductive responsibility of female workers provide little time to engage in a day-to-day struggle against the exploitative conditions. As such, large sections of workers embrace reformist unionism with its routine industrial relations procedures and actions. The working class at the same time seeks to protect or advance their overall social reproduction through support for reformist parliamentary parties. The rapid pace of capital intensification in production since the 1990s led to a proportional decrease in the amount of employment required within the labour process. This process expands the reserve army of labour which in turn decreases the market power of labour. These conditions of high unemployment further increase competition between employed and unemployed, permanent and casual workers, men and women, foreign and local workers.

In such conditions sections of workers adopt conservative and even reactionary ideas such as those seen in the repeated spates of xenophobic violence or even the refusal to organise unorganised workers who appear as a threat to existing employment conditions. These processes never take a uniform direction and a section of workers maintains a consistent progressive outlook. Because of preconceived notions, academic and left activist intellectuals rarely pay attention to the detailed nature of strikes and the changes that are occurring within the labour movement.

Technological change and class struggle

The periods of changing class consciousness when workers adopt a more radical approach are episodic and correlate with the long-term

movements of capitalism where the general rate of profit declines and capital responds with the introduction of labour-saving technologies and cost cutting across industries. Such a period, an initial turning point in the level of class struggle, occurred in 2005 when the trade union movement led by Cosatu, under pressure from its rank and file members, began to adopt a more radical position. The 2005 strike wave was offensive in character with trade unions demanding wage rates double the rate of inflation of 3.4%, with an average settlement of 6.3% and with workers fighting against overall deterioration of working conditions.

Except for construction, the strike wave affected all industries with militant strikes from January to December that year. About 40% were wildcat strikes. Surprisingly, the turning-point strike occurred on 3 January when 2,200 Food and Allied Workers’ Union (Fawu) members embarked on an offensive national strike at Nestlé demanding an 8% wage increase. This was shortly followed by a strike at Delmonte on 19 January where permanent and casual workers demanded a 6% increase and expressed unhappiness about pay disparities between seasonal and permanent workers.

The strikes were qualitatively distinct from those in previous years. The national strike of 90,000 goldmining workers was the first in 18 years since the defeat of the 1987 miners’ strike. The strike at South African Airways was also a first. Several of the strikes were challenging changes to the labour process. The strike at Volkswagen was against planned outsourcing; at chrome mines it concerned job grading; at Fidelity Supercare workers were protesting against flexible employment contracts; and Zimbabwean workers at Maswiri Boerdery were protesting against changes in pay for piecework. Other distinct features of the strike wave were the entry of seasonal and casual workers in agro-processing at Nestlé,



Delmonte, Unifruitti citrus packaging and eight Western Cape fishing factories.

At several of the strikes, unions were attempting to unify workers by fighting disparities in pay between seasonal, casual and permanent workers and for higher increases for workers at the lower end of the wage spectrum. Workers at Solid Doors, a steel company in Mpumalanga, embarked on the longest strike in the history of South African labour relations (177 days).

The other unique aspect of the strike wave in 2005 was that it witnessed the emergence of multi-union strikes, like the municipal wage strike in July that was sanctioned and supported by the South Africa Municipal Workers' Union (Samwu) and the Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union (Imatu); the X-Strata Alloys Lydenburg Works strike sanctioned by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) and Solidarity; and the Electrical Cable strike also called by Numsa and Solidarity. The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and Solidarity together organised a national strike in gold mines. This indicated new attempts at unity in the broad

unionised workforce in South Africa. Furthermore, there was a one-day national strike called by Cosatu against job losses and poverty (Department of Labour, 2005: vii, 1-7).

Overall, 2005 was marked by the participation of precarious workers in strike action, attempts by trade unions to unify standard and non-standard workers, widespread strike action across industries and importantly the recovery of mineworkers from the 1987 defeat. Strike waves after 2005 built on each other. The strikes were reminiscent of some of the most violent labour conflicts of the 1980s and were fundamentally a contest over the changing nature of work.

The year 2007 was illuminated by 608,919 strikers and 9,5 million days lost, both the highest in a decade. The high level of days lost is largely attributed to the wage demands of the public service strike, a "contest of power" that was offensive in character, lasted 25 days, and involved 10 trade unions and 332,074 workers. This extraordinary period involving all workers, permanent and casual, blue-collar and white-collar, unleashed a level of self-activity and

organisation that seemed impossible just a few years before. The competition amongst workers was breaking down and a working class "for itself" was beginning to ferment.

However, the trade union bureaucracy (noting the momentum of the strike waves that had united organised and unorganised workers during the 2005-2007 wave) held back this movement in favour of a short-lived political exchange within the Tripartite Alliance for a more "labour-friendly" Zuma government. The political exchange did not hold back workers' struggle, and in 2009 construction trade unions led a national strike of organised and unorganised workers with a common set of demands, including converting workers on limited duration contracts into full-time workers. The outcome of the strike set the pace for other workers with a real wage increase of 4%, extension of annual leave days, and a 40-hour week. The leadership ultimately backed down on the demand for permanent employment because of patriotism surrounding the 2010 FIFA World Cup and called off the strike.

In 2010 there were strikes in ➤

transport, mining, higher education, health, chemical, transport, municipal, metal, auto, energy, hospitality, retail and farming sectors. In many of these strikes the demand to end casual labour and labour broking featured prominently (Department of Labour, 2010: 3-17). The 9.5 million days lost in 2007 more than doubled to 20.6 million in 2010. However, most of the days lost were in the public sector where some 1.3 million workers came out on another militant strike. South African public-sector workers suspended their strike after nearly three weeks that saw some of the largest police attacks on labour since the fall of apartheid. Cosatu failed to carry out its threat of a general strike in solidarity and this put a damper on the momentum. Most strikes were successful, with workers across industrial sectors securing real increases comparable to the 1980s.

The trade unions united around the ousting of then President Thabo Mbeki, but as the level of class struggle intensified, tensions emerged in the Tripartite Alliance, which in turn increased divisions between more militant and conservative trade union leadership. This was most starkly visible in the fallout over the Marikana Massacre and the role of the NUM's leadership in sabotaging the strike. With the breakdown of political trust and the divisions between militant and conservative leaderships, Cosatu split. This was at a time when so much more was possible in harnessing the momentum of workers to achieve more substantive gains.

Conclusion

The material conditions for a labour aristocracy do not exist under conditions of neo-liberalism in South Africa. The current composition of trade unions is not a reflection of the policy decisions of a bureaucracy but is a reflection of structural changes in the economy and the growth of a service sector and a public sector. The historical

evidence provided on an international level and in South Africa show that there is no correlation between better-off workers and declines in the level of militancy. As I have shown, the public sector with predominantly white-collar workers is the most strike prone economic sector in South Africa. It is the trade union bureaucracy, not its membership, that is the foundation of consistent reformist practice and ideology within the working class.

The trade union bureaucracy has vested interests in maintaining capitalist relations. The professionalisation of trade unions, especially in the context of trade union investment companies, has created a new dimension of adopting business values in trade unions accompanied by systemic corruption. The trade union bureaucracy is a distinct layer, freed from the daily humiliation of capitalist labour process, and it has direct access to sources of power in the state and business to advance its individual lifestyles and careers. In this context, the trade union bureaucracy reduces change to parliamentary reform and institutionalised collective bargaining. It occasionally engages in militant action when reformism fails, only to hold workers back or sabotage workers' struggle, as at Marikana when the momentum of workers began to shake the established system.

The trade unions, including public sector unions, have made some progress in defending the interests of unorganised workers. Samwu, the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union and the National Union of Public Service and Allied Workers have started organising workers in the Expanded Public Works Programme and considerable support has been given to community healthcare workers for permanent employment (Mahlokwane, 2020). However, such initiatives may be short-lived unless the unions adopt new policies of de-professionalisation of staff and the dismantling of trade

union investment companies, the savings of which should be reallocated to embarking on a programme of unionisation of the unorganised.

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ENDNOTES

1. This article is an updated version of The Myth of a Labour Aristocracy in South Africa published in *Amandla* magazine in 2019.
2. See <https://businesstech.co.za/news/finance/350391/the-rise-and-rise-of-public-servants-pay-in-south-africa/>
3. See Forslund (2021).
4. *Fin24*, January 26, 2005. **NA**

Tough fiscal choices ahead

By Professor Philippe Burger

Professor Burger is Pro Vice-Chancellor: Poverty, Inequality and Economic Development, Dean of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences and Professor of Economics at the University of the Free State. He was President of the Economic Society of South Africa and a member of the South African Statistics Council, which oversees the work of StatsSA.

PHILIPPE BURGER explains the tightrope act of the new Minister of Finance, as he edged his way through the Budget speech last month! Recent economic research shows that simply increasing government expenditure will not lead to growth. This was not an austerity budget -- the budget deficit is large and 48% of the population now receive a grant. However, he points out that payment of grants is no substitute for income-generating jobs, and here is where the 2022 budget completely failed.

Presenting his first budget as Minister of Finance, Enoch Godongwana, walked a tightrope. His speech followed years of state capture, during which economic growth all but stagnated and unemployment rose. It also followed two years of the Covid-19 pandemic during which more than two million people lost their jobs. In



the third quarter of 2021 the official unemployment rate reached a record 34.9%, while the unemployment rate according to the expanded definition (which includes discouraged individuals who wish to work, but who have given up looking for jobs) reached 46.6%.

While 16.4 million people were employed in the first quarter of 2020, employment fell to 14.2 million in the second quarter of 2020. It improved to 15.0 million in the first quarter of 2021, before falling back to 14.3 million in the third quarter, still 2.1 million lower than pre-Covid levels.

In the face of such high unemployment and poverty, Minister Godongwana faced significant pressure to expand the South African welfare state. Several commentators and activists argued for the introduction of a permanent Basic Income Grant (BIG)

that would replace the Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRDG). The latter was introduced to provide relief for the large numbers of people who lost their jobs because of the economic fallout from the Covid pandemic. He refrained from introducing a BIG, instead extending the SRDG (R350 per month) by another year.

Minister Godongwana also faced pressure to lead efforts from National Treasury's side to implement structural reforms that would kickstart economic growth. Between 2014 and 2019 the South African economic growth rate never exceeded 1.5% per annum, and averaged 1%, well below the average population growth rate of 1.5% for the same period. Furthermore, in 2020 the economy shrunk by 6.4% because of the Covid crisis, with only a partial rebound of 4.8% in 2021. Thus, at the end of 2021 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) had not yet regained its 2019 pre-Covid level.

The budget projects economic growth to be 2.1%, 1.6% and 1.7% in the 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 fiscal years. The low growth rates, particularly in the outer two years, represent a return to the low growth environment of the 2014-19 period. Indeed, there are questions about whether these growth rates used in the budgetary planning might not be too optimistic, particularly given the electricity constraints under which the economy functions. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), for ►►



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instance, projects growth of only 1.9% and 1.4% per annum for 2022 and 2023.

The low-growth environment of the South African economy raises the question about what role fiscal policy plays in stimulating economic growth. Specifically, does the budget provide sufficient support for higher growth?

Increase expenditure to support growth?

Commentators and activists clamouring for the introduction of a BIG also argue that the South African government is pursuing an austerity budget that will curtail economic growth. They argue, therefore, that not only does the government not provide sufficient support for higher economic growth, but that its “austerity budget” undermines growth.

Being firm believers in the power of the expenditure multiplier, they argue instead for higher expenditure, believing that such expenditure will result in higher levels of output. They are not too concerned if such an increase in expenditure results in higher public debt, because, so the argument goes, by stimulating GDP growth, the higher public debt might not necessarily result in a higher public debt/GDP ratio (since both denominator and numerator of the ratio will be growing).

There are, though, empirical studies by Janse van Rensburg, De Jager and Makrellov, as well as by Kemp and Hollander, that show that the expenditure multiplier is not all that potent, meaning that increasing expenditure might not result in all that large an increase in output. Indeed, my own research with Estian Calitz shows that the expenditure/GDP ratio exceeds the level at which an increase in the ratio raises economic growth, and, in fact, reduces economic growth.

Some proponents of higher expenditure also argue that should higher expenditure result in higher debt, the Reserve Bank can merely monetise the debt, i.e. buy the government bonds with money it newly creates. This view, though, ignores the portfolio dimension of money.

The new money created through higher government expenditure will end up as assets on balance sheets of financial institutions and individuals. Having such low-to-no-interest earning assets on financial institution balance sheets will trigger a reallocation of their portfolios towards higher-earning financial assets and commodities, raising the price of such assets, and therefore potentially creating financial asset and commodity price inflation. Individuals with such cash in their portfolios will act similarly, buying higher yielding financial assets, or buying consumer goods, causing a rise in consumer inflation.

The higher consumer price inflation currently seen in the US and Europe is not only the result of disrupted supply chains following the Covid crisis; it is also the result of such monetisation of the large fiscal deficits governments ran in reaction to the Covid crisis.

If higher expenditure financed with debt does not initiate a sufficiently large increase in the economic growth rate to keep the debt/GDP ratio stable, and if financing such expenditure through monetised debt risks creating inflation, the third option would be to finance

such expenditure through higher taxes. However, raising taxes removes purchasing power and therefore reverses to a large extent whatever stimulatory effect the increase in expenditure has.

Furthermore, South Africa finds itself in a competitive world. While its tax burden (i.e. the sum of revenue collected in taxes expressed as ratio of GDP) is lower than that of most developed countries, it is at the high end of tax burdens in emerging economies. These are the economies with which South Africa competes for both domestic and foreign direct investment. Thus, there is not all that much room to raise tax rates. Indeed, to stimulate investment, Minister Godongwana announced a reduction of one percentage point in the corporate income tax rate to 27%.

Is the budget an austerity budget?

Although there is no room to increase expenditure, would it be accurate to characterise the budget as an austerity budget? At 10% in 2020/21 (largely because of the Covid crisis), 5.7% in 2021/22 and projected at 6% in 2022/23, the overall budget deficit can hardly be said to be small. It still contributes to a rising debt/GDP level. Even the 4.8% and 4.2% budget deficits projected for 2023/24 and 2024/25 are not small. The latter, though, are projected to be smaller than in preceding years because of a falling expenditure/GDP ratio.

Expenditure of consolidated government as ratio of GDP is projected to fall from 33.2% in 2021/22 to 31.5% in 2024/25. Though both the nominal rand values of expenditure and GDP are projected to increase, expenditure is projected to increase at a lower rate than nominal GDP, resulting in the drop in the ratio to 31.5%. Furthermore, with the budget projecting average Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation for the 2022-2024 calendar years at 4.6%, the average nominal increase of 3.2% in the nominal rand value of expenditure translates

into a decrease in real terms (while revenue in real terms remains more or less constant).

The lower average increase in nominal expenditure compared to GDP results from the lower average projected growth of compensation of employees, goods and services, and transfers and subsidies at respectively 1.8%, 2.6% and 0.7% per annum from 2022/23 to 2024/25. The lower growth in the compensation of employees follows a decade of above-inflation salary increases for the public sector that resulted in the consolidated government salary bill reaching 11.4% of GDP in 2020/21. It is projected to fall to 9.7% of GDP in 2024/25, carrying the bulk of the downward adjustment in the government expenditure/GDP ratio.

A further significant contributor to the lower nominal increase in expenditure over the period 2022/23 to 2024/25 is the projected abolition of the SRDG. The grant was extended for the 2022/23 fiscal year and amounts to R44 billion, but then, according to the budget, falls away from 2023/24 onwards. As a result, social grants as percentage of GDP are set to fall from 3.9% in 2022/23 to 3.1% in 2023/24.

With 2022 being an internal leadership election year in the ANC, it was politically unlikely that the government would have terminated the SRDG in the 2022 budget. However, whether the government will be able to terminate the SRDG in the 2023 budget without replacing it with a BIG is also questionable. Having by then paid this grant for almost three years, the negative political fallout of abolishing it without replacing it with a BIG will probably be quite significant, rendering it politically unpalatable. Therefore, unless expenditure is cut elsewhere or taxes are raised, the likely introduction of a BIG in the 2023 budget will put upward pressure on government expenditure, and therefore on the deficit and debt as percentages of GDP.

Thus, with budget deficits that remain large, the budget is not an

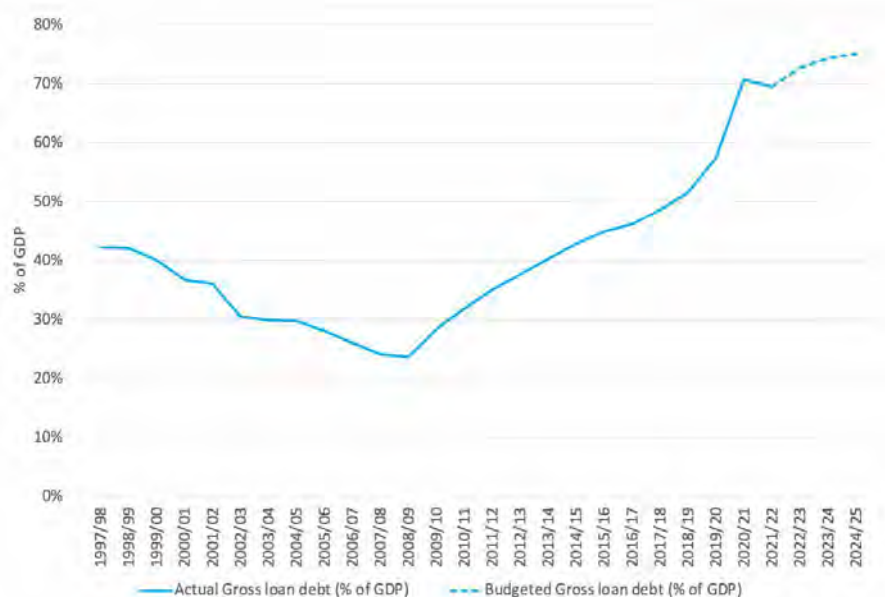


Figure 1: Gross Loan Debt (% of GDP) of the South African government

austerity budget. Having said that, the real decrease in expenditure and the planned stabilisation of the debt/GDP ratio does mean that less stimulus is pumped into the economy.

Public debt and fiscal sustainability

According to the 2022 budget, the reduction in the budget deficit will slow down the rate at which the public debt/GDP ratio increases, with the ratio projected to peak at 75.1% in 2024/25 (see Figure 1). This is a year earlier than projected by the government in 2021.

Note that in previous budgets the debt/GDP ratio was projected to approach 90%. However, with the revision of the country's National Accounts in 2021 the value of GDP was adjusted upwards, which had the effect of reducing the debt/GDP ratio.

In addition, government's revenue displayed a higher level of buoyancy in reaction to the bounce back in economic growth in 2021. This resulted in higher-than-expected tax collections, which, in turn, resulted in a smaller-than-expected deficit and a slower

increase in debt. The government also collected more revenue because of higher commodity prices. Increased tax buoyancy and higher commodity prices resulted in the government in 2021/22 collecting R182 billion more in revenue than expected in the 2021/22 budget. This amounts to an additional revenue collection of 2.8% of GDP. Approximately 40% of the additional R182 billion goes to lowering the budget deficit.

Compared to what it expected in its 2021/22 budget, the government expects the higher collection of revenue to continue into the medium term, resulting in an additional R141 billion and R146 billion (equals to 2.1% and 2% of GDP) to be collected in 2022/23 and 2023/24. These additional revenue flows are expected to assist the government in reducing the deficit and stabilising the debt/GDP ratio.

However, if the government introduces a BIG, a real question is whether it will do so without raising taxes or reducing expenditure to keep the debt/GDP ratio stable.

This question will become more of a burning issue if economic growth also ➤



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The low-growth environment of the South African economy raises the question about what role fiscal policy plays in stimulating economic growth.

falls short of government's projections of 2.1% and 1.6% for 2022/23 and 2023/24, putting further upward pressure on the deficit. In short, there is a very real possibility that the deficit will come in higher in the medium term than projected by the government, and that this will result in the debt/GDP continuing to increase.

Lower expenditure and socioeconomic rights – education expenditure

In 2020 and 2021 some commentators expressed concerns that a reduction in expenditure in real terms might represent a roll back of the socioeconomic rights enshrined in the Constitution. The South African Constitution defines a number of socioeconomic rights. The right to basic education is one such right. Every child has the right to receive basic education. Should the government spend less on basic education in real terms, the question is whether it violates the child's right to basic education.

Education is also the largest non-interest expenditure item in the budget, and it is one of the main drivers of long-term economic growth. Specifically, Hanushek and Woessmann have shown that countries with better quality education have higher economic growth rates. Education also improves social mobility, meaning that with education the children of the poor are less likely to also be poor.

Ascertaining whether or not a socioeconomic right such as education

is realised is more complex than simply looking at the amount of money spent on it, and whether that amount increased or decreased. It also depends on how that money is spent, and thus on the quality of education (the element that Hanushek and Woessmann highlight as important for long-term economic growth). The question then becomes how low the quality of education, and, therefore, how low the level of learning by children must be for society to judge government in breach of the constitutional requirement to provide each child with an education.

Unfortunately, when considering the state of basic education in South Africa, large numbers of children might already be in a position where little or no learning takes place (in fact, many schools might not be much more than day care centres, with little learning taking place). As Nic Spaull noted, studies show that 78% of Grade 4 learners cannot read for meaning. There are several reasons for this, including inadequate school infrastructure and large numbers of teachers who lack the skills to teach the subjects they are supposed to teach. In 2020, 5,771 (24.8%)

of the 23,267 schools in South Africa still had pit toilets (and 3,415 schools had only pit toilets). Only 20.3% of schools had internet for teaching and learning, only 31% had a computer centre, and only 22% had a library, while a mere 14.7% had a science laboratory. And regarding the skill levels of teachers, Venkat and Spaul found that 79% of mathematics grade 6 teachers have a content knowledge of mathematics lower than what Grade 6 learners should possess.

The response to this under performance should not necessarily be an increase in expenditure on education. Indeed, the real problem might not primarily be one of resource availability, but rather resource management and allocation.

Thus, judging the extent to which socioeconomic rights are realised is not as simple as merely looking at the amount of money spent on it. It is possible, as has indeed been the case in the past, to increase expenditure in real terms by merely paying teachers above-inflation salary increases. Doing so did not reduce the learner-to-teacher ratio or improve the quality of education. It also does not guarantee that the teacher is more skilled. The same is true for a real reduction in expenditure resulting from paying teachers below-inflation salary increases. Doing so may leave the learner-to-teacher ratio unchanged and therefore not represent a deterioration in the quality of education. Assessing the quality of education therefore requires the consideration of a whole set of indicators, only some of which are financial.

Education in the consolidated government budget is set to increase by 4.6% in 2022/23, 1.1% in 2023/24, and 2.8% in 2024/25, averaging at 2.8% per annum, which is significantly lower than the 4.6% average CPI inflation the government projects for the 2022-to-2024 calendar years. However, part of this reduction results from planned reductions in the rate at which salaries are budgeted to

increase, which will not necessarily affect the quality of education.

Is the budget a growth budget?

As mentioned above, empirical evidence suggests that government expenditure as ratio of GDP already exceeds the level at which an increase in the ratio contributes to higher economic growth. Indeed, the evidence shows that a reduction in the ratio will likely result in higher economic growth.

Using National Revenue Fund data to estimate the relationship, Estian Calitz and I have shown that the government expenditure/GDP ratio varied between 22% and 32% in the period between 1995 and 2019. We then showed that for as long as the level of the expenditure/GDP ratio was below 29%, an increase in the expenditure/GDP ratio led to an increase in economic growth. Above 29% the relationship turned negative. The government expenditure/GDP ratio has exceeded the 29% level since 2015.

The negative relationship points to the use of funds in ways that do not support economic growth. To improve economic growth the choice therefore is to either reallocate funding in the budget to more growth-enhancing items, or to reduce the expenditure/GDP ratio to a level that does not curtail economic growth.

Improving economic growth through a reallocation of resources will involve a reduction in current expenditure in favour of an increase in capital expenditure.

In 2021/22 only 4% of consolidated government expenditure went to the payments for capital assets. This is set to increase to 5.2% in 2024/25 fiscal years. Although this increase represents a budgetary reallocation towards capital expenditure, as percentage of GDP it represents only a small increase from 1.3% to 1.6%. A significantly bigger reallocation will be needed to create public infrastructure that supports economic growth.

National Accounts data shows that gross investment by general government as ratio of GDP fell from 3.9% in 2008 to 2.7 in 2019 and 2.5% in 2020 (the first Covid crisis year). Investment by public corporations rose slowly from 3% in 2008 to 3.5% in 2013, mostly because of the construction of the Medupi and Kusile power stations, before falling to 1.6% in 2019 and 1.4% in 2020. Gross private sector investment as ratio of GDP fell sharply from 14.7% in 2008 to 11.1% in 2019 and 9.8% in 2020.

In a recent study I showed that for every additional percentage point increase in the private sector's investment/GDP ratio, economic growth will increase by a third of a percentage point. Thus, increasing the private investment/GDP ratio from 11% to 14% could add a whole percentage point of economic growth per year to GDP growth. However, private sector investment requires, among other things, sufficient infrastructure investment, a role that the government typically performs. To perform this role will require a significant reallocation of resources in the budget away from current and towards capital expenditure. Alternatively, the government should put together a policy and plan to let the private sector take up this role.

Tough choices ahead

If it wants to introduce a BIG and kickstart economic growth through higher government investment, the South African government faces tough choices, particularly since it operates under a budget constraint. It can try to increase tax rates to finance a BIG and investment. However, doing so with a tax burden that is already high compared to other emerging economies, will scare off investment. And borrowing the funds to finance a BIG and investment is expensive as South African government bonds carry a higher interest rate because of the government's junk status credit rating.

Furthermore, because of the ➤

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... 48% of the population receive a grant. Having half the population on grants is not a sign of a healthy economy.

country's electricity constraints, economic growth will also be constrained for the foreseeable future. Constrained growth, in turn, will limit the revenue growth of government. Even though President Ramaphosa in his 2022 State of the Nation address announced plans to expand electricity production, such plans will take time to implement. Thus, the prospects of higher economic growth in excess of the 1.3%-1.7% range in, say, the next five years, is rather limited.

To introduce a BIG in the 2023 budget will therefore require a reallocation of resources away from current expenditure on salaries, goods and services. Even at a mere R350 per month per recipient the SRDG currently costs R44 billion, or 0.7% of GDP, for 10.5 million people. In addition to the 10.5 million recipients of the SRDG, there are 18.3 million beneficiaries of other grants, such as the Child Support Grant. With a population of roughly 60 million, the total of 28.8 million people receiving grants means that almost 48% of the population receive a grant. Having half the population on grants is not a sign of a healthy economy.

Increasing expenditure on capital will also require a reallocation of resources away from current expenditure on salaries, goods and services, and grants towards growth-supporting infrastructure development.



Photo credit: Flickr

If the government cannot see its way open to do this reallocation, it will have to create a policy as well as an enabling framework for the private sector to finance and construct such infrastructure.

One point with which to conclude though, is that the payment of grants is no substitute for income-generating jobs. Thus, in the absence of sustainable and inclusive economic growth that generates jobs, the payment of grants will not ensure longer-run political stability. A grant may alleviate hunger in the short run, but people also need hope of a better future. That is something a job, not a grant, can deliver. Therefore, even though we can debate whether or not to introduce a BIG, the real question is how to get the economy growing so it can create jobs. The 2022/23 budget falls short in answering this question.

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Racial capitalism

and South Africa's changing race-class articulations

By Sam Ashman

Sam Ashman is an Associate Professor in the School of Economics at the University of Johannesburg. Her research focuses on the financialisation of the South African economy and the changing Minerals-Energy Complex, and how these are connected to high levels of inequality and the growing climate crisis. Her current book project, *South Africa: An Economy of Extremes*, will be published by Agenda Publishers in 2022.

Apartheid was defeated by the liberation struggle and dispatched to the lower reaches of hell. But what about “racial capitalism”? SAM ASHMAN reflects on how this rallying theme is used across the world today. Few of those using the slogan now are aware it was first developed amongst Marxist scholars and historians in South Africa in the 1970s. Are there grounds to re-interpret the concept to explain South Africa today?

The resurgence of a term

According to the *New York Times*, between 15 million and 26 million people took part in the protests against the murder of George Floyd in 2020 – and that was during Covid-19. That scale makes these Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests (to use an umbrella term) the biggest movement in the history of the US, according to some at least. These



protests saw, amongst other things, the removal of statues of slave owners both in the US and beyond. The resonances with the Rhodes Must Fall issue in South Africa are clear, though Rhodes seems unlikely to fall from the wall of Oriel College, Oxford. Alongside this movement, there has been a resurgence in the use of, and debate around, the term “racial capitalism.” Whilst this pre-dates George Floyd’s murder, the emergence of BLM has propelled the

term to the forefront of left debate, particularly in the US.

The term racial capitalism has roots in South Africa’s race-class debates (Legassick and Hemson, 1976), even if its use has waned somewhat in South Africa – though it may be making a comeback under the impetus of US debates, and as we grapple with South Africa’s seemingly enduring legacies and ongoing realities (for recent discussions see Mabasa, 2021; Motala ➤

and Vally, 2021; Phiri, 2021). South Africa's past debates remain important, both historically and for understanding the country's present (Bond, 2011; Friedman, 2015). In these debates many have argued rightly for the need to avoid both class reductionism and race essentialism, and instead to look at race-class articulations, and how these change over time. This article argues that the racial capitalism literature can help us chart this course by pointing to race/class simultaneity (Roediger, 2017) and race/class contingency (Hall, 1980; Magubane, 2001; Wolpe, 1988), but that we also need particularistic understandings of racial capitalism in time and space. It argues that the legacy of South Africa's forced labour system remains centrally important for understanding South Africa's specific form of racial capitalism, and that this forced labour system needs to be understood in the context of the ways that South Africa was embedded in the combined and uneven development of the world economy at the end of the 19th century and for most of the 20th century. The continued, if changing, uneven and combined development of the world system continues to condition race-class articulations.¹

Race, class, and labour

A central theme of the racial capitalism literature is that capitalism is imbued with racial distinctions from the start. US historian Walter Johnson (2020) has defined racial capitalism as the "dialectical relationship between capitalist exploitation and racial domination". Much of the work and discussion about racial capitalism reaches back into what Cedric Robinson (1983) in *Black Marxism* – his influential, but uneven work – calls the black radical tradition, earlier work connecting capitalism and racism, particularly that of W. E. B. Du Bois (1935), and also work that puts the role of women centre stage in racialised regimes of accumulation and reproduction (Hudson, 2018). Du

Bois roots his understanding of racial capitalism in the history of slavery and the central role played by black labour in the construction of modern capitalism: "Black labor became the foundation stone not only of the Southern social structure, but of Northern manufacture and commerce, of the English factory system, of European commerce, of buying and selling on a world-wide scale; new cities were built on the results of black labor, and a new labor problem, involving all white labor, arose in both Europe and America."

Racial capitalism as a term therefore places the relationship between capitalism as a system and racism centre stage. Race, its construction and deployment, is not outside the logic of capital. For Bhattacharaya (2018), capitalist accumulation critically rests on and requires inequality, not least profound differences of economic wealth and power, and racism is a major means of ensuring this, drawing on and remaking old differences, and creating new ones. Conceptions of race, and processes of race-making, are entangled in the changing history of capitalist accumulation and the world system, the racial hierarchies of colonialism and imperialism, the expropriation and exploitation of labour and populations deemed to be racially inferior, and the creation of racialised relative surplus populations (Bernards and Soederberg, 2020; Fraser, 2016).

Themes relating to biopolitics are also raised (Rose 2008) and issues around who lives and who dies, who controls the right to life, and how capital's power depends on relatively tight control over labouring bodies. Of note is how Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007) has defined racism in the US. Moving away from systematic or structural discrimination understandings, she defines racism in relation to death: racism is "the state sanctioned or extra-legal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death." This resonates

with Achille Mbembé's (2003) work on necropolitics, which involves more than the right to kill, but the right to expose other people to death, and regimes which systematically reduce people to precarious conditions of life. Mbembé discusses this in relation to the plantation, the colony, apartheid and Palestine. Now, with climate change, capital seems untethered from planetary welfare, posing questions about the future of life.

Kundnani (2020) suggests that the term racial capitalism is attractive precisely because it "promises a way to close the race-class gap"; it points to the race-class simultaneity emphasised by Roediger (2017); it doesn't abstract race from capitalism and the foundations of wealth, power and privilege, but neither in this literature are classes imagined in some "pure" imaginary form. They are raced and gendered and sexed. As Robin D G Kelly (2021) puts it, traditional Marxists tend to argue that race is real but, "it sort of gets in the way of what's really the root of oppression", whilst Afro-pessimists see "the whole structure of Western civilization as based on anti-Blackness and anti-Blackness alone".

Stuart Hall's contributions about the nature of race-class articulations (e.g. 1980) are of lasting relevance, have been expertly excavated and deployed by Hart (e.g. 2004) and were in part in response to South African debates and Harold Wolpe's contributions in particular. Wolpe correctly thought about processes of racialisation and race-making in relation to capitalist development, not seeing them as in conflict, or racism as a hangover from the past. As the apartheid era brought a barrage of racist legislation and racist practices pervaded all areas of life, liberals challenged the white racism of the apartheid state by arguing that race domination was the irrational consequence of Afrikaner pre-modern ideology that would be erased with economic growth and the development of a "modern" market economy. In



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... there has been a resurgence in the use of, and debate around, the term “racial capitalism.”

response to the liberal perspective, South African Marxists from the 1970s developed a distinctive analysis of the emergence and development of capitalism and apartheid that saw apartheid as conducive to capitalist development (discussed in the next section).

Wolpe has been widely criticised for the functionalism contained in his view of the relationship between capitalism and white domination – at least in his early formulations. He also tended to use articulation to mean linkage, as in his analysis of the articulation of modes of production. Hall disputed Wolpe’s functionalism, arguing that capitalism and white domination ought not to be seen as an automatic relationship. Whilst modern racism plays a central role in the constitution and development of capitalism as a world system, racism and black identity is not “singular, essential, ahistorical, given or fixed, but multiple, conjunctural, and always a process.”

Hall argued that articulation does not simply mean connectedness, but that it has a double meaning: it means both joining together and giving expression to, famously writing that, “Race is thus, also, the modality in which class is ‘lived,’ the medium through which class relations are experienced, the form in which it is appropriated and ‘fought through.’” Actors are understood in situated spaces in which meanings, constraints and

interests are in flux, articulated and re-articulated in a constant process of contestation. In specific historical situations, these articulations take particular forms, however conjunctural race-class articulations become real material facts. And as old linkages can be dissolved, new connections, re-articulations, are forged.

Magubane (2001: 3) periodises South African history’s changing race-class relations and argues that “Racism is not simply a discourse, but a practice which produces certain knowledge of the colonized, and indeed, exploited, that makes the practice of domination, restructuring, and having an authority of the colonized natural”. And, borrowing from Edward Said, he argues that ideas of racism and white supremacy need to be examined historically both genealogically (provenance, affiliation with other ideas, and with political institutions) and as practical accumulation (of power, land, ideological legitimacy). Although racism “cannot be simply correlated with the process of material exploitation, the discourse produces forms of knowledge which are of great utility in justifying the degradation of the exploited” (Magubane, 2001: 4). Money and commodification, as discussed below, are essential. That “great liberal thinker” John Locke, in *First Treatise of Government*, discusses the power of West Indian planters over their slaves, arguing that this power (“whether over slaves or

horses”) is something which “derives from his purchase.” Money confers power over property, be it animals or subordinated humans (McNally, 2014).

In addition to the slave trade, there is the critical importance of racialised processes of primitive accumulation, tied to colonisation. Examining settler colonialism is instructive in understanding these processes – though across very different capitalisms in the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa (e.g. Coulthard, 2014). McNally (2020), for example, looking at the origins of racial capitalism in the US, argues that it is to be found in the conjunction of plantation slavery and indigenous dispossession, enshrined in the classical liberalism of the founding fathers, as epitomised by Locke who saw communal land as “pre-rational” and “pre-civilisational”; “wild Indians do not know the virtues of enclosure”.

Whilst these point to the homologous roots of different racialised regimes of accumulation, we must also be attentive to the differences. Much racial capitalism work is infused with what Paul Gilroy (1993) called the Black Atlantic. Yet there are immense differences across racialised regimes of accumulation and reproduction. I argue that the racial capitalism literature points to four factors, which play out differently in time and space: the specific expendability of black labour; the carceral treatment of black labour; the emergence of a “white labour >>



problem,” and dominant if changing narratives which are simultaneously anti-radical and anti-black as they attempt to divide off the white working class from black labour. Burden-Stelly (2021) discusses the last of these in relation to modern US racial capitalism, where she argues that US dynamics are quite specific, but nevertheless anti-blackness and anti-radicalism are mutually constitutive “legitimizing architectures”.

Slavery, dispossession and proletarianisation are part of the commodity economic logic of emerging capitalism in which money plays a key role. McNally (2020) argues persuasively that changing monetary forms have long been attached to labouring bodies, and to the political economy of life and death. The ancient markets of the Roman Empire, represented in the silver Athenian owl coin, expanded via warfare because it was a crucial means of surplus appropriation, and this plunder also entailed slavery and the establishment of armies which were paid – perhaps the first modern wage system – as well as 30,000 slaves who worked the Athenian silver mines. From the 1690s onwards, the development of state finance and the constitution of bourgeois money took place under the aegis of the emerging Bank of England, which loaned money for war and slaving to the English government and through which came the emergence of paper notes, literally IOUs. This monetary form and system were the financial basis for the British Empire and established Britain as both the world’s largest colonial power and, by the middle of the 18th century, the largest slave trader. The Gold Standard supported this global system. The US Federal Reserve, formed in 1913, eventually took over as the dominant institution and the dollar as the dominant currency, with the dollar tied to gold until the collapse of the Bretton Woods System. This collapse laid the basis for the dollar to act as world money, and for the emergence of

the financialised capitalism of today.

South Africa’s development is profoundly shaped by late 19th century imperialism (though conquest predates mining). South Africa’s transformation, as we know, is tied to the powerful demand for gold in a specific period of capitalism, the world economy, and its monetary system. Whilst this period may be when the slave trade has been formally abolished, it is still one where the combined and uneven development of the world economy links together demand for gold to support the gold standard, with the emergence and development of unique form of labour supply in the form of the Migrant Labour System (MLS). Indeed Legassick and Hemson (1976) were seeking to understand a particular form of capitalist development in time and place – albeit one critically shaped by global conditions.

Gold and forced labour

The origins of the term racial capitalism, it seems generally agreed, lie in the debates about South African development and the relationship between racism and capitalism and the widely discussed revisionist school of South African historiography. Legassick and Hemson’s 1976 pamphlet for the British Anti-Apartheid movement, “Foreign Investment and the Reproduction of Racial Capitalism in South Africa”, stressed the central role of mining capital, and the overseas investment embodied in it, and was deployed to support the sanctions campaign against the apartheid state, particularly given the centrality of British imperial involvement. In challenging liberalism, these South African Marxists and others argued that to understand race and class in South Africa, and racial capitalism, it was essential to go further back than the 1948 victory of the National Party. Firstly, it was necessary to examine the role played by imperial mining capital once minerals were discovered, and the

establishment over time of the MLS to supply the great need for labour to the mines. Secondly, there was the role of mining capital in the subsequent establishment and construction of the Union of South Africa from 1910 onwards, and the ways in which the policy of segregation during this time lay the foundations on which the apartheid regime was built. Mining and agrarian capital reached a series of compromises which would have lasting consequences, “allocating” African labour to both the mines and the farms.

Segregation was designed to ensure that African labour would continue to engage in household production (though in small and declining amounts) in the reserves but not to such an extent that wage labour could be avoided, and not to such an extent that produce could compete on the market with white capitalist farmers. The social costs of the reproduction of labour were transferred to the Bantustans. African labour was not to remain in areas of their work but was legally required to return to the reserves when their contract expired. Once the Chamber of Mines (now re-branded as the non-racial “Minerals Council of South Africa”) began to recruit labour on a monopsony basis, combining in order to keep wage costs down, a free labour market was blocked further in order to prevent Africans moving to better paying mines. The system also permitted some classic divide and rule, as “troublesome African labour organisers are expelled to the Bantustans, where the black mark on their computerised cards will ensure they never get a job again” (Legassick and Hemson, 1976).

As the economy developed around a minerals and energy core, with weak secondary manufacturing, this highly lopsided industrial structure served capital and the white working class, ensured African labour was necessary, and rendered many Africans surplus to the immediate needs of capital



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... capitalist accumulation critically rests on inequality ... and racism is a major means of ensuring this ...

accumulation, a highly racialised “relative surplus population,” which today is increasing not diminishing within the global political economy of capitalism (Bernards and Soederberg, 2020). And so the term racial capitalism, probably only coined by the end of the 1970s, came to sum up the thrust of the radical critique of apartheid (Nash, 1999). The idea is also present, if not the term initially, in the work of Neville Alexander (1983). These and other critics of colonial capitalism in southern Africa developed a powerful insight: that migrant labour was part of a unitary, if contingent, system of capitalist development (see First, 1983).

Discussing South Africa’s forced labour system she makes a number of theoretical claims. I argue that three things follow:

Firstly, one must throw out linear or stadial readings of capitalist development, and of primitive accumulation. The linear reading suggests that the development of capitalism means the violent expropriation of the peasantry from the soil, through enclosures, a process which establishes free wage labour and capital accumulation, and from which follows a concomitant decline in violence, or extra-economic coercion, and the development of a settled, urbanised proletariat (Nicholls, 2015). Instead in South Africa’s case, the black majority were certainly



violently dispossessed of land through war and conquest, but extra economic coercion continues, as the emergence of a “free” labour market for African labour is blocked.

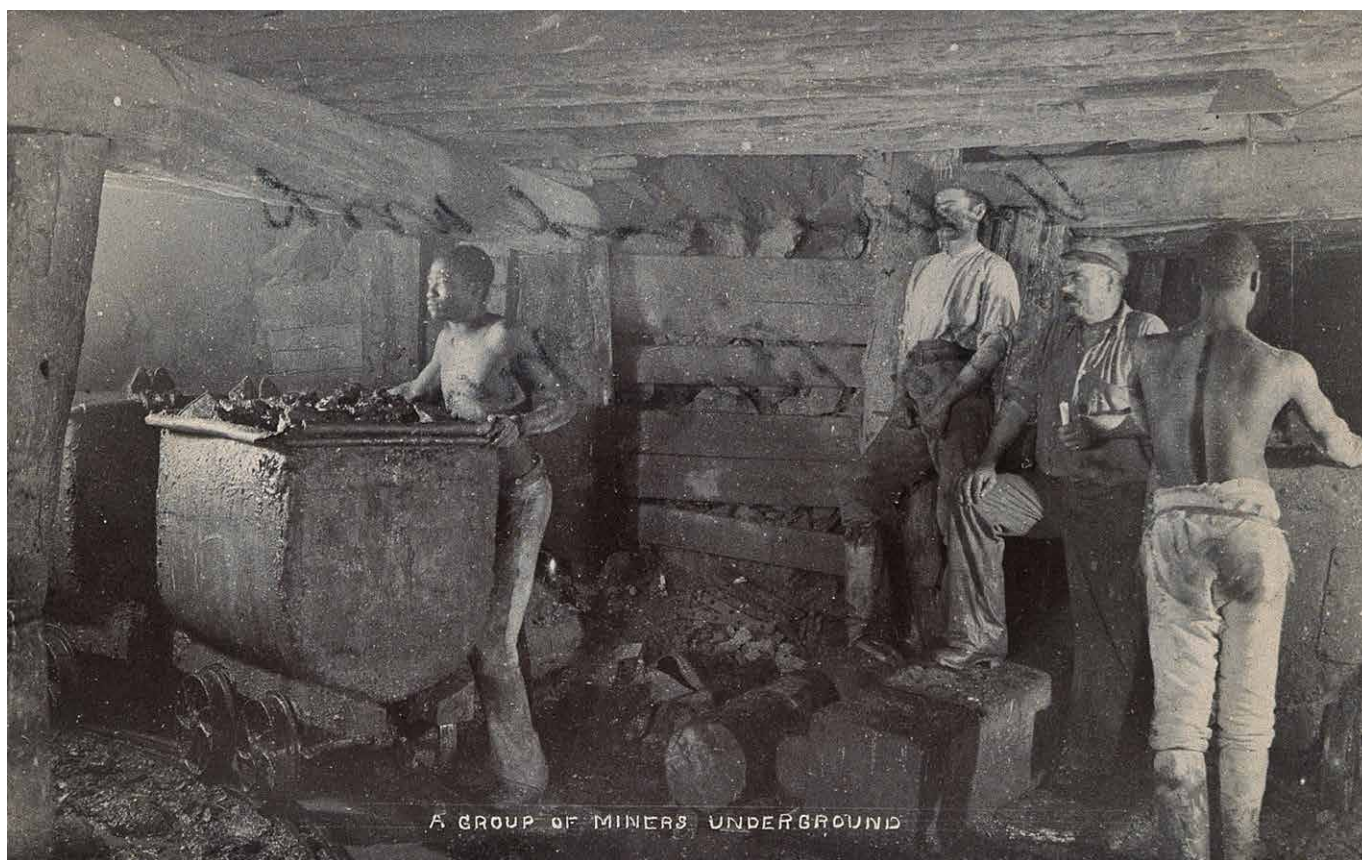
Secondly, and following from this, a binary between free and unfree labour is not helpful (Banajee, 2003; McNally, 2014), with labour regimes better placed on a continuum. Segregation and apartheid’s racial domination involved the denial of citizenship to the black majority as part of a wholesale system of control over access to land, work and movement.

Thirdly, we need to reject Eurocentric understandings of social reproduction. The MLS drew from across empires, challenged “standard” timeframes of work and labour contracts, of living arrangements, and changed the roles of women and households. The place of social reproduction for male workers was the compound for large parts of the year, with women, children and the young in the reserves. The burden this placed on African women was certainly underestimated in the first wave of the debates.

Apartheid, of course, tried, and ultimately failed, to generalise a key element of the MLS. This was to reduce all workers in most of South Africa to “temporary sojourners” without

rights. But as manufacturing developed, however skewed and weak, a more settled and skilled African workforce emerged, whatever the law officially had to say. This workforce would go on to produce the mass strikes of 1973 and the trade union movement, which later, along with school students’ resistance and the urban risings and strikes of the mid-1980s, eventually brought apartheid to its end. This was the grain of truth in the liberals’ argument. Wolpe’s (1988) later reformulation of his view reflected this as he emphasised not the functional relationship between capitalism and apartheid alone (certainly true for mining and agrarian capital), but historical contingency and change, arguing in a Hall-esque way that:

The supposition that capitalism in South Africa, in its very constitution, requires the racial order which is forever necessary for its development and reproduction, precludes the search for and analysis of the uneven, asymmetrical, contradictory and unstable relations between capitalism and race. ➤



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The term “racial capitalism” originated in the debates of the so-called revisionist school about South African development in the 1970s.

Wolpe (1988) came to emphasise the contingency between capitalism and the racial order, seeing it as the outcome of struggles between contending classes and groups, a relationship “simultaneously functional

and contradictory”, advancing some class interests, whilst undermining the interests of others. “Which pole of the relationship will be dominant depends on the historically specific conditions.”

Racial capitalism in South Africa today

Some on the left concluded, mistakenly, that as capitalism and apartheid were inseparable, a negotiated settlement was not possible. Now lack of progressive change since 1994 leads some today to conclude that, really, apartheid is not over, or that it has been “privatised” (Mpofu-Walsh, 2021). The more accurate perspective is that, with a negotiated settlement, segregation and apartheid’s material structuring of the economy would need more than the vote and legal equality to bring the change necessary for a more equal and just future. Meaningful political

equality and democracy require the social and economic resources essential for human flourishing. As Du Bois wrote about the aftermath of the US civil war, radical reconstruction was doomed without a commitment to “real economic emancipation.” Martin Luther King (1967: 5-6) made the same point about the Civil Rights Movement: “The practical cost of change for the nation up to this point has been cheap. ... Jobs are harder and costlier to create than voting rolls. The eradication of slums housing millions is complex far beyond integrating buses and lunch counters.”

But several things combine. One is the structuring of the past, or the legacy; another is the change brought about by the decisions of the present, which compound the legacies of the past. Democratic South Africa has joined the neoliberal, financialised, (unevenly) globalised world system.



Global restructuring since the 1970s has produced centralisation of corporate power, the concentration of wealth, jobless and frequently credit led growth, and an intensifying climate crisis. As global production has restructured, producing global value chains, costs are often loaded onto “peripheral” workers, with wages frequently squeezed below the costs of social reproduction. This has entrenched a global racial hierarchy, whilst allowing for some to join the top ranks.

In South Africa, a small black elite has emerged, and the black middle class has grown. But the ANC has presided over widening inequality, increasing unemployment, precariousness for those in work, a gathering climate crisis and growing levels of corruption. The ANC’s own self-imposed economic framework has helped develop the financialisation of the economy, which has undermined already skewed productive structures. The legacy of migrant labour and the apartheid Group Areas Act remains apparent, with apartheid spatial economic geographies marking urban and rural spaces alike. We face intersecting crises across many areas of society. The experience of race and racism remain complex, with race-class dynamics articulating with language, culture, ethnicity and nationality (Phadi, 2021). Few open defenders of apartheid remain, but racist ideas in many forms are entrenched. The system continues to shape black experiences as race and class are reproduced. The uneven and combined development of the world system, and South Africa’s position within it, conditions contemporary race-class articulations and the lived experience of racial capitalism in South Africa today. Hall’s insistence that black identity is not singular and essential, but multiple, conjunctural and always a process is borne out, once again, with all its South African characteristics.

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ENDNOTES

1. There are other strands of the racial capitalism literature which posit an essential, rather than an historical, relationship between racism and capitalism. Reasons of space mean these are not discussed at the length they deserve. **NA**

Measuring economic activity in Africa

‘Time over money’ approach includes women and
unemployed youth

By Odile Mackett

Odile Mackett is a lecturer at the School of Governance, University of the Witwatersrand. Her PhD research focuses on the International Labour Organisation’s Decent Work Agenda and the implications the continued traditional framing of work is likely to have for gender equality in the labour market.

Studying how people in Africa spend their time on non-leisure activities is a better guide to policy development than relying on the traditional money measure of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), according to ODILE MACKETT. She draws on recent research on the measurement of economic activity to challenge the way economists – and all of us – decide which work is the most valuable to society.

Introduction

In capitalist societies, activities that are valued are those which are done in exchange – usually they are paid for in money. During this exchange, goods and services are allocated value and these values represent what societies think is good and fruitful. However,

these exchange-based relationships have created disparities between groups, and the capitalist value creation process has been a core driver of inequality (Obeng-Odoom, 2020).

Various schools of economic thought have argued that for these processes to work as they do, certain people and activities would need to be “invisibilised” (Ainsworth, 2002; Chen, Sebstad and Connell, 1999) or “exploited” (Skrivankova, 2010; Baglioni, 2018). Within the existing economy, we place emphasis on what people do to earn money to live on. Those who cannot earn a living for themselves are less valuable to society and consequently vulnerable – this is mainly the elderly, the sick and the young. There are also a lot of activities that, while essential, are not directly paid for – such as much housework and care for the young, the old and the sick. (Much of this work is done by women.) Amongst those who are able to work for a living, however, vulnerabilities can also be identified. These may be individuals who work in manual occupations for low wages, but more so,

those who are identified as unemployed.

Despite the uneven spread of capitalism and modernisation across Africa, many countries on the continent have adopted methodologies used by advanced economies to measure and plan economic activity (Jerven, 2015). This is regardless of the fact that these methodologies tend to be ill-suited for the types of economic activities which characterise African economies.

In this article, I argue for a different way of measuring economic activity, placing special emphasis on the work of the youth and women. In many parts of Africa, women have severe constraints on their time, due to lack of infrastructure resulting in them having to walk to fetch water and fuel, and needing to hire transport to go shopping. Consequently they tend to be worse off in terms of labour market outcomes and poverty-related indicators than men (Mbaye and Gueye, 2018; Jerome, 2011; Gottlieb, Grossman and Robinson, 2018). It has been found that between 75% and 90% of women in non-agricultural employment tend to be in low paid or informal work; work from



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Using GDP as a measure hides the fact that GDP growth can accompany high, and even increasing, poverty and inequality rates.

which acute financial vulnerabilities emanate (Mbaku, 2017).

In addition, the youth in Africa – meaning the 15 to 24 age group – make up more than a third of the population (ILO, 2020). For the youth, official unemployment statistics have been unable to capture the full scope of vulnerabilities they experience in the labour market (Mbaye and Gueye, 2018).

This includes an overrepresentation in the informal labour market and a lack of social protection in case of a loss of labour market income. Yet, unemployment rates are shockingly high. In Southern Africa, the youth unemployment rate was 50.3% in 2019 (ILO, 2020). Furthermore, the youth make up the largest share of individuals who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). In Senegal, for instance, over 50% of youth in rural areas and 35% of youth in urban areas form part of the NEET population. For young women in Senegal, this share is 60% (Mbaye and Gueye, 2018). On the continent, this figure was collectively 21.5% in 2019 (ILO, 2020). Both the statistics on unemployment as well as the NEET population reflect the challenge of labour underutilisation on the continent. Despite the unique characteristics of the population on the continent, traditional policies and measurement of policy success have followed standard Western norms.

The measurement flaws

The GDP has been called “the world’s most powerful number” (Fioramonti, 2013). The importance of the GDP has been repeatedly recognised through its inclusion in the Millennium Development and Sustainable Development Goals; the African Union’s various agendas; the extensive research which has gone into GDP growth and calculation; as well as national policy frameworks which are often designed around the need to achieve higher growth – either as an end in itself or to bolster related development indicators. When South Africa’s National Development Plan talks about “growth” this is usually shorthand for “growth of GDP”.

Reliance on GDP as the main index of economic change has continued despite many criticisms of the measure. GDP cannot reflect the development of a country – which may rest on pumping oil, rather than education, infrastructure and diverse industries. Using GDP ➤➤

as a measure hides the fact that GDP growth can accompany high, and even increasing, poverty and inequality rates (Stilwell, 2016; Jerven, 2015). GDP is both incomplete and exclusive. It simply does not register unpaid labour in the home – housework, cooking and caring (Berik and Kongar, 2021; Robeyns, 2021). Degrowth scholars have also criticised the obsessive focus on GDP growth itself (Sekulova et al., 2013; Kallis, Kerschner and Martinez-Alier, 2012).

Feminist theorists have written about the flaws of GDP measurement and ways in which the unpaid work performed in the reproductive sphere could be included (Budlender and Brathaug, 2002; Suh and Folbre, 2016) as the value of goods remain the same whether they are procured in the market or produced and consumed privately (Budlender and Brathaug, 2002). Due to the difficulty with measuring the value of goods produced and consumed outside the market, these are often excluded from GDP calculations. Yet GDP remains the most important economic indicator, despite its undervaluation of goods and services produced in the household.

US-based economists Günseli Berik and Ebru Kongar (2021) have argued that GDP per capita is not an accurate measure of economic activity as it “reinforces the focus on economic growth, and incorporates output that is harmful to human and environmental health.” These authors have argued that instead use should be made of the capabilities approach, which moves beyond asking what people *have*, to asking what people *can* do (the philosophy which underpins the Human Development Index). Applying this measure in developing countries also becomes a challenge, specifically in those with large informal economies where economic activity cannot be easily enumerated.

Why time-use surveys?

An alternative form of data collection about work, which has gained popularity in recent decades, is time-use surveys. Initially used in business processes to determine how long workers spent on the completion of tasks (Stinson, 1999), these data have illuminated the valuable contributions which women make to the economy every day.

With time-use data, the hypothesis (developed by the conservative US economist Gary Becker [1965]) that women would decrease the amount of time spent on housework once they increased time spent in wage work has been disproved (Hartmann, 1981). These data have also made the enumeration of activities which are not based on an exchange-based relationship possible.

Time-use data have not only demonstrated how shifts in cultural perceptions of gender roles influenced women’s well-being and the time they dedicate to housework (Seymour and Floro, 2021), but they have also more accurately captured the activities of agricultural households and informal sector workers, which labour force surveys have ordinarily done fairly poorly (Seymour, Malapit and Quisumbing, 2020; Hirway and Jose, 2011).

They have additionally been used in satellite accounts, which have attempted to estimate the value of women’s unpaid work and the contribution thereof to overall GDP estimates (Esquivel et al., 2008; Neetha, 2010). The value of time-use surveys thus lies in making visible not only the work of informal sector workers, but also of unpaid labourers in the household and unemployed individuals who tend to engage in survivalist activities. This article focuses on the latter two categories.

The excluded

Women

Women have tended to find themselves on the periphery of the economy in both developed and developing nations. Reasons for this have been well-ventilated in the literature and range from their preference to specialise in housework, their biological make-up which makes them better suited for tasks outside the market, and assumptions about them made by other market participants, resulting in barriers of entry to the economy (Becker, 1985; Hartmann, 1979; Bergeron, 2016).

One trend that has been consistent over the decades, even as the labour market has become more feminised, was that women continue to be the primary labourers of unpaid care work (Folbre, 2014). The relationship between the productive and reproductive economies are well studied by heterodox schools of thought. Mainstream feminist economists, radical feminists and social reproduction theorists have written most widely about these phenomena (Bhattacharya, 2017; Himmelweit and Mohun, 1977; Briskin, 1985; Vogel, 2000). In their work, they have demonstrated how vital activities within the reproductive economy are to sustain the productive economy.

However, this unpaid care work, by virtue of it being unpaid and performed in the household, has tended to be excluded from traditional economic analyses. In countries with poorly developed public infrastructure, this burden becomes even greater (Floro and Komatsu, 2011). This argument can be extended to the unpaid work women do in building their communities; the foundation of a well-functioning society (Banks, 2020).

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GDP is both incomplete and exclusive. It simply does not register unpaid labour in the home – housework, cooking and caring.

However, in countries around the world, increasing divorce rates, fragmented families, decreasing marriage rates, and decreased fertility has accompanied the feminisation of the labour market (Bakker, 1999; Browne & Misra, 2005; Gronau, 1977; Rosenfeld & Birkelund, 1995; Schultz, 1985; Weeks, 2011). Loss of male breadwinner income and public health crises, such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic, are additional factors that have pushed women into the labour market in Africa (Coulibaly, 2005; Zimmer and Das, 2014; Zimmer, 2009).

Many attempts have been made to include women's work in the measurement of economic activity, or to determine how a woman should be compensated for work done in the household (Pyun, 1969; Suh and Folbre, 2016; England, Budig and Folbre, 2002). The focus of these studies has been on making women's work visible through demonstrating its value and, by doing so, making women more visible and consequently less vulnerable. Failure to do so has resulted in women's exploitation in the capitalist economy, and households (or at least the women therein) having to provide the support which the state and the market are unable to provide. In African economies, with limited infrastructure, women's contributions become vital to the functioning of the economy. Despite



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this, women remain a vulnerable group on the continent.

Youth

On the African continent, the “youth bulge” or demographic dividend which has been identified in a number of studies has been viewed as an asset to the continent, given the prediction that the African region will be the only region in the world with a youth cohort greater than the rest of the population (Backhaus and Loichinger, 2021; ILO, 2021; 2020). However, the inability of many African economies to absorb the youth into productive activities has fuelled discontent. This discontent has not been beneficial for their individual identities, nor has it been good for social cohesion. The youth unemployment rate has been growing on the continent in line with global trends, but the youth bulge makes the accompanying consequences of youth unemployment in Africa a more serious and urgent problem (ILO, 2021).

The activities of unemployed youth have not been viewed in a similar light to those of women. This is in part because assumptions have centred

on them eventually getting jobs, something women did not traditionally need to do, at least in the Western context (Fraser, 1994; Land, 1980). However, given the many challenges facing the traditional labour market today, and supply-side constraints, such as long-term unemployment, it is questionable whether these individuals will ever find traditional or standard employment opportunities.

When combining the poor economic conditions on the continent with the changing nature of the global economy and limited social security provided by African governments, youth unemployment presents an unsustainable situation. Nevertheless the youth, like women, also make valuable contributions to the economy every day. Many engage in unpaid reproductive labour, alongside women (particularly young women), while others engage in subsistence or survivalist activities (Webster, Joynt and Sefalafala, 2016; World Bank, 2009; Taljaard, 2012).

A sample study in Ghana (40 years ago) found that 77% of unemployed youth helped their families with ➤

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The value of time-use surveys thus lies in making visible not only the work of informal sector workers, but also of unpaid labourers in the household and unemployed individuals who tend to engage in survivalist activities.

“farming, wood carving, cloth weaving, tailoring, carpentry or trading” (Boakye, 1980: 31), although less so in urban settings. Similarly, in South Africa about 73% of men classified as unemployed or not economically active men and over 50% of similarly classified women are actually engaged in subsistence activities, while a proportion of not economically active and unemployed men and women also engaged in wage employment (Floro and Komatsu, 2011) according to the time-use diary. These activities were not enumerated using the employment definitions employed by labour force surveys, but were instead made visible using time-use data.

Towards a more inclusive approach

A shift in thinking about what constitutes valuable economic activity is needed around the world, but more urgently in Africa. Literature cited in this article has demonstrated the limits of traditional measures of economic activity but has also established why continuing to measure economic



activity in this way is not sustainable. We need a different way of thinking about economic activity, by moving away from economic activity having a means to a money-metric end towards an act of “social provisioning,” as encouraged by Power (2004). For women and the youth, a shift in thinking is needed from defining activity as *what people do to earn a living* to considering *how people spend their time*.

This conceptual shift in thinking is not a novel proposal. What is novel is that I am arguing for this shift not only for the sake of women, but also for the sake of unemployed youth. In line with both the social provisioning framework and the capabilities approach, this would require that we think about work as more than just a means to earn a wage, but also think about our identities in our work, as the ILO (1999) has already encouraged in its Decent Work Agenda.

This shift would mean moving away from relying *solely* on the traditional measures of employment in labour force surveys to the measurement methodology used in time-use surveys. Arguments for the use of time-use

surveys have been made by various authors (Esquivel et al., 2008; Budlender, 2007; 2010; Floro, 2021). These authors have demonstrated that using time-use surveys could not only result in estimates of GDP being revised upwards (Suh and Folbre, 2016; Chadeau, 1992; Dulaney et al., 1992), but could also shift people’s thinking around how they spend their time and the contributions they make on a daily basis, given the difference in reported labour market stats and actual time-use demonstrated by Floro and Komatsu (2011).

If we look at economic activity from a time-use perspective, a number of benefits could become apparent (in addition to those already mentioned). These include identifying the types of activities the “unemployed” engage in and identifying how time constraints hamper access to participation in traditional economic markets.

For the unemployed, this means that we can enumerate what they do with their time. Many may be engaged in unpaid labour in service of their communities or households. This would be specifically pertinent where labour market status is linked to household



composition and the location where someone lives. In countries where the supply of workers outpaces the demand for formal labour (the case for many countries in the sub-Saharan Africa region), more appropriate policy responses could be devised as policy responses to poverty and inequality generally take the form of gearing individuals towards formal, paid employment.

Time-use data provide insight into the types of activities that people may already be involved in, and which may represent a barrier to paid employment. Women who, for instance, have heavy care burdens in the household may not have time to look for and remain in paid employment. Knowing how they spend their time may allow for more appropriate welfare reforms to lighten the care burden. Similarly, inequality in time-use, which has been proven to be a key driver of inequality in the labour market, could allow for labour market policies that are geared to addressing time constraints which are external to the labour market, such as mandated childcare facilities in the workplace or publicly subsidised childcare centres. Lastly, more appropriate welfare reforms could be extended to unemployed youth which do not presume that all working age individuals should have access to paid employment (such as South Africa's social grants and private pensions systems). Broad-based social security reforms could include universal income grants (as proposed in Namibia) or unemployment grants.

Although the regular administration of time-use surveys would assist in better enumeration of activities individuals engage in, it would still be necessary for governments to be able to identify those who are defined as "unemployed" in order to devise appropriate policies to support such individuals; knowing how people spend their time will not address their need to earn an income. It is indeed possible to combine traditional and time-use

measures into a single survey, and this has been done in countries like Tanzania and Benin where questions related to time-use were added to an existing survey in the form of an additional module (Budlender, 2007).

In addition, it must be noted that changing or expanding measurement techniques does not suggest that other barriers to economic prosperity will automatically be removed. These include existing problems related to economic growth, challenges related to poorly governed political institutions, and the racism, Eurocentrism and imperialism that often underpin African economies (Obeng-Odoom, 2017). Having data is also not an automatic qualifier for positive policy developments. Rather, it could provide a more accurate picture of what is taking place within an economy and allow for the development of more appropriate policy responses.

Conclusion

We need to re-think how we measure economic activity, particularly in Africa where large informal economies are the norm. Time-use surveys are a powerful way of enumerating the economic activities of those who are especially economically vulnerable and tend to be ignored by traditional economic measures – women and the youth. Thinking differently about economic activity in terms of time-use, rather than as exchange-defined relationships will influence what we view as valuable to society and in turn change the parameters of public policy debates, public budgeting and decision making.

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ICT graduates call for interventions to improve internship programmes

By Khathutshelo Budeli, Dikgetho Mokhutja, Alex Dandadzi, Ntsoka Mathiba, Taurai Hungwe, Tsakani Ndobe, Vhulenda Sumbana, Siyabonga Masuku, Innocent Nkosi and Mosima Masethe

Khathutshelo Budeli and Dikgetho Mokhutja were postgraduate students who carried out the research study under the guidance of the other authors, all with the Computer Science and Information Technology Department at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, Gauteng, South Africa.

Internship programmes are potentially a powerful intervention to give university graduates the work experience they need to advance in their chosen profession. These initiatives represent a major investment by government and the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) who sponsor them. This study, drawn from the experience of ICT graduates, questions some of the features of internship programmes and suggests avenues to improve their usefulness for both interns and employers.

Introduction

Youth unemployment in South Africa, as of the first quarter of 2021, stood at 46.3%. The youth jobless rate as per the expanded definition stood at 74.7% (Statistics South Africa, 2021). This is a disturbing statistic. The government has intervened to encourage government and private sector organisations to employ young graduates and place them in internship programmes (Mabiza, Mahlalela and Mbohwa, 2017). These internship programmes range from 12 to 24 months. They were included as a new entrant category into the National Development Plan (NDP) and are operationalised by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), which oversees the SETAs (Pop and Barkhuizen, 2010).

The aim of the internships was to furnish interns with opportunities to work with experienced professionals in a particular field as well as develop networks for future reference (Burns and Chopra, 2017; Mabeba, 2019). The employer receives a grant from the relevant SETA to pay the interns while

the intern gets an opportunity to gain hands-on experience that enhances his or her learning or understanding of a particular area of study through participation in real work environments (Bukaliya, 2012; Mgaya and Mbekomize, 2014). A benefit that might be less obvious, but which is nevertheless important, is that host organisations get a chance to fulfill their corporate social responsibilities (Mgaya and Mbekomize, 2014), and to operate at full capacity at much lower cost; interns, who do the actual work, generally earn less than entry-level positions (Koyana and Mason, 2018). Therefore, employers use internships as a cost-savings measure.

It has also been found that interns get little support from established employees who have been with the organisation for longer, but who are less formally qualified than the interns (Koyana, 2014). Mabeba (2019) posits that interns are assigned to different mentors with different skills, which creates confusion for the interns. This often obstructs their process of learning new systems and skills in the work ➤

environment. Furthermore, hosting organisations do not commit to retaining graduates at the end of the internship programme, resulting in those graduates finding themselves unemployed, and possibly back where they were before the internship (Mabiza, Mahlalela and Mbohwa, 2017; Mseleku, 2019).

It remains to be determined whether interns acquired skills from internships that make them more employable and experience to help them get jobs (Ohei and Africa, 2019). This study set out to determine if the DHET/SETA internship programme works for graduates with Computer Science and Information Technology qualifications in South Africa.

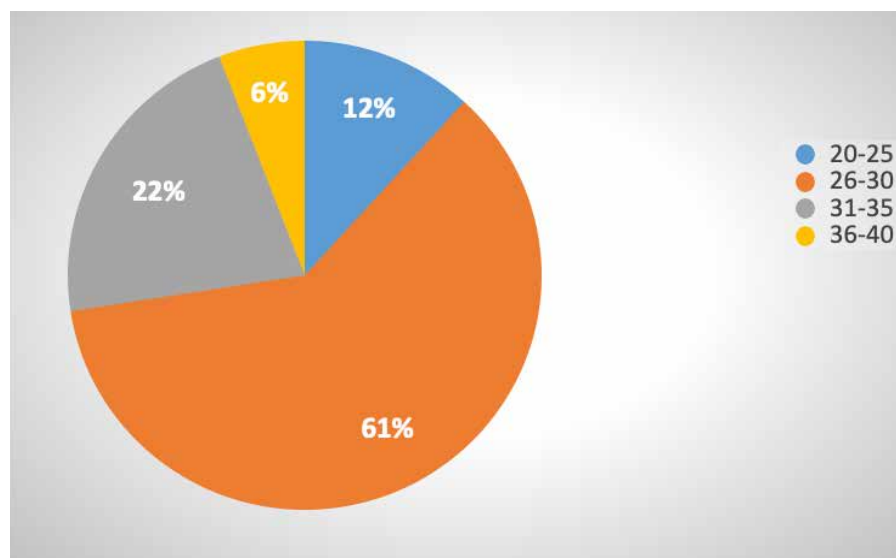
Methodology

Quantitative and qualitative approaches and the snowball sampling method were used in this study. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed by email to graduates working and/or undergoing internship programmes in the field of Computer Science and Information Technology at private and public organisations in Gauteng. The disclosure of organisations' names and respondents' personal information was discouraged to preserve privacy and confidentiality. The study was carried out over one year during the 2020 academic year.

Findings

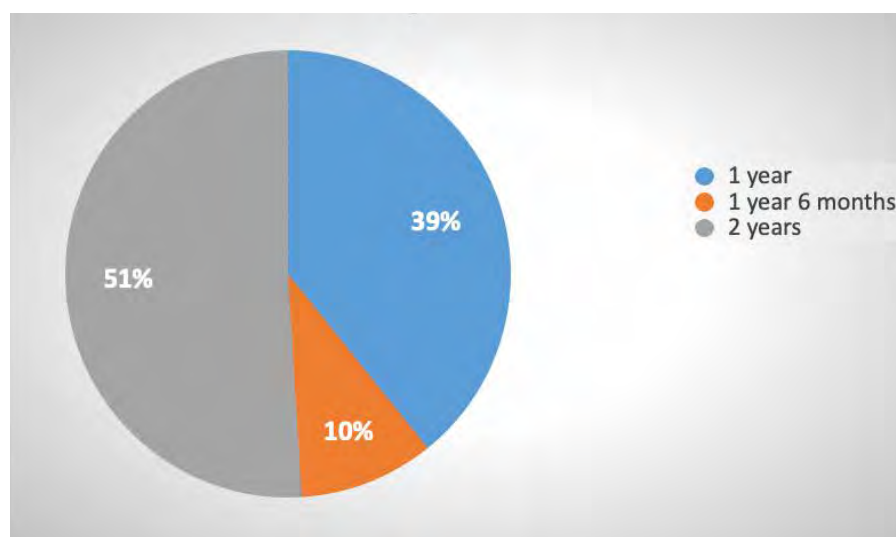
Out of 100 survey questionnaires distributed 51 responses were received, which suggests that there was interest in the study. Of these responses, 59% were from females and 41% were from males. This points to the inclusion of more women in the formal sector of the South African economy. The majority of the respondents (93%) were employed in the private sector with only 7% employed in the public sector.

Figure 1: Age of respondents



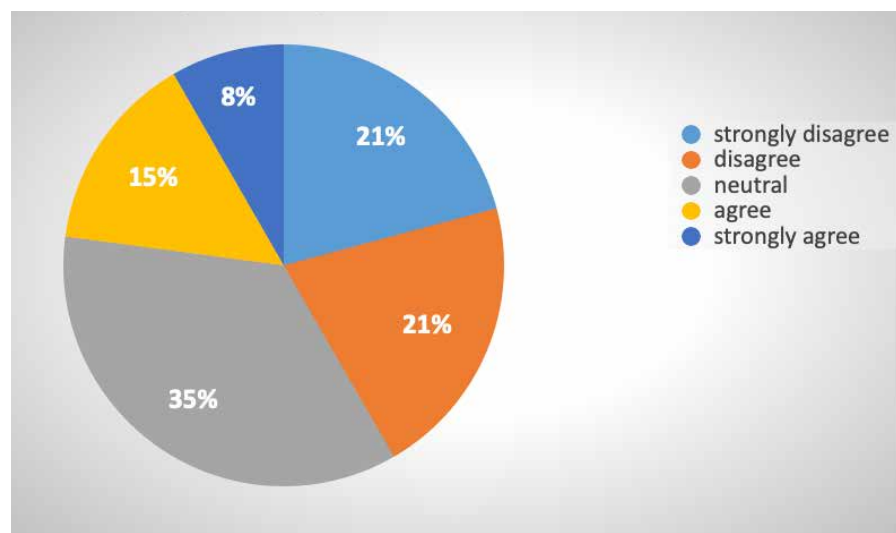
The majority of the respondents (61%) were between the ages of 26 and 30, which suggests the respondents were graduates who had recently completed their first and/or second degree at an institution of higher learning in South Africa. This was followed by those in the 31-35 age group at 21%, while 12% were in the range 20-25, and 6% between 36 and 40 years old.

Figure 2: Duration of internship



The majority of the interns (51%) were employed for two years, followed by 39% who were employed for a period of one year, and 10% employed for 18 months.

Figure 3: Tasks versus job description



As illustrated in figure 3, only 8% of the respondents “strongly agreed” that they did tasks stipulated in their job descriptions. A further 15% of the respondents “agreed”, giving a total of 23% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that the tasks they performed as interns matched their job descriptions. A very high percentage of 35% were neutral with 42% saying they experienced a misalignment between the tasks they were made to carry out and their individual job descriptions.

Figure 4: Communication with seniors

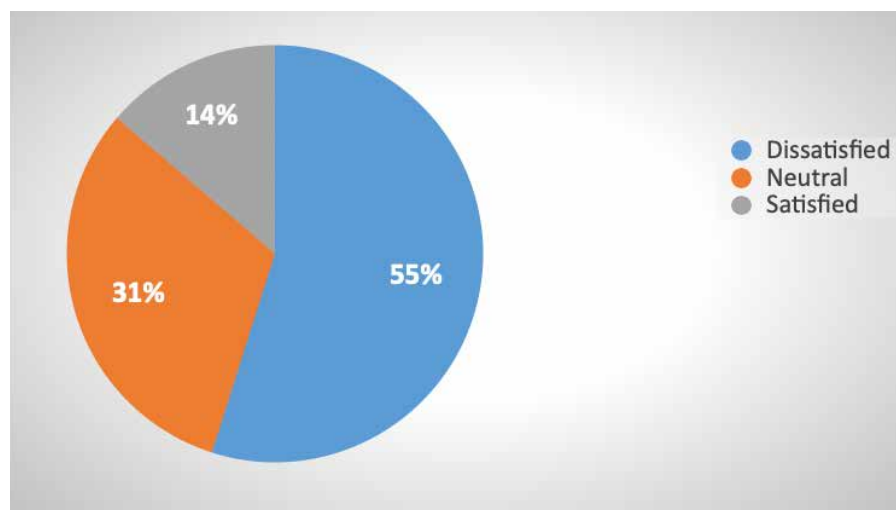


Figure 4 illustrates the communication between interns and their superiors (senior co-workers or supervisors). The majority of the interns (55%) felt there was a communication vacuum between them and their senior co-workers whom they were expected to learn from. Only 14% said they had a fruitful communication channel between themselves and their superiors.

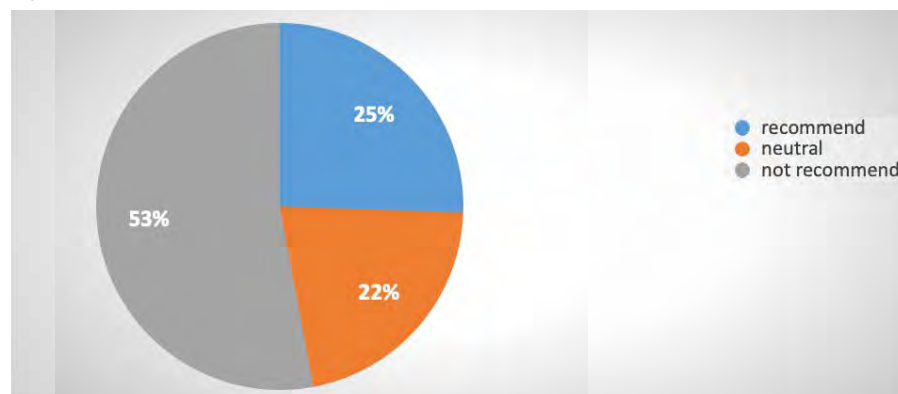
Figure 5 shows to what extent respondents would recommend an internship to someone else. Only 25% of respondents felt that they would recommend the internship, while the majority of the respondents (53%) said they would not. This negative result (53%) is a matter of concern considering that the government is trying to tackle the need for skills transfer to youth and reduce youth unemployment. It suggests that an intervention in the current system is warranted.

The respondents were asked what they think should be done to improve the ICT internship programme. This is what some had to say:

- “The sectors must conduct exit interviews when the contracts of their interns end so that they can have ideas on how to improve their training”;
- “The interns must be able to rotate between different departments for them to choose a career based on what they feel confident [with], excel [in] or what they like”;
- “Graduate interns must do their part in researching what they are training so that they can have knowledge and do not struggle when being trained so that they can fit well into the organisation”;
- “Sectors should have a clear set of learning outcomes, access to mentors and on-going career development opportunities”;
- “Have interns work on real projects, real problems that generate real results”; and
- “Allow interns to ask questions, talk about their performance, understand how they can improve, and offer feedback”.

The respondents’ opinions indicate dissatisfaction with the existing internship programmes and the need for interventions such as exit interviews, job rotation, implementation of >>

Figure 5: Recommend internship



mentorship programmes, clear job or learning outcomes, continuous career development opportunities, openness, effective feedback, and real project engagement.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether the internship programmes in the fields of ICT and/or Computer Science effectively provide interns with work experience and improve their skills. All of the respondents in the study had at least a bachelor's degree suggesting that they had acquired the theoretical and practical skills required by industry. Based on the findings, it is clear that most respondents felt they were made to perform tasks not specified in their job descriptions. This echoes a theoretical finding by Mabeba (2019) and a qualitative finding by Mseleku (2019) of general dissatisfaction among interns with the internship programmes.

The study looked specifically at graduates with qualifications in the ICT and Computer Science fields. It is certainly reasonable to expect interns to acquire relevant skills in two years of internship, which is demonstrated by the 23% of satisfied respondents. However, a lot more needs to be done in order to address youth unemployment in this country, given the government's interventions.

Employers might be taking

advantage of the grants provided by the government, simply to have more people available for their operations at low costs, instead of focusing on the intended goals of internships. It is our view that naming and shaming organisations that have taken advantage of the subsidised internship programmes might have deterred the respondents from taking part in the study. The fact that the majority of respondents would not recommend taking part in an internship programme to anyone else suggests that the current policy is not being adhered to.

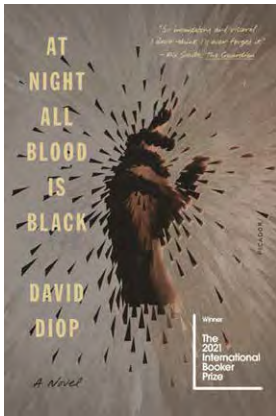
The recommendations made by interns are a fair call on government institutions and other organisations (private or public) to relook at the internship programmes and the policy as a monitoring and evaluation exercise to address these challenges. Such a policy review would create a win-win situation as it would also empower ICT graduates. Future research which compares the private and public sectors internship programmes according to different factors such as retention of interns, level of job positions, screening process of interns, and type of tasks (practical, administrative) could be a valuable exercise.

Although it would be beneficial for South Africa to conduct the same study at a national level, it is our view that in the medium term these results and recommendations should be applied

as a contribution towards updating and improving the current internship programme policy first. Such a move would directly address current internship programme challenges, resulting in the reduced unemployment of ICT graduates as well as contributing to the development of South Africa as a whole.

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At night all blood is black

David Diop

Translated by Anna Moschovakis

Publisher: Pan Macmillan: US, 2018. R280

Review by Caroline D. Laurent, Postdoctoral fellow, Harvard University

Who is David Diop?

Born to a French mother and a Senegalese father, David Diop has won the prestigious annual International Booker prize for translated fiction. He shares the prize with his translator, Anna Moschovakis for the novel, At Night All Blood is Black. The book tells the story of a Senegalese soldier who descends into madness while fighting for France in the World War I. It has been a bestseller in France and won several major literary awards. Literature scholar Caroline D. Laurent, a specialist in Francophone post-colonial studies and how history is depicted in art, told us why the novel matters.

Diop is a Franco-Senegalese writer and academic born in Paris in 1966. He was raised in Dakar, Senegal. His father is Senegalese, his mother French and this dual cultural heritage is apparent in his literary works. He studied in France, where he now teaches 18th-century literature.

At Night All Blood is Black is Diop's second novel: his first – 1889, *l'Attraction universelle* (2012) – is about a Senegalese delegation at the 1889 universal exhibition in Paris. His next book, about a European traveller to Africa, is set to come out this summer.

What is at night all blood is black about?

It tells the story of Alfa Ndiaye, a Senegalese *tirailleur* (infantryman) and the main narrator of the novel (he uses

the first-person pronoun 'I' in most of the text). He is fighting on France's side – and on French soil – during World War I.

The novel starts with the narration of a traumatic event that the African soldier has witnessed: the long and painful death of his best friend, Mademba Diop. The traumatic event directs Alfa's vengeance, that could also be perceived as self-punishment. He kills German soldiers in a similar way, reproducing and repeating the traumatic scene. He then cuts one of their hands off and keeps it with him.

This results in Alfa being sent to a psychiatric hospital where doctors attempt to cure him. It deals with the concepts of war neurosis and shell shock that appeared then (what we now refer to as post-traumatic stress disorder).

The form of the novel associates elements of an inner monologue as well as a testimony. This allows the reader to see, through the perspective of a colonial subject, the horrors of war.

In this sense, Diop writes a nuanced text: he describes the violence perpetrated and experienced by all sides. Alfa Ndiaye becomes a symbol of the ambivalence of war and its destructive power.

Why does the book matter?

It's important because it addresses what I would refer to as a silenced history: that of France's colonial troops.

Though the colonial troops, and especially the Senegalese tirailleurs, a corps of colonial infantry in the French Army, were established at the end of the 1800s, they became 'visible' during World War 1 as they took part in combat on European soil.

Despite this, the involvement of African soldiers during the two World Wars is rarely taught in French schools or discussed in the public sphere. The violence exercised during recruitment in French West Africa, their marginalisation from other troops and the French population notably through a specific language (the français tirailleur) – created to prevent any real communication – and their treatment after the wars go against a specifically French narrative that emphasises the positive aspects of France's colonialism and its civilising mission.

The lack of visibility of the history of Senegalese *tirailleurs* is also connected to the ongoing dispute about specific events. One in particular is the massacre of Thiaroye. In December 1944, between 70 and 300 hundred (the numbers are disputed) Senegalese *tirailleurs* were killed at a demobilisation camp in Thiaroye, after having asked to be paid what they were owed for their military service.

Diop also manages to shatter stereotypes associated with Senegalese *tirailleurs*. In French historical and literary representations, they are seen as both naïve children in ➤

need of guidance and barbaric warriors. Senegalese *tirailleurs* partook, against their will, in war propaganda: this representation was to create fear on the French side as well as on the German side (*Die Schwarze Schande* – the Black Shame – presented African soldiers as rapists and beasts).

Diop appropriates this in order to complicate it: while Alfa's violence in killing his enemies follows this logic, one realises that this causes – and was caused by – great distress. Moreover, Diop also inverts this vision as he questions who is human and inhuman: Alfa asserts that his Captain, Armand, is more barbaric than he is.

Diop thus manages to question

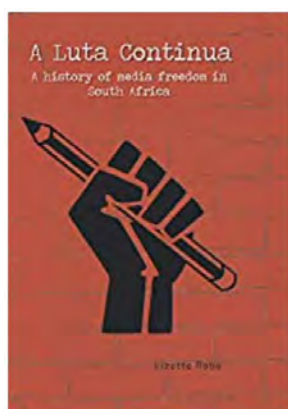
representations of black soldiers dictated by colonial stereotypes – in order to dismantle them.

Why does this Booker win matter?

Diop receiving the International Booker prize is of great importance because *At Night All Blood* is *Black* exposes a specifically French history that is connected to France's colonial endeavours. And even though the novel focuses on France, it connects to other histories as it indirectly points to the fact that other European colonial powers also resorted to using colonial troops during wars and erased their role in subsequent commemorations.

The novel also shows the importance and power of translation as Anna Moschovakis has managed to translate all of the beauty and horror of Diop's prose. In the same way that Diop manages to combine his dual heritage in his text, Moschovakis has allowed English readers to be exposed to a history that is specific to France, and yet similar to other histories.

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Self-regulation

A contradiction for press and politicians alike

Lizette Rabe

Publisher: SUN PReSS: Stellenbosch, 2020. 1151 words. R495

Review by Martin Nicol

Between 2011 and 2016, *The Sunday Times*, the most influential voice of journalism in South Africa, used its right to media freedom to publish three major stories which have since been shown to be total lies, planted by state capturists, organised crime and ANC factions. These were about a Cato Manor death squad, the illegal renditions of Zimbabweans by police and the rogue unit at the South African Revenue Service. The journalists involved were honoured at the time with the most prestigious awards from their colleagues for investigative journalism (Harber, 2020).

Judge Kathy Satchwell said that her

“big takeaway” from the inquiry she led into the scandal was: “The media’s role in a democracy and the importance of self-regulation” (Daniels, 2021).

Lizette Rabe is professor of journalism at Stellenbosch University. She has written a no-nonsense narrative history of the media in South Africa, from the earliest days of colonialism – when “Western modes of communication” first made landfall – up to the first wave of the coronavirus.

This is the first ever attempt at a comprehensive – and inclusive – account of the history of media freedom in South Africa. She finds media freedom long before the media began to play a role in democracy.

“There can be no democracy without media freedom,” writes Rabe. True! we respond – but it seems there can be media freedom without democracy, and media freedom can also undermine democracy. Media freedom can, in fact, destroy citizens’ trust in government and even in democracy itself.

Rabe relies a great deal – in fact pretty much exclusively up to 2009 – on secondary sources, all of which are carefully footnoted. But her unique contribution is to string them all together. The periodisation is pedestrian and not particularly helpful in bringing sense to the narrative. However several themes are usefully deployed – such as how the press came to be segmented

into English, Afrikaans and “black” elements and how these “trichotomous characteristics” defined the press for two centuries; how the black press developed in five phases (ending with “the black empowerment phase”); and how the alternative/resistance press flamed in and out.

That beacon of press excellence, *Fairlady*, somehow gets an index entry here but there is no mention of my favorite ever alternative publication – the often-banned *Learn and Teach*, with Mogorosi Motshumi’s Sloppy cartoon and the big readable font.

Rabe comes down hard on colonial and apartheid governments for their harsh actions against the press. Her theme – across the centuries – is how politicians and governments absolutely hate the media, and yet rely on the media for pursuing their own ends. Then she expresses surprise when the ANC government reacts negatively to both tongue lashings and inaccurate reporting from the press. She goes to the extent of repeating, at some length, the views of a long-time communications professor at UNISA, P.J. Fourie, who penned an article in 2009 entitled “A return to the Repression of Freedom of Speech: Similarities between the Apartheid Government and the ANC’s actions against the media”.

This is all fair comment, and is supported by detailed quotations, but it is a bridge too far as a credible argument. Even Fourie, writing five years later and comparing local press freedoms with those in our BRICS compatriots, entitled his contribution: “South Africa: A free media still in the making” (Milton and Fourie, 2015).

Never having read much of the Afrikaans press – ever – I found the explanations of its history, personalities

and directions over the years interesting and diverting. Ton Vosloo, card-carrying verligte and sometime Naspers mogul, writes a gushing foreword, suggesting a subtitle for the book: “Bloodied, but unbowed”.

Some of Rabe’s assertions I found astonishing: “To the Afrikaans press’s credit it must be said that, during the 1960s ... the Afrikaans press progressed to become the most powerfully organized force of opposition.” Elsewhere she writes, “In the mid-80’s the apartheid bastion started to crumble ... Afrikaners progressively realised how an inhumane policy humiliated the majority of fellow South Africans.” Also, “It was widely accepted that the Afrikaans papers *Die Beeld* (1965-70) and *Beeld* (1974 -) in particular and also other Naspers papers played a more important role in changing apartheid than the Afrikaans establishment press have generally been credited for.” James McClurg, ombud for the Argus Group, is quoted as saying that when historians turn their eye on this era (before 1990) [they should] “reserve a chapter for the contribution of the verligte Afrikaans press towards change in South Africa”.

None of this squares with my historical prejudices on how democracy was achieved – but Rabe has footnotes galore and by 1990 the National Party was indeed in favour of the total freedom of the press, a great change indeed!

Rabe has comments on the problem of “instrumentalism” in the press, as when Ranjeni Munusamy “brought ‘broad disgrace to the profession’,” by acting as cats-paw for Zuma supporters in an attack on the prosecuting authority in 2003. Earlier she quotes a visiting British journalist, aghast at the political journalism of the *Rand Daily*

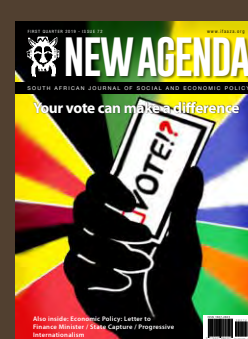
Mail, who said “You aren’t journalists, you’re political activists” and that if he were chair of the board he would fire the lot of them. This bias towards political involvement seems to be a common characteristic of all South African journalists over all time. It even provides an excuse for the book’s title, *A luta continua*. “Self-regulation” is not part of this territory – for journalists, or for government!

Then we get to Chapter 9 – “the period from 2009 onward”. The events it describes are earth-shattering for journalism and media freedom as we used to understand it. State capture, ANC and EFF attacks on journalists, the implosion of the SABC and the complete re-arrangement of the media universe – and then Covid-19. Rabe’s methodology – explained at the start as “a narrative history” – is completely unequal to the task of marshalling sense or substance from the last decade. The chapter is a grab-bag of odds and ends, and no longer a coherent story like the bulk of the book.

Rabe’s book is a thought provoking guide to our media history – and it provides a context for reading *We have a Game Changer*, the (forgiveably!) self-congratulatory account of the first decade of the *Daily Maverick*. In fact, when you reach Rabe’s Chapter 9, skip it and read the DM book instead.

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