

Get Involved

Explore ways of being a part of the solution in South Africa

In this 6-part series brought to you by Kagiso Trust, we explore radical collaboration between local government and local municipalities creating circles of unity for community benefit. We tackle topics of civil society, electoral reform, professionalising local government, corruption and social justice, infrastructure and power of collaboration.

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Civil Society needs to get organised

Civil society is crucial in shaping communities and holding those in power accountable. However, with many municipalities in South Africa facing significant challenges, it is imperative for civil society to actively participate in addressing these issues. By organizing themselves, holding those in power accountable, and engaging in collaborative efforts, civil society can transition from being part of the problem to becoming a powerful force for positive change. Active participation at both the individual and collective levels is essential to ensure that the needs and aspirations of communities are met. Join us for this 6-part series with Kagiso Trust as we explore ways of being a part of the solution and not part of the problem.

The panel discussion revolves around radical collaboration between local government and communities in South Africa, focusing on addressing challenges faced by municipalities. Kagiso Trust hosts the debate in partnership with BizNews, and the panel includes Mankone Ntsaba (Chairperson of Kagiso Trust), Paul Smith (Local Government Support Head for Kagiso Trust), and Professor Themba Maseko (Professor and Director of Executive Education at the Wits School of Governance).

Mankone Ntsaba introduces the Radical Collaboration campaign, highlighting the challenges local government faces in South Africa and the need for intervention. The campaign aims to encourage collaboration among stakeholders, including organizations, individuals, government, and businesses, to address the problems faced by municipalities collectively.

Paul Smith shares his practical experiences, emphasizing the importance of creating an enabling environment for

municipality development. He mentions the common problem of polarization

among stakeholders, hindering progress and service delivery. Smith advocates for collaboration and active citizenry to overcome these challenges.

The discussion then explores why elected councilors often leave undone critical tasks. Smith acknowledges that while elected officials have the budgets and mandates to address issues, citizen involvement is necessary for holding them accountable. He emphasizes the need for competent collaboration between citizens and municipalities to achieve better outcomes.

Professor Themba Maseko highlights the legal requirement for municipalities to develop an Integrated Development Plan (IDP) based on community needs and input. However, he observes a need for more community participation in these processes, which affects the prioritization of issues in the IDPs. Maseko stresses the importance of citizen involvement and accountability of councilors, suggesting that citizens must actively engage in their governance.

The incentive for citizens to participate is discussed, with Maseko noting that citizen participation can influence decision-making and improve service delivery. He acknowledges the challenges of political dynamics and coalition governments, which can create instability and hinder performance and delivery. However, he emphasizes the role of citizens in holding councilors accountable and



demanding action from municipalities. Regarding communication and community participation in the IDP processes, Paul Smith suggests that communities need proper structuring and support to engage effectively. He advocates for creating civic coalitions that include influential stakeholders from non-governmental sectors. Smith urges communities to be part of the solution and emphasizes empowering municipalities to engage with communities and adopt community-centric development practices.

The panel discussion concludes with a call for open dialogue between communities and municipalities, promoting a shift from selfish to ecosystem-centric decision-making. It is recognized that behavior change takes time, both within cities and communities, but the benefits of collaboration and active citizen involvement in local governance are emphasized.

Overall, the panel discussion highlights the need for radical collaboration, citizen participation, and accountability in addressing the challenges faced by South African municipalities. The campaign aims to foster unity and cooperation between stakeholders to create positive change at the local level.

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Exploring the impact of electoral reform on every South African citizen

Electoral reform is crucial in transforming South Africa's democracy. Former member of the Independent Electoral Commission, Terry Tselane, and Senior lecturer at University of Pretoria, Dr. Sithembile Mbete participated in a panel discussion focused on the recent electoral reforms and their implications, specifically the inclusion of independent candidates in the closed list proportional representation system. Tselane emphasized the long-standing efforts to establish a fair electoral system, while Mbete expressed concerns about the Electoral Amendment Act potentially benefiting political parties. Despite the complexity of the reform process, Tselane and Dr. Mbete remained hopeful for broader electoral reforms in the future elections.

In this interview, part two of the 6-part series with Kagiso Trust, focuses on electoral reform in South Africa and its potential impact on the country's politics. The guests, Terry Tselane and Dr. Sithembile Mbete, discuss the reasons behind the need for electoral reform and the challenges associated with its implementation.

Tselane highlights two main reasons for electoral reform: the long-standing advocacy by pressure groups and a Constitutional Court judgment requiring the inclusion of independent candidates at the national and provincial levels. While independent candidates can already participate at the local government level, the reform aims to extend this opportunity to higher levels of government.

Dr. Mbete explains that electoral reform, specifically allowing independent candidates, is essential for fulfilling the political rights of South African citizens. It promotes direct accountability between voters and their representatives, bypassing the influence of political parties. However, she raises concerns about the chosen electoral system, which maintains the closed list proportional representation with minor changes. This system may still favor political parties over independent candidates.

The interview also addresses challenges in implementing the reform, such as demarcating constituencies and providing adequate time for independent candidates to campaign. Tselane suggests using existing boundaries, like municipal and district boundaries, to expedite the process. However, the complexity of the new system and the lack of sufficient civic education pose difficulties for both independent candidates and voters.

Regarding the potential impact of the reform, Dr. Mbete believes that the barriers to entry for independent candidates at the national level are significant under the current legislation. Consequently, she does not anticipate major changes in the 2024 elections, with political parties remaining dominant. However, there may be a more direct relationship between independent candidates and voters at the provincial level.

In conclusion, while electoral reform in South Africa aims to increase inclusivity and direct accountability, the current legislation and challenges in implementation may limit the impact in the upcoming elections. The need for civic education, media involvement in dissemination of information and further discussions on the electoral system remain crucial for meaningful reform.



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Stop sitting on the side...get involved

—Written by Paul Smith



“In a democracy, every nation has the government it deserves.”

These profound words, attributed to Joseph de Maistre, highlight the importance of active citizenry in shaping the government and local communities. The choices made by engaged citizens exercising their voting rights directly influence the composition of local governments. However, when communities remain passive, they become vulnerable to corrupt and narcissistic leadership. To combat this, active citizenry must be embraced as the strongest tool for effecting change in political and community leadership behaviour to promote community-centric development.

a shift from insular to collaborative active citizenry is necessary. This shift entails embracing a mindset focused on the community’s well-being rather than self-centered thinking. It also requires a behavioural shift towards “Radical Collaboration” – genuine communal engagement and ideation for the greater good. Collaborative active citizenry significantly influences political and community leadership behaviour, shaping individual and collective engagement with political processes, decision-making, and policy outcomes in the interest of inclusive governance and community-centred development.

The Makana Circle of Unity (MCU): A Model of Radical Collaboration: In its infancy, the MCU serves as an exemplar of radical collaboration. This “A Political” civic coalition adopts a distributive leadership model to empower the community in addressing local development issues while working harmoniously with the local Municipality. The MCU provides a structure that strengthens the collective voice of the community within the local governance framework, enabling them to influence local development programs and hold both the municipality and the community accountable for their role in development. To foster radical collaboration and civic coalition, individuals within the community should:

- Embrace collaboration and active participation.
- Recognize and celebrate our shared humanity.
- Overcome prejudice and biases.
- Foster selflessness and cooperation.
- Build social cohesion.
- Advocate collectively for positive change.

While not all active citizenry requires radical collaboration, it all begins with exercising our individual democratic rights. We must choose to be part of the solution by voting prudently in elections, volunteering, supporting and contributing to initiatives, getting involved, advocating for change, and promoting collaborative engagement. Active citizenry, both individually and collaboratively, is vital for a healthy, community-centric democracy. It promotes increased responsibility and accountability among all stakeholders, ensuring that the voices and concerns of individuals and communities are heard and responded to by those in positions of authority. Collaborative active citizenry empowers all individuals to actively contribute to the prosperity of their community, foster positive change, and build trust among stakeholders.

Active Citizenry: Unleashing Your Power to Shape Political and Community Leadership Behaviour and Foster Community-Centric Development

Kagiso Trust urges all South African citizens to Get Involved and be an Active Citizen. Contact Paul Smith on PSmith@kagiso.co.za to find out

While Kagiso Trust has witnessed numerous commendable civic initiatives throughout South Africa, many suffer from what can be termed “Insular Active Citizenry.” These initiatives, despite their quality, impact, and relevance, often focus narrowly on issues important to specific interest groups. Influenced by historical inequalities, racial geography, belief systems, and political affiliations, these initiatives fail to serve the common greater good of the community.

James Patrick Kinney’s poem, “The Cold Within,” aptly captures the destructive nature of polarization and insular active citizenry. When actions and agency are driven by prejudice, selfishness, and indifference everyone bears the brunt of an undesirable fate. Communities must recognize that for power to be effectively exercised by those in authority or leadership, there must be willing submission by those they govern. To prevent self-interest from jeopardizing collective well-being, polarization and insularity must be avoided and dismantled. It is our responsibility to choose leaders wisely and actively participate in shaping our futures.

To achieve true community-centric development,

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Corruption and Social Justice: The Struggle for service delivery



In this latest episode of the Radical Collaboration series with Kagiso Trust, experts discuss the pressing issues of social justice and corruption in South Africa. The conversation centers around the concept of social justice as enshrined in the country's Constitution, emphasizing equal access to basic necessities such as clean water, which is a fundamental right. However, the reality on the ground tells a different story, with disparities in the quality of services between different communities. The guests, Zukiswa Kota from the Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM) and Wayne Duvenage, CEO of the Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse (OUTA), shed light on the detrimental effects of corruption and the challenges faced in achieving social justice and equitable service delivery.

South Africa's journey towards social justice has been hindered by numerous factors, including corruption, mismanagement, and poor governance at the local level.

The deterioration in the provision of essential services, such as access to clean water, highlights a regressive trend rather than progress in meeting constitutional commitments. Communities like Hammanskraal have experienced a decline in the quality of water despite constitutional promises. This decline raises questions about the intent and integrity of those responsible for governing and serving communities. It suggests a failure to prioritize the well-being and rights of citizens, especially the most vulnerable.

Corruption plays a significant role in exacerbating the challenges faced in achieving social justice and equitable service delivery. It contributes to the misallocation of resources, poor oversight, and a culture of impunity. The speakers highlighted instances of corruption, such as the mismanagement of the Giyani Bulk Water Project and outright corruption in Giyani, which have directly impacted people's access to clean water. The misuse of procurement and tender processes, along with poor administrative capacity, further compound the issue.

The discussion also touched upon the role of democracy and accountability in addressing these challenges. While South Africa boasts a progressive Constitution and a functioning democracy, there are shortcomings in holding elected officials accountable for their actions. Communities must actively participate in holding their elected representatives accountable, but this requires awareness, engagement, and collective action. The need for electoral reforms to ensure that elected officials are accountable to the electorate, rather than political parties, was empha-

sized. Reforms in the electoral system, constituency-based democracy, and participatory decision-making were seen as potential solutions to empower communities and enhance democratic governance.

Despite the pervasive corruption and challenges, there are avenues for change and improvement. Multi-stakeholder collaboration, such as civic actors working together with municipal authorities, can facilitate positive change and co-create solutions. Communities can also seek legal remedies to address issues through the courts, as seen in the case of Makanda. Additionally, active citizenry and civic education are crucial in empowering individuals to understand and participate effectively in the decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Transparency and access to information are vital elements of social accountability. Municipalities should prioritize sharing information and engaging with the public, ensuring that council meetings are accessible and documents are readily available. This open and inclusive approach fosters public scrutiny, helps identify red flags, and prevents corruption before it occurs.

While corruption remains a persistent challenge, the guests expressed optimism about the increasing awareness and exposure of corrupt practices.

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Professionalising local government: fostering accountability

Once hailed as the beacon of democracy in Africa, South Africa's municipalities are grappling with significant challenges related to governance lapses and accountability. Part 3 of the 6-part series with Kagiso Trust, Professor Sam Koma from the University of Limpopo and Mankodi Moitse, CEO of Kagiso Trust, shed light on the pressing need to professionalize local government in South Africa and address critical issues such as corruption, service delivery, and improved governance. The discussion delves into the importance of promoting high professional standards and ethics in the public sector, the challenges faced in recruitment and appointment processes, and the alarming accountability regressions highlighted by the Auditor General's report. These expert voices advocate for radical collaboration between local government and communities for a better future.

In part 3 of the 6-part series with the Kagiso Trust, experts shed light on the urgent need to professionalize local government and confront issues such as corruption, service delivery, and improved governance. This campaign aims to foster radical collaboration between local government and communities, creating circles of unity for mutual benefits. The discussion kicks off by questioning the necessity of professionalisation in a system where it is assumed that top government positions are occupied by suitably qualified individuals. However, recent governance lapses and accountability regressions have starkly highlighted the need to address professional ethics and standards in the public sector.

Both the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and



the National Development Plan Vision 2030 underscore the importance of promoting and upholding high professional standards. These standards are essential for building a capable and developmental state, where professionalisation and ethical conduct are upheld and promoted by those employed to serve the public.

Codes of conduct play a vital role in fostering professional values, behaviour, and conduct within local government, governing both elected public representatives, known as councillors, and municipal staff. These codes emphasise the creation of a culture of public service, the prevention of corruption, and the assurance of responsiveness to the needs and expectations of the public. However, empirical evidence reveals significant challenges within the public

service, particularly in the recruitment and appointment processes.

Reports from the Public Service Commission and the Auditor General shed light on the influence of political officials in appointing individuals who do not meet the minimum job requirements, thereby compromising the professionalism and effectiveness of the public sector.

The Auditor General's latest local government audit outcomes report paints a grim picture of accountability regressions, especially in public procurement.

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Decaying infrastructure and failing service delivery: A grave threat to local business

In this insightful discussion, three business leaders share their perspectives on the critical need for radical collaboration to address the challenges of local government infrastructure in South Africa. Alan Mukoki, CEO of the South African Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Richard Gaybba, Chair of the Makana Business Forum, and Ken Clarke, CEO of Twizza Beverages Eastern Cape, shed light on the urgent requirements for quick turnaround times, proper maintenance, and efficient service delivery. Despite the discouraging state of many municipalities, these leaders discuss their efforts to bring about positive change through initiatives like radical collaboration and the circle of unity.

In this latest interview, Alan Mukoki, the CEO of the South African Chamber of Commerce and Industry, shed light on the pressing need for radical collaborations to enhance local government infrastructure and service delivery in South Africa. The discussion focused on the provision and maintenance of infrastructure at the local level.

Businesses expect quick turnaround times from local governments regarding inquiries and requests, such as water provision, electricity, waste removal, and efficient road maintenance. Speedy and responsive infrastructure is crucial for productivity and competitiveness. The CEO emphasized that functional roads, operational traffic lights, and effective governance are essential for thriving businesses.

The general situation in many local governments in South Africa reflects discouragement due to a lack of skills, accountability, and responsiveness. The lack of incentives for performance and low voter participation contribute to the prevailing problems. Instances of poor service delivery, like water shortages in certain districts, have caused businesses to consider relocating.

Businesses recognize that they should not be responsible for assisting local governments in performing their duties. Instead, the private sector and local government collaboration should focus on ensuring local governments create the necessary conditions and service-level

agreements for businesses to thrive. This means hiring competent and skilled individuals and establishing a culture of accountability and high performance.

The interviewee suggested a radical shift in the approach to local government management to improve the situation. This begins with reevaluating the type of individuals hired for key positions, such as city managers, and ensuring they possess the necessary skills and competencies. Performance management and a rigorous assessment process, similar to the private sector, can help ensure the right people are in the right roles.

The Mukoki stressed the importance of quantifying and defining culture within local government organizations. This includes setting clear expectations and standards for hiring individuals who align with the desired culture and values. Local governments can establish a cohesive and competent team committed to delivering effective service by doing so.

Clarke, CEO of Twizza Beverages Eastern Cape, shares his experiences with the Queenstown municipality, which has struggled financially and with infrastructure issues. Load shedding and insufficient infrastructure maintenance have negatively impacted his business, leading to increased costs and reduced productivity.

Gaybba, Chair of the Makana Business Forum, describes similar challenges, including water supply issues, electrical failures, poor road infrastructure, and inadequate sewerage treatment. These problems affect the town's economy, which is heavily reliant on the tertiary sector.

Despite the difficulties, Gaybba expresses some optimism due to efforts in radical collaborations and discussions.



However, he believes that holding officials accountable is crucial for meaningful change.

Clarke emphasizes the need for a national plan involving businesses, government, and communities to address these challenges collectively. He stresses the importance of admitting problems and seeking assistance to find solutions. He also calls for holding local government officials accountable and involving experts to resolve the situation.

Both business owners express concern over the lack of action and the resistance from local municipalities. They highlight the urgent need for collaboration, proper planning, and financial support to make a significant impact.

In conclusion, the current state of local government infrastructure in South Africa is posing serious challenges for businesses and communities alike. Radical collaborations and discussions show some promise, but urgent action, accountability, and a national plan are essential to create a positive change for the future.

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Revitalising Small Towns

In the end, individual people will ultimately make the difference; it is your personal choice



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A resounding revelation has emerged after extensive visits to thriving municipalities to uncover their success strategies, collaborations with less prosperous counterparts, and a comprehensive review of dialogues regarding municipal performance. The crux of the matter lies within the realm of people and leadership. The familiar challenges stemming from underperforming local governments have left us with an imperative, one that calls for action rather than perpetual diagnosis.

A recurring theme echoes throughout interactions within the Local Government sector: a pressing need for collaborative efforts among communities, businesses, and NGOs to reclaim agency from governmental bodies. This participatory approach, essential for shaping local futures, seeks to counterbalance local governments' perceived abuse of privileges, propelling communities to engage actively in local governance.

The recent emergence of independent candidates in local government elections raises intriguing possibilities. Could this signal a resurgence of community-driven governance, bolstering the ability to tailor destinies according to communal aspirations? The question arises whether communities yearn for councillors deeply embedded within their communities, capable of addressing their needs, as opposed to the prevailing cohort controlled by political entities.

Professor Themba Maseko underscores the vitality of enhanced collaboration between communities and local municipalities. This partnership entails mutual responsibility and accountability, yielding improved community outcomes. The presence of dedicated and engaged councillors can facilitate this transformation to radical collaboration.

However, the road to effective collaboration also necessitates shifts within communities themselves. First, communities must select councillors driven by community-centric values, transcending political affiliations, and appoint adept officials to realize municipal mandates. Second, communities must cultivate a cohesive structure conducive to meaningful deliberate collaboration with municipalities.

In addition, electoral reform is worthy of consideration to foster community-centric development and stakeholder collaboration. Strengthening the influence of

independent candidates while curbing the influence of proportional representation councillors could invigorate direct accountability between voters and representatives, reducing political party influence.

That said, authentic radical collaboration hinges on trust and respect among all parties involved. Presently, a growing level of distrust between communities, businesses, and governments hampers collaboration. All stakeholders need to be empowered to participate in meaningful collaboration. The restoration of municipal credibility is paramount for this outcome, a prerequisite for becoming a reliable equal collaboration partner. This demands a shift in municipal leadership paradigms, prioritizing community-centric service delivery over political allegiances and improving municipal institutional performance.

Central to the discourse is the readiness of current political and administrative leaders to transcend party politics and cadre deployment and adopt community centrality. This must result in appointing qualified capable officials aligned with community interests and the ability to lead municipalities to a more purposeful culture. Successful municipalities have also showcased the efficacy of separating councillor and administration roles and responsibilities, diminishing political intervention, promoting enhanced agency for municipal managers to manage their municipalities and improving oversight of municipal performance from councillors.

In addition, and to promote the organizational change desired for municipalities, government support agents, such as provincial and national departments, must reevaluate their approach to support and oversight. Addressing root causes, such as people's capabilities and institutional culture, should supersede symptomatic fixes like debt recovery, revenue management strategy, and service delivery deficiency. Addressing symptoms will, at best, result in short-term impact.

Addressing municipal performance cannot exclude the important relationship between corruption and social justice, an outcome of better service delivery. Every misappropriated rand undermines the state's capacity to address marginalized communities' social justice struggles. Radical collaboration between all stakeholders, including the municipality, must adopt a zero-tolerance stance on corruption, demanding accountability from all wrongdoers. This will free up the resources to address

community infrastructure development needs. To support the infrastructure redressing needs to bridge the social justice gap and promote local business retention Alan Mukoki, CEO of the South African Chamber of Commerce and Industry, underscores the imperative of radical collaboration between businesses and local governments to enhance infrastructure, service delivery and development. This partnership should empower municipalities to deliver rather than supplant their responsibilities, ultimately benefiting the community.

The looming trend of failing small-town economies underscores the urgency for radical collaboration and small-town rejuvenation. Departing businesses and resourceful residents exacerbate marginalization, leaving struggling communities devoid of resources, options, and hope. Collaborative efforts must transcend challenges, focusing on infrastructure maintenance and service delivery to retain and attract local businesses that will provide communities with work opportunities and grow municipal tax bases enabling local sustainability.

The Makana Circle of Unity's progress serves as a beacon of hope for small towns. Collaboration between the community stakeholders and the municipality, rather than against the municipality, yields positive results. While change is gradual, fostering collaboration amid historical mistrust holds promise and is worth pursuing. The stark reality is that collaboration faces opposition from many stakeholders preferring chaotic polarised environments that serve their individual agendas. Communities must not fall victim to these leaders and persist in serving the greater good for all. Radical Collaboration starts with early adopters who gradually influence more stakeholders to subscribe to collaboration as success is realised.

As Charles Darwin aptly put it, survival hinges not on strength alone but adaptability. The call for rejuvenating small towns is anchored in a personal and institutional transformational shift, one reliant on purpose, collective efforts, community centrality, and unwavering radical collaboration between community and local government.

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