Protest as political voice: Historical perspectives on youth politics

The Fourth Industrial Revolution and climate change: A roadmap to joblessness

The Uber platform and the app economy: Implication for labour, fair tax and social justice

Ensuring decent work in the digital age: A sharing and distributed economy with a shared and distributed ownership

The state of the youth 25 years into democracy

Bringing you critical labour analysis since 1974
The issue begins by examining the state of the youth, as well as what it reveals about our young democracy and how it is experienced by the working class youth. This issue, combined with the 4IR issue, is about our present future! It is the unrevealing project of creating a nation that is underpinned by a zeal for social justice but is this social justice, promised through a democratic process of voting, enough? Does it centre the dreams and aspirations of its young people? Does it cater for the working class that struggled for the birth of democracy? The answers perhaps lie in South Africa's recent economic trends revealed by the 2019 medium term budget speech. The South African economy in 2019 is said to be growing by 0.5%; missing the 1.5% forecasted by the national budget speech in February 2019. The unemployment rate in the 3rd quarter peaked at a record high of 29.1%, the highest in over 16 years. This roughly translates to 6.7 million unemployed people. This high unemployment rate is even affecting those who are supposed to be enjoying this democracy, those aged 15–24, who according to Stats SA are the most vulnerable labour force as 58.2% are unemployed. While we have seen aggrieved communities taking to the streets for better service delivery and job creation; it is surprising that the youth voter turnout during elections is noticeably low. That is why this issue first repositions the understanding of youth political participation. Firstly, by dispelling the post voting national chorus that the South African youth is politically apathetic. This view draws from a particular statistical concern (see Sibiya and Ncopo; Mthunzi; Heffernan in this issue) from the decreasing voter turnout. The youth has been active in political mobilisation that involves service delivery, as will be shown in this issue: the Alex Shutdown, the emergence of the Soweto Action Committee, youth mobilisation in the education sector with the Fees Must Fall Movement #FMF, the environmental movement including the September 2019 worldwide strike (see Morgan) and mobilisation against gender based violence (see Mntambo and Nkwanyana; Tsotetsi). This is perhaps the nature of working class politics today, it speaks to a number of ‘general’ or ‘broad’ issues that cannot be ignored if we seek to launch an analysis of our present future. We have seen the youth in Sudan, Chile, Hong Kong, France, Iraq, Beirut, and Bolivia to name a few, also take to the streets for the common cause of social justice.

Despite the grim picture of the South African economy and its dire implications for the status of economic and social justice, government has thrown a spanner in the works with its push for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) as a means of advancing the SA economy and subsequently alleviating social ills. In this issue we unpack what the 4IR is and aim to understand the optimism about technology in production, artificial intelligence, and the internet of things when we do not even appear to have surpassed our current social and economic conditions. Is this talk about the 4IR a chimera to hide the fact that the private sector is also involved in the large scale unemployment we see today? This is why centring the struggles of the working class is important, because to understand the future one has to understand the current conditions of the working class!

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Managing Editor
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Youth, politics and the myth of political apathy

Anthony Tolika Sibiya and Hlumelo Ncopo argue that the low youth-voter turnout in the South African national general elections does not mean that the youth is politically apathetic. Instead, the youth is involved in social justice movements and other community-based organisations that are playing a critical role in reconstructing the new democratic South Africa.

INTRODUCTION
The national general elections held on 8 May 2019 in South Africa and the results thereof show an electoral decline with arguably many young people who elected not to exercise their voting right. The overall election turnout has dropped significantly, by 7.5%, from 73% in 2014 to 66% in this year's elections. This is despite the 9.8-million eligible voters who did not register to exercise their electoral right.

There are varying reasons for this protest, ranging from lack of awareness among South Africans, and this is squarely blamed on the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). It is certainly worrying to us that the estimated 60% (which is 6-million people) of those who did not register to vote are young people under the age of 35. In theory, this tells the story of a dreary future.

The youth apathy in political spaces has been theorised and examined at length and all this theorising amounts to the idea that young people are slowly disengaging from South African politics (see Levin 2005; Breakfast, Bradshaw and Haines 2017). In this article, we focus at length on the alleged ‘youth political apathy’ as articulated in the aftermath of 2019’s low election turnout. While we acknowledge that young people have in part demonstrated disengagement in political party involvement, we argue that does not signify the lack of consciousness, nor the end of activism, among the youth in South Africa.

While the youth appears to be disengaging from electoral politics, young people are heavily involved in other alternative platforms, i.e. non-governmental organisations, social justice movements and other community-based organisations that are playing a critical role in reconstructing the new democratic South Africa.

To us, this insouciance about party/electoral politics demonstrates a trust deficit on the electoral system as an instrument to facilitate social justice and strengthen democracy. On the contrary, the reorganisation of student politics across universities in South Africa affirms our resolve that consciousness still exists among young people, albeit not in party politics. To measure apathy solely on the electoral decline is not only simplistic but also inadequate.

STATE OF THE YOUTH
In this section, we do not intend to provide a comprehensive review of the state of the youth, because that is beyond the scope of this article. However, we briefly highlight the state of the youth as represented by indicators, such as unemployment. In a way, we give due consideration to conditions that may give rise to what is alleged to be the youth’s political apathy; a term we retheorised to mean the reorganisation of politics.

There is consensus in the discourse that youth unemployment has now reached a ‘crisis level’ and the latest figures by Stats SA (2019) confirm this reality. Some commentators who have commented on this unemployment crisis seem to sustain the dominant narrative that government interventions or approaches have drastically failed to reduce the scourge of unemployment. In fact, this
The scourge of unemployment has stubbornly increased yearly. We, therefore, implore the present administration to declare unemployment a national catastrophe. For example, in 2019 (second quarter), youth unemployment stands at (56.4%) while unemployment is the highest for youth without a matric (57%) and lowest for those with any tertiary education and training (18.3%). Furthermore, approximately 3.3-million out of 10.3-million young people aged 15–24 years are not in employment, education or training; this category of youth has increased by (0.7%) from 2018 to 2019 (Statistics South Africa 2019). The picture remains perilous.

The continued sense of exclusion of youth and its negative representation resembles what Fine and Weise in the late 90s characterised as the unknown city. Such negative representations give credence to what others equate to the state of the youth as a state of being lost or a lost generation. These eminent writers (Fine and Wiese 1998) depicted a thoroughly frightening picture of young people in the USA displayed in the media as the reason behind the national problems facing their society. Like in the USA in the 1990s, the sense of hopelessness, frustration, and impatience among the South African youth is, to some extent, aggravated by some social conditions and thus a loss of hope in political-institutional structures to help i.e. electoral systems. For instance, unemployment, which we have cited already, and many other social ills create negative sentiments and attitudes among the youth. We contend that there is a gap regarding the critical voice/s in the public discourse to champion the cause of the despondency among the youth.

The few available critical voices remain unheard and unknown by the key social commentators. Instead of being heard and engaged, young people are characterised as ungrateful for the struggles waged for their liberation and, ultimately, their electoral right.

**THE DIMINISHING VALUE OF YOUTH POLITICAL FORMATIONS**

There has been a consistent decline in youth political formations, which attests to the reality that young people do not have trust any more in political parties as the drivers and agents of social justice and development. Although there is youth political formation in the mainstream political landscape, it suffers from clear political vision, ethics, and positive political codes of conduct. Consequently, the youth that eventually becomes active in these directionless youth formations tend to use these formations to advance their narrow political careers.

In our view, the value of youth political formations appears to be diminishing and losing currency in the political discourse. We reckon that political mother bodies alienate and suffocate young people. In some cases, youth political formations are led by proxies, thus our view that contemporary politics, perhaps, is about forming intact networks than effecting social change. To expect the same youth, made toothless and with no sense of commanding voice or critical political value, to drive and marshal the general populace to party electoral fortunes, is impractical.

If we consider all these problems faced by the youth, does it not justify their decision to boycott electoral politics? We surely do not support the stay-away protest approach in dealing with these problems, for this approach is counter-revolutionary; instead we need to unpack a series of factors in relation to the youth’s decision.
to boycott electoral politics. To put it differently, youth political formations, at this moment, are inward-looking and preoccupied with intraparty disputes, therefore, mobilising the youth is the least of their concerns – thus increasing electoral participation declines.

Having narrated the factors at play, we postulate that the decline in electoral support does not signify the death of activism, nor consciousness among the young people in South Africa.

UNIVERSITIES REKINDLING YOUTH CULTURES AND NEW IDENTITIES

Universities being traditionally politicised, as they are liberal in their outlook, are sites that allow all kinds of political opinion, and as such, they are better than structured politics, or party-structured politics, which seem to no longer accommodate dissent or new political ideas. Thus, we should take solace from the recent Fees Must Fall movements in higher education, which in our view have invigorated youth activism after years of a political lull and career opportunism caused by the decline in mainstream youth formations.

In this regard, there is a dominant narrative that the fees must fall movement demonstrates that democracy in post-apartheid South Africa is still strong. Dissent is not a cause of the state of emergency or bloodshed. Rights to strike for a just society are not criminalised, especially when they do not include breaking the laws of the state (Baragwanath, 2016). Correspondingly, the successful mobilisation across political divides in higher-learning institutions strongly refutes the half-cooked political apathy narrative (Hodes, 2016).

History bequeathed upon South African societies and universities a great deal of injustice. While democratic elections have been perceived as a facilitator of a means by which those injustices can be corrected, many have been left questioning whether liberal democracy is sufficient to correct those historic injustices. It is in this context that the student-led (youth) movements in higher education sought to correct injustices in the universities and their societies.

It is our considered opinion that these movements underscore the capabilities and political agency of youth, which debunks the myth of youth political apathy.

CONCLUSION

We, therefore, conclude that youth-led social movements that are not politically ‘aligned’ and student-led movements in higher education give insights to what youth activism can achieve in a short run in comparison to elections, which take a long time to achieve objectives. We reckon that it is a gross misreading to regard the youth electoral veto as something that is a crime in a country with democratic principles and values. We need to understand the electoral veto as a political statement, which decries the lack of trustworthiness of those in power and a position of authority. We dispute the narrative that a decline in electoral support signals youth political apathy. This storyline impoverishes the country and the much-needed debate about the effectiveness of elections in facilitating social justice, human rights, and meaningful participatory democracy. The youth might not have voted, and partly, this may be due to the weakened mainstream youth political voices to mobilise and resonate with the general youth. Based on the youth-led movements and their different activism prior to this year’s national elections, we are certain that the youth is not politically apathetic.

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Intsha, ezombokazwe, nenkolelo yokuthi osemusha akanandaba nezepolitiki

U-Anthony Tolika Sibiya noHlumelo Ncopo baphetha ngokuthi isibalo esiphansi sokubakhona kwentsha okhethweni lukazwelonke lwaseNingizimu Afrika asisho ukuthi intsha ayizwani nezepolitiki. Esikhundleni salokho, intsha iyazibandakanya ezinhlanganweni zemiphakathi nakwezinye izinhlangano ezikhathalela inhlala-kahle yabantu ezidlala indima enkulu ekwakhiweni kabusha kweNingizimu Afrika yentando yeningi.

**ISINGENISO**

Kuningi okubhaliwe mayelana nokungabani yakukhathakazela intsha ayisho intshiseko yokuthi iNingizimu Afrika ibuswa kanjani.

Noma ngabe kunezici zokungakhathaleli mayelana nezokubusa kubantu abasha uma kukhulunywa ngende izithinta ukuphatha, kumele futhi kwamukelwe ukuthi nentshiseko nenkolelo ukubonga abasha uma kukhulunywa nezinhlangano ezingahambisani noholumeni, izinhlangano ezizigxile kubulungiswa nokuhamba kwezwe, kanye nezinhlangano zemiphakathi okuyizona ezithetha uguquko lwangempela eNingizimu Afrika yamanje.

Kuthina lokhu kwehluleka kokuzibandakanya kumaqembu wezepolitiki kanye nokungathambeni uhlelo lokhetho kuHLangana nokungathembeni osopolitiki. Uma sibheka lokhukusuka kolunye uhlangothi sibona ukuthi abafundi basenyuvesi banentshisekelo kuzindaba zezepolitiki noma bayazihlanganisa nakaqembu zezepolitiki. Ukugxila eeqinisweni lokhu osemusha akanandaba nokuxazulula izikinga ngoba akazange avote akuyona inqubo enhle yokuqonda le nkinga.

**ISIMO SENTSHA**

Kuthina lokhu kwehluleka kokuzibandakanya kumaqembu wezepolitiki kanye nokungathambeni uhlelo lokhetho kuHLangana nokungathembeni osopolitiki. Uma sibheka lokhukusuka kolunye uhlangothi sibona ukuthi abafundi basenyuvesi banentshisekelo kuzindaba zezepolitiki noma bayazihlanganisa nakaqembu zezepolitiki. Ukugxila eeqinisweni lokhu osemusha akanandaba nokuxazulula izikinga ngoba akazange avote akuyona inqubo enhle yokuqonda le nkinga.

Kuningi okubhaliwe mayelana nokungabani yakukhathakazela intsha ayisho intshiseko yokuthi iNingizimu Afrika ibuswa kanjani.
Isibonelo salokhu ukuthi izinga lokungasebenzi kwentsha limi ku-56,4%. Kulabo abangenawo umatikuletsheni isimo sabo sibi ngoba uma bebalwa bafika kuma-57%. Abangcono yilabo abaneziqu zaseyunivesithi noma labo abanokuqegqeshwa okuphezulu, bafikelela ku-18,3% uma sebebonke. Ngapezu kwalokhu yizigidi ezingama-3,3% eziqhamuka kwizigidi eziyi-10,3% zentsha esuka ku-15 kuye ku-24 eziqhamuka kwizigidi ezingama-3,3% kwalokhu yizigidi ezinyi-10,3% uma sebebonke. Ngaphezu okuphezulu, bafikelela ku-18,3% noma labo abangenawo abaneziquziselele kusunyelwe kuma-57%. Abangcono yilabo sibenyoni ukuthi lesi sithombe asitshokozise nhlobo.


Lokhu kuquhubeka kokungakane kuyafana nalo kubo ukutshwe ukuthi lesi sithombe sibonisa lezi zinqubomgomo ezibhekene nentsha sekuyinsakavuleka ukuthi lezi zinqubomgomo ezithula, futhi ngokwemvelo, okwenza ngoba amanyuvesi anenkululeko zemibono evela kubafundi, izinhlobo ezahlukahlukene Ngokwesiko, amanyuvesi avumela isiko ezimibono ezinkulu ezaphambili, futhi izingqubomgomo ezithu ezilezihla kubantu abaphumelela okuyisa okuyisiza okuqeqeshwa. Lokhu kuqhubeka kokungakane kuyafana nalo kubo ukutshwe ukuthi lesi sithombe sibonisa lezi zinqubomgomo ezibhekene nentsha sekuyinsakavuleka ukuthi lezi zinqubomgomo ezithula, futhi ngokwemvelo, okwenza ngoba amanyuvesi anenkululeko zemibono evela kubafundi, izinhlobo ezahlukahlukene Ngokwesiko, amanyuvesi avumela isiko ezimibono ezinkulu ezaphambili, futhi izingqubomgomo ezithu ezilezihla kubantu abaphumelela okuyisa okuyisiza okuqeqeshwa.

AMANYUVESI AVUSELELA ISIKO ELDALALAMAQEMBUMANWENTSHA NGOBA LIBALULEKE KAKHULU EZIMPILVENI ZENTSHA
Ngokwesiko, amanyuvesi avumela izinhlobo ezahlukahlukene zemibono evela kubafundi, ngoba amanyuvesi anenkululeko ngokwemvelo, okwenza
izinqubo zawo kulokhu zibe ngcono kunenqubo yamaqembu ezepolitiki. Ngokubona kwethu iqembu le #FeesMustFall selibuyisele impilo kwemanzimi ngemva kokuba izinto bezithule isikhathi eside futhi obekuqhubeka sonke lesi sihathathi ukuthi abaholi abonakele bebezezithutika ngemali yentela. Lokhu kusho yethu le #FeesMustFall selivumele omunye kwezombusazwe elo abaholi abonakele bebezithule isikhathi eside futhi obekuqhubeka.

Kuyinkolelo yethu ukuthi lezi zinhlanganomenqubo yizinkwaba ukuthi nentsha esinentshisekelo kwezepolitiki. Lokhu kucekela phansi inkolelo ukuthi izinto ziyozele kuyinkolelo yethu ukuthi lezi zinhlanganomenqubo yizinkwaba ukuthi nentsha esinentshisekelo kwezepolitiki.

ISIPHETHO
Ngakho-ke siphele ngokuqinisekisa ukuthi amaqembu wentsha angaxhumene nepolitiki yamaqembu nentsha avulwa abafundi basenqo umenyelele isikhathini nomazwa. Inqobo zibulala emphahathini nomazwa ukuthi kufanele kuyinzenza zentsha zikhombisa ukuthi nentsha esinentshisekelo kwezepolitiki yakuleli. Lokhu kucekela phansi inkolelo ukuthi intsha esinentshisekelo nomazwa.

Umlando waseNingizimu Afrika wengwe ukuthi izikhathini zimunye isikhathi esidule esinoqomboni. Abantu abaningi baphakathi ukuthi ngokomthetho isikhathi esidule esinoqomboni. Abantu abaningi baphakathi ukuthi nentsha esinentshisekelo wentando yentsha ukugcizelelo

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Nothing less than a youth-led revolution will change the deteriorating lives of the youth in SA

Zama Mthunzi looks at the social, economic and political conditions of the youth in South Africa today. He argues that 25 years into democracy, the livelihoods of the youth continue to deteriorate. The problems noted in this article will only be solved by a youth-led revolution.

As we celebrated the 43rd anniversary of the June 16 uprising, it has become apparent that the livelihoods of young people in this country continue to deteriorate. In this article, I provide a description of how the social, economic and political conditions of the youth have become worse over the years, while prescribing active citizenship as a way of bringing forth change. The youth ought to be central in this active citizenship. However, the reality is, that in order for a noticeable change to take place, a youth-led revolution is required because only the youth can resolve the problems of youth. The question is when?

YOUTH AND POWER
Six months into 2019 and South Africa is celebrating 25 years of democracy. In the same year, the 6th democratic general elections were held. The general elections affirmed concerns about the poor participation by the youth in political processes such as the elections, Parliament and general politics. These concerns were not in vain; they proved that more and more young people are becoming uninterested in the existing formalised politics. The young people of South Africa seem not to think that critical engagement and organising in politics have the potential of alleviating some of the material burdens they are faced with, but rather they view politics as a catalyst for large-scale corruption.

The latest statistics from the 2019 general elections illustrate that youth-voter turnout dropped by 47%. A huge number of new voters (18 or 19 year olds) did not bother to register. Another contribution to this general decline of voter turnout is the 10-million registered voters who did not pitch at the polls, and of these 10-million voters 60% are said to be young people. Even with massive campaigns from political parties like the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) to get young people to the polls, enticing a large number of young people to participate in the voting process has proven unfruitful. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) also had a youth-voter registration campaign to appeal to young people and provide voter education (the ‘Xse’ campaign), yet it became evident that young people remained unconvinced by the political processes of the country.

Parallel to the decline in the youth vote, the country was jubilant, as for the first time in South African history, young people in large numbers were to join the 6th administration in Parliament. One might argue that this is just tokenism, something that is usually done with women representation. Interestingly, a large group of Fees Must Fall activists (who were once portrayed as hooligans occupying universities) from elite universities in Gauteng made it into Parliament across the top three ruling parties. One does not take anything away from their activism, but to think that they represent an organised voice in Parliament would be naïve. Consequently, the true meaning of their representation will only make sense once we see how they are able to use their positions strategically to bring significant changes to the severe conditions faced by young people.

UNEMPLOYMENT
South Africa’s unemployment rate increased by 1.4% from the first quarter of 2019, from 27.6% to 29% with the youth and black
women being most affected. Today South Africa has 6.7-million people who are unemployed. The 1.4 percentage point increase means that 455,000 have become unemployed; of course, this figure does not include the extended unemployment of people who are available to work or are discouraged work seekers or have other reasons for not participating in the labour market. If they are counted, this means that 38.5% are unemployed. Therefore, 10.2-million people in total are unemployed in South Africa! In the second quarter, employment in the formal sector and private households declined by 49,000 each. The informal sector and agriculture, however, recorded increases of 114,000 and 5,000 respectively. The youth of this country remain in a precarious position with the unemployment rate raging at 55%. Unemployment is also fueled by increasing retrenchments that are reported on the daily news and those that go unannounced.

This ultimately leads to strained mental health. The continual retrenchment is taking young, skilled workers and graduates out of work. The South African economy has been in a sustained slump. This has seen massive retrenchments, especially in the skilled sector. The banks have been leading this job washaway with over 10,000 workers retrenched in the second quarter of 2019.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution will soon replace skilled, young workers. This replacement has been widespread in the banking sector where the four big banks (Absa, FNB, Nedbank and Standard Bank) have called for retrenchments and moved to digital banking. The stereotype of retrenchment being associated with unskilled labour is being challenged. After all, as the saying goes 'last in, first out', and that is the reality of the relationship between youth and work in this country.

However, for those who are able to remain in permanent employment, there are constant complaints about racism and unfair treatment premised on arbitrary prejudices.

In the spirit of the general elections, an interesting observation is how all political parties spoke about jobs as part of their strategy of garnering votes. However, not a single party spoke directly to the unprecedented rates of retrenchment. The ruling party remains a major contributor to the unemployment crisis. At the beginning of the election campaign, the ‘butcher’ (labour-broking service, ‘which is dedicated to reducing youth unemployment’) launched a youth employment service, the ‘YES’ programme. This labour-broking service being presented as employment is a disgrace to say the least. It takes very few young people on 12-month internships that do not guarantee
employment. Even other youth platforms are hollow, including the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA). To say there is no hope is to be kind. There are no jobs coming for young people!

SCHOOL
The South African schooling system remains the worst in the world. Whether it is the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) or any other assessment, the standards of education remains rock bottom. An education professor at UKZN once called the SA education system a ‘cognitive genocide’, arguing that young people’s minds are destroyed at school.

Gideon Pogrund, in his article The immense suffering behind SA’s youth unemployment statistics, reflects on the hopelessness he ascribes to those who are young and unemployed. Surely, he cannot believe that an analysis that still blames Bantu Education can be sustained. By his own account, those unemployed (focusing on the first quarter) are under the age of 24, meaning they were born around 1994, went to school say six years later (2000), entered high school 12 years later (2006), completed high school (if they did) 5 years later (2011) – and he still blames Bantu Education? This is flawed. We know of many countries that changed their education systems in a few years and now run competent schools and education departments, e.g. the Cuban government under Fidel Castro eradicated illiteracy in a year.

School violence has become our daily bread; learners are beating up teachers, learners are killing each other, and teachers are now carrying guns in schools. Surely this cannot be conducive for anyone to learn or teach. The policies in this country are the root cause of all these problems. This is why we have not been able to solve the long-standing problems like huge dropout rates, low culture of learning and teacher absenteeism. Time and time again, the Minister of Education announces how learners will be required to have less marks or to score a low academic percentage to pass. The problems are many and there are no plans to address them immediately; in 2019 children still die in pit latrines at schools. How is this even still possible? Clearly, there is something seriously wrong. Schools are no longer places of progressive struggles.

UNIVERSITY
The struggle for free education has gone back to the fringes. The struggle is in the so-called historically black universities. The Walter Sisulu University (WSU) June examinations had to be closed down due to protests around NFSAS. Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) has seen multiple shutdowns against financial exclusions. South African universities have simply ignored former President Jacob Zuma’s declaration of free education for first-year students from working-class and poor families. Students who have participated in the mass demonstrations of 2015/16/17 are still harassed, and some are depressed and we have seen some commit suicide. It is clear that nothing has really changed after the Fees Must Fall nationwide protests.

Poor students still sleep in libraries and survive on food donations. The dropout rate of poor students continues to rise, and students seem to have bowed down to the brutal might of the state. The Fees Must Fall movement has not been able to regroup and tackle these problems. There is clearly unfinished business here; the more things change, the more they remain the same.

CONCLUSION
After all that’s said and done, the lack of responses to this violence on the youth makes it necessary to constantly bring our struggles to the fore. We should always make concrete analysis from concrete situations and not from our subjective wishes. The conditions are going to continue to deteriorate with no ‘light at the end of the tunnel’. We are in the pit. It is, of course, easy to throw out revolutionary slogans and make continuous clarion calls for revolutionary uprisings while knowing that a youth organisation does not exist. The reality of the matter is that the crisis that the youth find themselves in (unemployment, poor standards of education, continuous exclusion from political leadership) and the integration of the South African power structure and its interests (ruling party and its policies) are committed to the destruction of the South African youth to maintain its economy that is based on cheap black labour. It is clear that the ruling party has not been able to deal with the continuous slump of the economy that has reproduced unemployment, poor standards of education and youth de-empowerment. The private sector has continued to prioritise profits over social development. The lack of company regulations from the state have allowed companies to abuse the labour market. Just in the second quarter, companies have already retrenched over 500,000 workers without due process. One can argue that youth struggles have not brought any structural change for young people since ’76.

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Brittany Kesselman shows that South Africa is facing a crisis of hunger and food-related illnesses. To solve this crisis of hidden hunger, there is a need for an integrated food and health policy. The departments of health, social development, agriculture, and others, along with civil society partners, need to take immediate action to tackle the problems of malnutrition, obesity and associated NCDs through holistic, food-based interventions.

South Africa is facing a crisis of hunger and food-related illnesses. Twenty-six percent of South Africans are food insecure, with another 28% at risk of hunger, according to the South African National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. About 26% of children are stunted, which means their lifelong growth and development is negatively affected by poor nutrition. At the same time, levels of obesity and associated non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as type-2 diabetes, heart disease, hypertension and some cancers, are increasing – affecting growing numbers of South Africans at younger ages. This double burden of hunger and poor nutrition, on the one hand, and obesity and NCDs, on the other, is indicative of a food-system crisis. It is also a violation of South Africans’ dignity and basic rights. Frequently, obesity and malnutrition exist in the same households and even the same people, a condition known as ‘hidden hunger’.

UNHEALTHY DIETS
A number of different factors converge to cause hidden hunger. These include high levels of poverty and unemployment, urbanisation, industrialisation of the food system, limited availability of healthy foods in low-income areas, and increasing consumption of fast foods and highly processed foods.

Many South Africans subsist on diets high in sugar and processed starch. Indeed, the National Food Consumption Survey (1999) found that among South African children aged one to nine, the most commonly consumed foods were white sugar, maize, bread, tea and milk. At the same time, most South Africans consume far below the World Health Organization’s daily recommended amount of 400 grams of fruits and vegetables. Such diets supply enough calories, and in fact contribute to increasing levels of obesity, but they are very low in vitamins and minerals, and do not meet nutritional needs.

While conducting research with urban farmers in Johannesburg, I was surprised by their low levels of vegetable consumption. Unlike other urban residents, these farmers had free access to fresh vegetables, so cost was not an issue. Instead, their dietary practices were shaped by time constraints, cooking skills, fuel costs, nutrition knowledge and dietary norms in their communities. In addition to the cost and availability of healthy food, all of these factors need to be addressed in order for South Africa to address the double burden of malnutrition and NCDs.

THE NEED TO INTEGRATE POLICIES
To date, South African policies to address hunger and malnutrition have tended to be housed in the Department of Agriculture and to focus on increasing production, whether through urban agriculture or support to small-scale farmers in rural areas. The Department of Health, meanwhile, treats NCDs with medication and limited advice on prevention and management (through diet, exercise, etc.). There are virtually no connections between South Africa’s agricultural policies and health policies, despite the fact that diet is a major contributing factor to the growth of NCDs in recent years.
Integrated food and health policies should be a priority as South Africa moves toward implementation of the National Health Insurance (NHI). Such policies would reduce healthcare costs by contributing to prevention and to lower-cost (non-pharmaceutical and non-surgical) methods of treating NCDs.

**LEARNING FROM INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES**

What would these integrated policies look like? We can draw on international examples for some ideas. From the side of health-care, the new field of culinary medicine trains doctors to understand how dietary changes can restore and maintain health. Some hospitals are creating food gardens in order to serve healthy meals and even provide cooking lessons in waiting areas to help patients learn to eat better. Doctors are writing prescriptions that work as vouchers for fruits and vegetables, so that the patients can afford them. Research from the United States suggests that such prescriptions for healthy foods could be more cost-effective than preventive medications for hypertension, heart disease or high cholesterol.¹

In terms of food policies, we need to look beyond simply increasing production to better address access to healthy food, for example, through subsidised produce shops or subsidised restaurants – both of which were implemented by the South African government during a period of food shortages in the 1940s. In addition, agricultural policies should support small-scale farmers to undertake agroecological production methods that do not rely on expensive chemical inputs – something the Cuban government has done very successfully through state-sponsored research and extension services. Government should also link small-scale farmers to alternative distribution channels outside of the major retail chains. This would ensure more sustainable livelihoods for small-scale producers, and better access to healthy food for consumers.

to schools, hospitals and other government institutions, while supporting the livelihoods of small-scale and family farmers.

- School lunches and school gardens, to ensure that children have access to nutritious meals (two or three per day at school) and that they learn about food production and nutrition from a young age.

On a research visit to Belo Horizonte, I saw how these programmes improve access to fresh fruits and vegetables – a key measure in the fight against malnutrition and obesity. They also support decent incomes for small-scale producers, so that they are able to stay on the land. In addition, environmentally sustainable production is encouraged through a policy that prioritises purchasing agroecologically farmed foods. This form of farming reduces the contribution of agriculture to climate change. Beyond the health and economic benefits, the programmes also support social cohesion through communal eating spaces, festivals and cultural events featuring local dishes, and pleasant neighbourhood spaces such as local farmers’ markets where people can meet the farmers who grow their food and enjoy a sense of community.

GOVERNMENT-CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERSHIPS

In discussions with the local officials and activists in Belo Horizonte, it was clear that at least three key factors influenced the development and successful implementation of these food and nutrition security programmes. One was a highly organised, motivated movement of civil society actors whose advocacy pressed the government to act. The second was a committed local government that acknowledged its obligations in terms of the right to food and was willing to try innovative policies. And the third, institutionalised mechanisms of cooperation between civil society and government, as well as with other actors, that ensured ongoing communication and government accountability. The success of these programmes is evident. When the policies and programmes developed in Belo Horizonte were rolled out at national level (known as Fome Zero or Zero Hunger) Brazil experienced a notable decline in hunger and malnutrition. The country was removed from the UN’s hunger map in 2014, though the abandonment of some of these policies at national level may well reverse these gains. One of the most remarkable and encouraging aspects of Belo Horizonte’s food and nutrition security programme is its low cost, which is less than 2% of the city’s budget. Another is the degree of commitment and cooperation of all actors involved – including various government departments, civil society organisations and others. The model provides many useful lessons that could greatly benefit South Africa. The departments of health, social development, agriculture, and others, along with civil society partners, need to take immediate action to tackle the problems of malnutrition, obesity and associated NCDs through holistic, food-based interventions.

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Climate crisis perspective  
Moving beyond the National Democratic Revolution?

Ashley Nyiko Mabasa looks at how the National Democratic Revolution continues to promote an idea of development that is centred on fossil fuels, like coal, which destroy the environment. He argues that there is a need for the ANC and its alliance partners (especially youth structures) to have an environmentally centred policy approach.

The ANC’s 2007 Strategy and Tactics fails to put to the fore the radical shift from developmentalism of the 20th century based on the fossil-fuel capitalism. There is an urgent need for a critical assessment of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) vis-a-vis building of the national democratic society in the 21st century circumstances. Firstly, early this year, we witnessed KwaZulu-Natal’s and the Eastern Cape’s catastrophic floods, which resulted to the death toll of 80 people. Secondly, we have seen Cape Town’s Day Zero, which led to the city’s rapidly increasing water shortages affecting the poor and the working class who could not afford the borehole system. Thirdly, around 8 and 9 March 2019 the people of Mozambique, Zimbabwe and part of Malawi encountered the destructive cyclone Idai.

Climate crisis and Congress politics

Most discourse on the National Democratic Revolution is derived from the historicisation of South Africa’s national and class oppression. In assessing the National Democratic Revolution in the post-apartheid struggle, it is critical to discuss the failures of post-Soviet Union Revolution politics in the Global South countries. It is important for Leninists and Stalinists to incorporate the ecocide (destruction of the environment) question as a means to negate the capitalist matrices of production.

In addition, the problem with the National Democratic Revolution, which is advanced by the ANC and its youth, is the absence of climate crisis mitigation and adaptation. The ANCYL and other student organisations under the ANC, such as the South African Congress of Students (SASCO), have been silent on the issue of climate crisis.

Global economic accumulation depends on the burning of coal energy. Historically, the minerals-energy complex (MEC) has always been about putting the interest of the mining industry first. Mines require a massive amount of energy, which is largely sourced from coal. The energy requirement of the mines is power-driven by electricity. South African mining industries require a great deal of power for them to be productive; crushing and processing minerals, which are important for civic life, requires great energy; and despite the fact that oil, coal, gas and fuel remain our main sources of energy, there is still a bias towards using coal; our electricity, of which our mining industry needs a massive scale of megawatts, is still produced by coal; there is a slow shift towards adopting renewable energy, or generators that operate using batteries.

Multinational corporations have also contributed to the degradation of the environment. Classical Marxists have been arguing that the gravedigger of capitalism is the development of the productive forces and relations of production that will lead to the consciousness of the proletariat resulting in a dictatorship that will overthrow the capitalists’ system in favour of the proletariat. This dictatorship of the proletariat occurs under a socialist state. However, the Ecological Marxists argue that capitalist modes of production have also made nature the
capitalist system’s gravedigger by contending that the depletion of the fossil fuels that drive industrialisation shows that fossil fuels become depleted because they are used unsustainably; and this unsustainability of the capitalist modes of production is best highlighted by climate change, destruction of ecosystem, desertification, etc.

ASSESSING THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION AND SOCIETY

The ANC’s 2007 Strategy and Tactics promised to build a national democratic society by building a developmental state.¹ The ANC’s developmental state is premised on the burning of fossil fuel and it takes on the same route of the 20th century Eastern Asia developmental state. Here the ANC’s Strategy and Tactics shows contradictory logic by arguing that the state through the Mineral and Petroleum Resource Development Act (MPRDA) must be the custodian of the minerals beneath the soil. This is problematic because it perpetuates the Stalinists’ approach of statism, which promotes the repression of opposition or is against all the processes of challenging the power relations of the state. Hence, the Xolobeni Community in the Eastern Cape is fighting with the state by rejecting mining in order to preserve the environment. At the same time the state, through the Department of Mineral Resources spearheaded by Gwede Mantashe, former chairperson of the South African Communist Party (SACP), is lobbying for international capital in order for mining to take place in Xolobeni.²

In addition, the 2007 Strategy and Tactics is not coherent because it wants to continue with the expropriation of South Africa’s mineral resources. It does not call for social ownership of renewable resources, meaning that its class interest does not reflect the working class. Mainstream Renewable Power is a large consortium its subsidiaries are AREP, H1 Holdings, Old Mutual Life Assurance Company, Lekele, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the International Finance Corporations (IFC) and most of its funds are generated from ABSA. This consortium signed 27 independent power producers’ contracts.³ In addition, Mainstream is an Ireland-based renewable-energy company and it has eight renewable-energy projects in South Africa. The project has a combined investment of R6.6 billion, in the 140 MW Kangnas project in the Northern Cape and in the 110 MW Perdekraal East project in the Western Cape. The beneficiaries of renewable energy in South Africa are the international and local bourgeoisie who have become bourgeois through the state.

ASSESSING THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION WITHIN SUB-IMPERIALISTS: BRICS

In assessing the National Democratic Revolution discussion, the NDR seeks to undermine imperialism, because imperialism is dependent on extracting natural resources with machines for the realisation of profit. This was affirmed by David Harvey who argued that this new imperialism resembles the greater recourse of accumulation by dispossession through the appreciation of ‘non-capitalist’ kinds of life and environment.⁴ Therefore, the national oppression was intended for global accumulation with cheap labour, and the envisaged struggle of NDR as anti-capitalists in nature and with the object of undermining the conducive conditions of the global accumulations. An anecdote of this was provided: outside of China, which is implementing a national project of modern industrial development in connection with the renovation of family agriculture, the other so-called emergent countries of the South (the BRICS) still walk only on one leg: they are opposed to the depredations of militarized globalization, but remain imprisoned in the straightjacket of neoliberalism.⁵

The recent emergence of BRICS can be considered as a rejection of the global capital accumulation by the United States, Europe and Japan. Does the emergence of BRICS place the NDR into question? NDR undermines imperialism which Lenin regarded as the highest form of capitalism; however, the irony is that BRICS is an alliance of sub-imperialist countries.

In assessing the National Democratic Revolution in the 21st century, the relative autonomy of the South African state as a sub-imperialist country must be interrogated. The relationship between the sub-imperialist countries within BRICS seeks to promote the international division of labour. Sub-imperialist countries such as South Africa depend on the productive capital of imperialist countries through the manufacturing industry while

¹ 2007 December “Building A National Democratic Society, Strategy and Tactics” 52nd National Congress of the ANC
³ https://pmg.org.za/committee-question/10509/
⁵ Samir Amin, Contemporary Imperialism: Monthly Review, 2015
The purpose of socialisation of relations and means of production is to develop productive forces. However, the NDR seeks to root out the global capital accumulation, which benefits from various racial oppressions.

the imperialist countries depend on extracting natural resources from the sub-imperialist countries. Sub-imperialist countries use the mechanics of the imperialist countries in their interstate relations with their neighbours in their regions; in their regions, the sub-imperialist countries aspire to be depended upon by the neighbouring countries while they extract the natural resources of these neighbouring countries.

In relation to BRICS, the NDR argues for socialisation of the means and relations of production. Using the Freedom Charter, which is not socialist but provides a basis for ‘an uninterrupted advance to socialism’, will result in the socialisation of productive forces. The purpose of socialisation of relations and means of production is to develop productive forces. However, the NDR seeks to root out the global capital accumulation, which benefits from various racial oppressions. In this case, BRICS insist on the internationalisation of the capital and aims to place BRICS nations at the centre of global politics and economics.

In an attempt to deal with the colonisation of a special type (CST), the CST thesis was supported by the materialistic interpretation of the two-stage theory. This was inspired by Lenin’s work on the essential need to advancing an intraclass national democratic struggle – commonly referred to as the national democratic revolution. This first stage was necessary for developing capitalism, which created ‘class demarcation’ perfect for creating a political dissatisfaction necessary for the ultimate transition to socialism. Conversely, in the transitional stage to socialism from the national democracy in 1994, BRICS emerged. BRICS does not have a strategy to break with the global capitalist dynamics or the creation of a new economic and political organisation.

The radical left discourse is that BRICS is an alternative to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and World Trade Organisation. In this case, BRICS has interests in Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe. The NDR’s commitment towards socialism and eventually communism is deferred by the emergence of BRICS. Brazil’s interests in African minerals are growing. Petronas, one of Brazil’s biggest companies, is present in 28 countries, investing US$1.9 billion in coal, and in 2005, in oil and natural gas in Nigeria. Another case involving Brazil is that of the Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES), which is planning to finance Eletrobras in Mozambique with US$6 billion for the construction of a hydroelectric power station. Another case of an African country is the case of Vale, one of the largest mining companies in the world, which is owned by Brazil that recently signed a US$1 billion deal to build a railway in Malawi to transport coal to Mozambique. The reality is that Mozambique is exploited by the sub-imperialist BRICS countries not the Western countries.

Furthermore, Russian companies are also scattered around Africa; in fact, Baruti Amisi contended that BRICS resemble the 1885 Berlin Conference, which decided on the ‘Scramble for Africa’. The 1885 scramble is repeated by the state-owned companies and bourgeoisie of the BRICS countries. Russia’s multi-national corporations (MNCs), such as Renova Group, have recently concluded a deal with the South African government. Renova may also have an interest in South Africa’s Lonmin Company, which is the third largest platinum producer in the world. Another speculated move is that Russian companies such as RusAl, Norilsk Nickel, Alrosa and Renova plan to invest about US$5 billion in Sub-Saharan Africa over the next five years.

In conclusion, the ANC, driven by the NDR in 1985 at Kabwe Conference, at their Nature of the Ruling Class discussion, classified the ruling class as the enemy of the revolution. Contemporary beneficiaries of the ruling class might not be entirely the West and local Afrikaners but could be the BRICS countries. In the name of development, they exploit the working class and destroy the environment.

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6 Lenin, 1917: The State and Revolution
7 Amisi, Bond, Kamidza, Maguwu and Peek: “BRICS, Anti-Capitalists Critique”, 2015
8 Ibid
9 ANC, “Nature of the Ruling Class” 1985
Putting the demos back in democracy

Courtney Morgan calls on young people to act on the climate crisis, which is caused by capitalism. Young activists are faced with a daunting task of not only looking to the past and addressing persisting inequalities but to also look to the future to address climate change.

How do we exist as young activists, fighting against inequality and poverty when conditions are constantly changing, and we are facing a ticking time bomb? This is the reality for the majority of young South Africans who are currently fighting for equality, but are coming up against a system that is disarming; and this is crippling our activists. The target has shifted; young activists in 2019 are faced with the challenge of not having a clear enemy. To many, it seems like we are fighting against an invisible target – one that can shapeshift into whatever image it wants. And on some level, that is true: the target shifts and reinvents itself, but at its core it’s still the same patriarchal, racist, violent system of capitalism. A system, which with every challenge, is able to reproduce itself and reassign its violence. Whether it’s through the shifting of capital, spatially or temporally. But in 2019, there is a challenge that maybe even capital won’t be able to avoid, the climate crisis.

WHAT IS CAPITALISM?
According to the Merriam Webster dictionary, capitalism is defined as an economic system characterised by private or corporate ownership of capital goods, by investments that are determined by private decision, and by prices, production, and the distribution of goods that are determined mainly by competition in a free market.¹ What this definition fundamentally misses is that capitalism is not just an economic system, it is a social system as well as a political system. This system does not only affect the economics of the country, but it also determines social hierarchies, political decisions and social interactions. Additionally, the free market concept is flawed. According to multiple definitions, the free market is supposedly a system where buyers and sellers are able to make decisions without any influence or interference apart from the influence of supply and demand. It is, supposedly, also characterised by voluntary participation in the system. But the lived reality of those suffering under capitalism is that it is by no means free. It is a system built on the historical dispossession and exploitation of the black working class, women, as well as the environment. It is also not voluntary. Capitalism is so entrenched in our daily lives that we cannot escape it; we are forced to participate in the system even for access to our basic human rights such as food and water. Capitalism is holding us all hostage, and burning the earth at the same time.

WHAT IS THE CLIMATE CRISIS?
The climate crisis is inherently a capitalist creation. Capitalism is a system that thrives on creating a loser, and in order to do this, it has to be built on exploitation. Throughout history, capitalism has found a portion of society to exploit in order to gain profits. This is also true for the way in which capitalism has exploited nature. It must be noted that colonialism was not just a genocidal project that wiped out millions of people around the world, it was also responsible for the decimation of the natural environment, plundering of natural resources and the loss of indigenous species. The exploitation of indigenous peoples cannot be separated from the exploitation of their ways of living and the decimation of their land. This ecocidal behaviour only intensified with the onset of the

¹ https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/capitalism
South Africa's political history and its unique geographical position, makes the experience of climate change severe. The increase in temperature experienced in South Africa is more than twice the global rate.¹ This has a knock-on effect on many other conditions in the region. Southern Africa is a drought-prone region, and due to rapid heating and shifting ecosystems because of climate change, the region is experiencing an increased rate of intensity and frequency of droughts.

With rampant inequality in the country, the poor and working class of South Africa are in a very precarious position; this was illustrated by the recent drought in the Western Cape, where the rich were able to protect themselves against the effects of the drought and the poor were left vulnerable. Although South Africa is not an island state, the country does have a significant amount of coastline, which makes it particularly susceptible to the effects of rising sea levels. In addition, to all the geographical effects, climate change also has the potential to cause social unrest; South Africa being a country with already high crime stats and rates of violence is at a risk of falling into a deeper crisis. The current situation, although scary, must be used as a rallying call to conscientise the people and to build a strong generation of activists.

WHAT DOES SOUTH AFRICA LOOK LIKE 25 YEARS INTO DEMOCRACY?

In 2019 the inequality that has persisted is, exactly as under apartheid, affecting the black majority of the country the most. As much as South Africa has been liberated from the grip of apartheid, it would be a disservice to the most vulnerable of this country to say that the material conditions of all people have changed for the better. There is still extremely high levels of exploitation of the black labour force, rampant inequality and poverty. It is also important to note the violence enacted on the people by the government, on various sectors of the community in varying degrees. From the massacre at Marikana to Fees Must Fall, we have seen the blatant repression of activism by the state. This country is also experiencing rates of gender-based violence and femicide rates are among the highest in the world, with a woman being killed every three hours.² The current situation in South Africa, to many people, especially young women, seems bleak. In addition to these social ills, we are faced with the climate crisis, which is posing an imminent threat.

South Africa's political history and its unique geographical position, makes the experience of climate change severe. The increase in temperature experienced in South Africa is more than twice the global rate.³ This has a knock-on effect on many other conditions in the region. Southern Africa is a drought-prone region, and due to rapid heating and shifting ecosystems because of climate change, the region is experiencing an increased rate of intensity and frequency of droughts.

It must also be recognised that this culture of activism was not spontaneous, it was nurtured by thousands of strong activists over many decades, facing conditions many of us can’t even imagine today. It is also important not to romanticise this history; South African activism was born out of a dark history. After decades of segregation through colonialism and unjust laws such as the Land Act of 1913, which dispossessed thousands of black people of their land, it was in 1948 when this segregation became even more institutionalised when the National Party came into power, signalling the beginning of the apartheid regime. This regime put in force a number of acts which were aimed at suppressing the black population of South Africa on all fronts, these laws were far reaching, both spatially and temporally. An integral turning point came close to the beginning of the apartheid regime. This regime put in force a number of acts which were aimed at suppressing the black population of South Africa on all fronts, these laws were far reaching, both spatially and temporally. An integral turning point came close to the beginning of the apartheid regime.

THE ROLE OF YOUNG ACTIVISTS
As young people and young activists, we must act with urgency. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change tells us we have just 12 years, maybe even less, to limit catastrophic climate change. Young activists are faced with a daunting task: to not only look to the past and address persisting inequalities but to also look to the future and address climate change. To do this, we must be more than activists, our activism must exist beyond the WhatsApp groups and week-long mobilisations. Communities on the ground, particularly mining-affected communities made up of poor black families are already taking this fight seriously. For many decades now, they have been confronting capitalism right on their doorsteps. As young activists, we must amplify the struggles already happening on the ground and be led by the ones most affected by the crises. It is not to say that young people are not already doing this, but the number of activists needed to avert these crises is massive, and we need to multiply. These issues of gender-based violence, inequality and climate change must be issues not just for activists, they must be the everyday person’s struggle. We must work toward a society and a generation where being concerned with the wellbeing of society is not about being a social-justice warrior or being woke, it has to be the norm. Fighting the climate crisis, is not about plastic straws and reusable grocery bags, it's not about shallow conservation models advocated for by white environmentalists, it is about a long, calculated, anti-capitalist agenda. This agenda must, at all times, centre the voices of the marginalised, the dispossessed and the silenced. Ultimately, the only way to achieve any victories against the climate crisis, or any other crisis this country is facing, is to quite simply fight capitalism in all its forms.

In the post-apartheid era, it is not enough to replicate past strategies, it is not enough to even be members of those same liberation movements. In the context of a rapidly heating world and deeply entrenched inequality, we are at a turning point. We need a strong, nonpartisan generation of active citizens. It requires a break from the normalised mode of activism, it requires one to stand alone, under no banner, behind no podium, wearing no regalia with your fist raised in the air, on the streets, fighting for survival. The only way to rid ourselves of capitalism’s exploitation, is for us, the people to rid ourselves of the system.

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5 sahistory.org.za/article/apartheid-and-reactions-it
Technological revolutions and the demands of the South African proletariat

Mondli Hlatshwayo argues that talk about the future technological changes does not reflect the reality of South African society. The South African state during the democratic dispensation has failed to provide public transport and electrification, which are key components of the Second Technological Revolution and are of major benefit to the proletariat/working class. For trade unions, the challenge is to have trained researchers and organisers that understand engineering, data analyses, and the 4IR technological changes so that they can make demands that allow access to long-term technological and production plans that will benefit the working class.

The current debates on the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) are, in part, aimed at disarming the proletariat and, I have to say, to deliver the oppressed to the oppressor without any struggle. We are told by what Appolis (2018) regards as evangelists of the 4IR that we must embrace this ‘revolution’ and accept short-term hiccups with an understanding that, in the medium and long term, all classes and social groups will be winners. In pursuing the 4IR, during the inaugural Fourth Industrial Revolution SA Digital Economy Summit, held in Johannesburg in July this year, President Cyril Ramaphosa said: ‘Given what we know today about the potential beneficial impacts of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, we must embrace this historic confluence of human insights and engagement, artificial intelligence and technology, to rise to the challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality’. (Cited in Dludla 2019:1.)

In an attempt to catch up with the 4IR, in April 2019, the South African government launched the Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution – an institution for conducting and coordinating research on artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, the Internet of Things (IoT), blockchain, distributed ledger technology, and precision medicine (Campbell, 16 April 2019, Engineering News).

THE SOUTH AFRICAN REALITY

South Africa does not produce the machines, and technologies for production and her manufacturing sector has been declining since the 1980s. The United States of America, Germany and China, for example, produce the robots, machinery and digital technologies that are prerequisites for the 4IR. This means that these countries benefit from selling their technologies to South Africa, and there are no indications that South Africa is willing or able to undertake a programme of massive industrialisation that could position it as a producer of sophisticated machinery (Francis 2018). The most disturbing factor about the South African democratic state is that it has failed to provide public transport and electrification, which were key components of the first and second technological revolutions, and which were of major benefit to the proletariat.

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN CAPITALIST LABOUR PROCESSES

Throughout the history of capitalism, no capitalist worthy of the name has set in motion processes to produce commodities or goods with the aim of solving societal problems like poverty, underdevelopment, hunger, lack of education or access to resources. A capitalist labour process produces commodities, which have both use and exchange value. The goods that are produced must have a use value, or they must satisfy other
The balance sheet of technological revolutions since the advent of the First Industrial Revolution indicates that the South African proletarians and their organisations need to define their own issues and demands as far as technologies are concerned.

needs of consumers. However, capitalists produce commodities because they want to sell them to a market of consumers in order to realise profit. In the capitalist mode of production, the introduction of artificial intelligence (and the notion of the 4IR) is about increasing profit margins for capitalists – a point that tends to escape those who assert that all sections of the global society stand to benefit from the 4IR and its utilisation of robotics.

Technology is a tainted tool used by capitalists to advance their interests. In the process, labour tends to be weakened through massive deskilling and the enskilling of a tiny minority of workers, the intensification of the labour process and technological unemployment. For example, restructuring and the employment of technology at what is now ArcelorMittal South Africa has led to the loss of about 50,000 jobs between 1989 and 2015. Even today, trade unions’ bargaining strategy tend to be a rearguard action: this means that they bargain over the effects of technologies long after the technologies have been introduced. A proactive bargaining strategy requires that unions and workers understand that consistent research and education on technology is required in each department of a plant, in order to make sure that technology and wages are part of their bargaining struggles and demands. Building a union’s capacity to conduct research on technologies in specific workplaces, to advance the interests of shop-floor workers, is a way to formulate proactive responses to technological changes. Staffing unions with engineers, data analysts, researchers and organisers who understand production processes is a strategy for making sure that unions demand access to long-term technological and production plans that are most likely to help the unions to respond to the 4IR.

**FAILED TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTIONS AND THE CONDITIONS OF THE PROLETARIAT**

The First and Second Industrial Revolutions were strongly associated with changes in public transport. The first steam engine public locomotive drove between Stockton and Darlington Railway in 1825. An inter-city railway line between Liverpool and Manchester was opened in 1830. Werner von Siemens in Berlin presented the first electric passenger train in 1879. After the Second Technological Revolution, electric and diesel trains transporting the public became widespread in Europe and America in the 1900s (Marshall 1930). What delayed the development of road and rail infrastructure in South Africa was the fact that the indigenous populations had to be defeated and subjected to the long process of subjugation by the Europeans living in South Africa. The railway only began in 1845, but the electrification of railways and use of electric passenger trains began in the 1920s after the establishment of the Union of South Africa (South African Railway Plant 1922).

Railways were used to transport migrant workers from what was regarded as the underdeveloped reserves to the gold mines on the Witwatersrand and, later on, and after the Second World War in particular, black workers used trains to move between workplaces that were far away from black residential areas. Despite the development of electrified railway systems, road networks, cars and buses, as part of the advancement of the Second Technological Revolution, blacks never had adequate access to public transport. However, whites enjoyed access to public transport in the form of buses, private cars, and even trams in some instances. Railway stations always had signs, which indicated spaces for ‘whites only’, and segregation was evident in railway stations and trains.

The situation regarding public transport is catastrophic. The corruption at the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa and the subsequent delivery of the ‘locomotives [that] have a roof height of 4.264mm while the maximum height for diesel locomotives may not exceed 3.965mm’ (Myburgh2015:1) was a painful indication that corruption robs the South African public of even the most basic technologies of the first and the second industrial revolutions. In the midst of his campaigning during the general elections this year, President Ramaphosa was embarrassingly stuck for four hours in a Metrorail train from Pretoria to Johannesburg. Despite all this, the president later, surprisingly, delivered the state of the nation address in which he asked South Africa to dream of a bullet train. The proletarians are then compelled to rely on minibus taxis. Demands for safe public transport that utilise clean energy should be one of the responses to the debate and discussions of the 4IR.

The first electric light recorded in Cape Town was in September 1870 when Henry Edwards, a
showman, demonstrated arc lighting. However, serious lighting and electrification in Cape Town took off after 1883. In the whole country, access to electricity was to be racialised, with blacks having very low levels of electrification, especially in the rural areas. The ANC confirms: ‘In 1994, only 36% of the population and only 12% of people in rural communities had access to electricity. Today, 8 out of 10 South Africans, including those in rural areas, have their homes electrified.’ (ANC 2019: 8–9). However, the story that is not often told is the fact that the supply of electricity to households in rural areas and townships is unreliable. In the context where the unemployment rate is close to 40% (if the expanded definition is used), and despite the noise about some ‘free’ electricity, the astronomically high price of electricity makes it almost impossible for many of the employed and the unemployed to enjoy a consistent supply of electricity. Eskom, the major supplier of electricity in South Africa, is in a very deep crisis. Eskom’s debt burden is now much bigger than South Africa’s entire budget for health care and education. Eskom’s debt has risen beyond R450 billion during the period since the end of March 2019, and it is more than the budgets of the national departments of health and education combined (Villiers 2018; Creamer 2019).

Access to the Third Technological Revolution in the form of access to data and telecommunications remains a huge problem for proletarian communities and individuals. According to Karombo (2019:1): ‘Data released after a study by Cable says the average mobile data tariff for South Africa stands at R101.91 per GB or 7.19 in US Dollar terms. This is in contrast to average mobile internet charges of US$1.49 and US$2.22 per 1GB in Egypt and Nigeria respectively.’ The failure of the state to provide free WiFi and access to the tools of the Third Technological Revolution has made it difficult for proletarians to consistently enjoy the fruits of the Third Industrial Revolution. Rural areas tend to have poor network coverage, depriving these communities of access to communication.

CONCLUSION

The balance sheet of technological revolutions since the advent of the First Industrial Revolution indicate that the South African proletarians and their organisations need to define their own issues and demands as far as technologies are concerned. First, as this article has shown, the role of technologies in the capitalist production process, is to make sure that technologies from all the technological revolutions reproduce as the capitalist system. Current debates about the 4IR led by bourgeois intellectuals and their parties, must be unmasked as having an agenda aimed at sending the proletarians to a slaughterhouse without kicking or screaming. One of the key responses to the current debate is to demand access to high-quality public transport, electricity and data, which are all results of technological revolutions that came before the 4IR. As one of the key responses to the 4IR, unions will have to adopt a strategy that views technology and production as a contested terrain.

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The danger of techno-optimism

What the hype around the Fourth Industrial Revolution gets wrong about jobs and prosperity

Hannah J. Dawson asks why the focus on technological innovation in South Africa is not opening up new conversations about decentring wage labour as the primary means of accessing a livelihood and expanding forms of social protection, such as a universal basic income (UBI).

South Africa has been swept up in the global hype around the ‘Fourth Industrial Revolution’ (4IR). Much of this hype is optimistic, assuming that new technology will bring jobs and prosperity, making our current economic system work even better. But what if they’re wrong? And why are we assuming that business should continue as usual with this ‘revolution’ – rather than taking the opportunity the 4IR presents to challenge the way economic rewards are distributed and help build the political will needed to address ever-widening inequality?

4IR and techno-optimism

4IR has become the mantra of every new policy initiative and official government event. President Cyril Ramaphosa has even set up a presidential commission on 4IR. Ramaphosa explained in the 2019 state of the nation address that the 4IR commission would ‘identify and recommend policies, strategies and plans that will position SA as a global competitive player within the digital revolution space’. The president presents 4IR as offering South Africa a pathway to turn South Africa’s sluggish economy around and create jobs rather than destroy them. The president has claimed that 4IR technologies will within a decade contribute R5 trillion in social and economic value and four million jobs.

4IR has become a metaphor for a future of prosperity and job creation. This is not only Ramaphosa’s doing. The government’s positive embrace of the 4IR echoes the rhetoric of the founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum (WEF), Klaus Schwab, who coined the term ‘Fourth Industrial Revolution’. The forum’s appropriation of the concept has been described as one of the ‘most successful lobbying and policy influence instruments of our time’ (Gillwald, 2019). The current 4IR debate in South Africa is dominated by techno-optimists who view technological developments such as artificial intelligence, automation and advanced biotechnology as a positive economic and social force.

It is very difficult to say with any certainty what impact 4IR technologies will have on South Africa’s persistently high rates of unemployment, poverty and inequality. It cannot be taken for granted that the impact will be positive or lead to increased productivity or ‘decent jobs’. The consequence might well be further job losses and a widening gulf between the haves and have nots. There is already evidence that digital technologies are destroying jobs in the service industries (i.e. call centres), retail, finance and administration. In March 2019 Standard Bank announced that it would close 91 branches and cut around 1,200 jobs as part of efforts to digitise its banking products and services.
A wealth of new writing on the existence of ‘surplus populations’ who are no longer needed by labour markets views technological change and automation as both posing a challenge to the centrality of stable, formal-sector employment as a policy goal and an opportunity to reorient social policy towards unconditional, universal social protection.

Fears about the impact of technology on jobs are not new. In the 1930s the economist John Maynard Keynes famously coined the term ‘technological unemployment’. While the prediction of technological displacement of labour was wrong then, it is increasingly accurate today. The persistently high unemployment rate in South Africa calls into question the optimism of the 4IR. Technological developments might well create some new jobs and make others safer, for example, in mining or construction, but these technological improvements hold little hope for the ten-million South Africans who are unemployed.

The idea that digital technologies will create rather than destroy jobs is contradicted by the fact that South Africa is already struggling in the wake of jobless growth and deindustrialisation as manufacturing both automates and continues its search for cheap labour elsewhere.

**4IR: A CHALLENGE TO THE PRODUCTIVIST VISION?**

A wealth of new writing on the existence of ‘surplus populations’ who are no longer needed by labour markets views technological change and automation as both posing a challenge to the centrality of stable, formal-sector employment as a policy goal and an opportunity to reorient social policy towards unconditional, universal social protection. The techno-optimism that surrounds the 4IR debate in South Africa thus has important implications for social policy.

While one might assume the increased talk of technological advancement and automation might begin to challenge the productivist paradigm that views wage labour as the primary means of accessing resources, we are in fact witnessing the opposite. The neoliberal spirit of 4IR preaches economic growth and job creation as the solution to South Africa’s persistently high unemployment rate and surging inequalities. The vision runs contrary to the expansion of social protection and a shift from a ‘productivist’ towards a ‘distributionist’ policy framework.

The question we need to ask is: why? Why is the focus on technological innovation not opening up new conversations about decentring wage labour as the primary means of accessing a livelihood and expanding forms of social protection, such as a universal basic income? This is especially noteworthy because South Africa already has an extensive social-grant programme and even seriously considered implementing a small universal basic income grant in the early 2000s. In other parts of the world, technological innovation and automation are strengthening the argument for expanded forms of social protection including UBI. In South Africa, wage labour remains central in both radical and reformist political and cultural discourse.

South Africa’s ‘normative fixation’ on wage employment as the key distributary and development mechanism (Barchiesi 2007b) and concerns over dependency have a long history. Indeed, the proposal for a small universal basic income in South Africa was rejected despite widespread support from labour unions and civil society, due in large part to ideological concerns about giving handouts to those who should be gaining income through wage labour (Barchiesi 2007a).

James Ferguson (2015) argues that South Africa’s redistributory policies and current social grant system herald the beginning of a new politics of distribution. While acknowledging that grants are still pointedly unavailable to the able-bodied who are not primary child-carers, and that the South African state explicitly rejected the idea of universal basic income, he argues that the South African grant system will ‘gradually creep toward a kind of universalistic, citizenship-based entitlement’ and will thus achieve the ‘result of universal income support through the back door’ (2015: 205).

Ferguson’s optimism rests on what he sees as ‘an explosion of new thinking suggesting that such payments are warranted as a kind of “rightful share”, often rooted in arguments for redistribution’ (2015: 205).

The defaulting of policy and political discourse towards job creation as the solution to South Africa’s social and economic woes makes the new politics of distribution Ferguson talks about more fantasy than fact. The 4IR debates remain firmly welded to a productivity vision that views job creation rather than resource distribution as the solution to unemployment, poverty and inequality. In a country like South Africa, where the gains of the 4IR are likely to be so unevenly spread, it is imperative for us to begin to envisage more radically expanded forms of redistribution as a necessary response to the present and ongoing 4IR. This would include redistributory policies, such as a UBI that guarantees a minimum livelihood to those who cannot reliably access sufficient income through labour.
CONCLUSION
In questioning the optimism of the 4IR vision in South Africa, I am not suggesting that we abandon efforts to harness technological developments for economic growth and job creation altogether. My point is rather to open up the debate to enable us to ask why the 4IR evokes certain visions of society and the economy and not others. For example, why has the talk of the 4IR not led to greater public debate and advocacy around redistribution or a UBI? It is time the conversation on 4IR turned to both its effect on inequality, and its potential to help create or shape the political will needed to address the widening gap between the haves and have nots.

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The Fourth Industrial Revolution a ‘fait accompli’ as a euphemism for restructuring?

Can labour still influence the agenda? A perspective

Hameda Deedat argues that despite the characteristics of the 4IR being widely defined, the understanding of its impact and its pace is unknown. Instead, we see the 4IR wave sweep over us, without us as a country giving guidance or even determining the course. The 4IR can be seen as a euphemism for labour-market restructuring and labour needs to influence and change the way 4IR is thought of.

INTRODUCTION
Geldenhuys, in a recent Moneyweb article, points out that Jeremy Rifkin, in 2011, announced the emergence of the Third Industrial Revolution as new communication technologies converged with new energy regimes. Less than five years later, Klaus Schwab announced the Fourth Industrial Revolution: ‘as new technologies start fusing the physical, digital and biological worlds’. Juxtaposing these announcements, Geldenhuys asks: ‘Two earth-shattering revolutions within 5 years of each other without the subsequent positive impact on the economy? “Really?”’ (Geldenhuys, 2019). Simple, yet profound questions, especially in the context of a ‘revolution’, which in Marxist/socialist terms is a term that has been misappropriated.

1 Moneyweb, October 2019, Pieter Geldenhuys the director of the Institute for Technology Strategy and Innovation and guest lecturer at the London Business School.
2 Rasigan Maharajah’s presentation to NALEDI BRICS seminar April 2018; Professor Extraordinary: Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology, Stellenbosch University, RSA. Node Head: Department of Science and Technology and National Research Foundation Centre of Excellence in Scientometrics and Science, Technology and Innovation Policy, RSA.
Geldenhuys like Maharajah² and others, reference Kondratieff, whose book in 1925 described the major economic cycles. His thesis was expanded on by Schumpeter in 1929, who built on this thesis and named the cycles ‘Kondratieff waves’. Above is a commonly displayed chart used by opponents and proponents of the 4IR alike to demonstrate what is undisputedly patterns and cycles of innovation and development overtime.

Global innovation and technological advancements and changes have been occurring and are still continuing. For this so-called 4IR, the key characteristics are described as the Internet of Things, information technologies – apps and platforms, digitisation and artificial intelligence (robotics).

In response to the 4IR, Gastrow claims that South African institutions are responding to the 4IR through ‘multiple, parallel and sometimes interlinked processes which include structured policy- and strategy-development processes within parliament, the government, higher education institutions, the private sector and research institutions’ (2019, p1). He adds that unlike other technological changes the 4IR focuses on the disruptive elements of the technological changes. He adds that the 4IR approach also draws significantly on the language of ‘future studies’, which is infused with the language of Silicon Valley (with exponential interests, tipping points and megatrends). His article describes the impact accompanying technological disruptions that are expected.

What is evident from the above sources is that despite the characteristics of the 4IR being widely defined, the understanding of its impact and its pace is unknown. Instead we see the 4IR wave sweep over us, without us as a country giving guidance or even determining the course. The fait accompli approach in the mining, security, finance, aviation, transport, printing, communications and manufacturing sectors, to say the least, has seen job losses, and the banks en masse pending retrenchments in the name of digitisation and robotics. This topic is exceptionally vast and it requires a lot of unpacking.

**LABOUR MUST RESPOND!**

The 4IR cannot come at a worse time for labour as capital consolidates and prepares itself for a global recession. Shareholders who determine the modus operandi are only interested in any means that can increase shares and profitability. Precarity of work and working conditions, downward variation, outsourcing, informalisation and the expansion of the informal economy in response to a shrinking formal economy, a weak labour movement, low union membership and political and economic instabilities, and an energy crisis characterise the South African landscape. We need to define the 4IR and establish motivators as to why introducing any of the key features of the 4IR would be beneficial for the nation as a whole. Brazil, Russia, India, the US and several other countries have identified their cutting edge/comparative advantage as well as their niche markets; in reality, we are way behind and to determine a trajectory that expects us to operate as if we are China will not only be foolhardy but will deny us the opportunity of taking advantage of the various features of 4IR that could work for us.

In the absence of the prerequisites, the 4IR has become a euphemism as employers constantly use it as the key reason for retrenchments and devoid themselves of any responsibility for making decisions that place shareholders and returns above worker interests. According to some employers in the South African business fraternity, the 4IR should be embraced as it will reduce human-resource costs quite substantially, thus giving business the financial boost it needs to remain relative or competitive. Some have added that human resource-related problems will become a thing of the past as employers would not have to deal with absenteeism, insubordination, large-scale strikes and wage increases. In some instances, workers will be replaced by apps and in other instances by robots. Either way, they can be replaced and the technology or innovation will lead to greater efficacy and
Precarity of work and working conditions, downward variation, outsourcing, informalisation and the expansion of the informal economy in response to a shrinking formal economy, a weak labour movement, low union membership and political and economic instabilities, and an energy crisis characterise the South African landscape.

...
people and workers by machines and algorithms which is good for business, research forecasts predict that, if not stemmed, millions of workers and their families will bear the brunt of these new technologies through job losses across a wide range of occupations. In some instances, it will begin with task replacement, but the end goal is to take over the occupations. The pace of the 4IR research on the impact of the 4IR that examines how people react to the technological replacement of human labour has been slow on the uptake. Garnulo et al. undertook research to address this gap and examined ‘the psychology of technological replacement’. The findings showed that people preferred workers to be replaced with other human workers, rather than robots; however, when it came to their own jobs being lost they preferred to be replaced by a machine or robot. This finding was quite ironic, but when qualified, the research found that the preference for the machine, robots or software as opposed to a human beings was associated with reduced self-threat and perceived threat to one’s economic future. While not conclusive and definitely acting as a catalyst for more research to be done in this area, the findings suggest ‘that technological replacement of human labour has unique psychological consequences that should be taken into account by policy measures (for example, appropriately tailoring support programmes for the unemployed).’ If nothing else this is the point.


The Fourth Industrial Revolution and the continued plight of the working class

**Babhali Ka Maphikela Nhlapo** makes note of five key problems with the 4IR that need to be addressed. These problems are: 1) 4IR’s inherent ‘democratic deficiency’ (the working class is not well represented), 2) the historically low levels of human-resource development in our country, 3) the 4IR deskillling processes that lead to massive job losses, 4) manufacturing contribution to GDP as a negative effect on the 4IR, and 5) the effects on women.

Political, social and academic literature is now littered with everything Fourth Industrial Revolution. The talk of the 4IR is one of the inventions of the World Economic Forum and it represents the conservative-dominant agenda: excessive focus on market-based innovation; sustainable development that depends on: laissez-faire approach to the economy; technological advances leading toward digitisation; and governance that depends on neoliberal approaches. With the advent of robots on the production line, workers are released to do other social activities like raising and looking after their own children, attending to other family demands, and looking after their health. These basic needs of human life and even human development are critical, so that by the time the workers come back to production they are completely refreshed and focused on their work. Workers, however, who are opposed to capitalists get removed permanently from the production line through, alienation, deskilling and later retrenchment.

Robots, therefore, represent both technological advancement reprieve from tough and dangerous manual tasks for workers standing alongside the danger of work alienation and retrenchment. Those of the present time are also able to walk, run and even possess the levels of human thinking called artificial intelligence. They also tend to speed up production and, therefore, deliver the products on time and with higher levels of precision.
Contrary to the University of Johannesburg's proclamations of being the 'leading 4IR institution to solve future challenges' there is no sufficient evidence that the post-school-education and training sector in South Africa, in collaboration with industry, has developed the training capacity to provide the skills demanded by the 4IR.

If we look back at the previous three industrial revolutions, we find that they were respectively: the invention of steam engines, electricity, and computerisation; while this one is about digital and artificial knowledge. This is the combination of large data: robotics, artificial intelligence and computers.

Mondli Hlatshwayo in this issue argues that the over-elaboration of the 4IR forgets that our country is a 4IR loser. He further argues that for the 4IR to thrive, we need to look back and start addressing the problems of the three previous industrial revolutions. Below I note five problems with the 4IR:

1. **4IR’S INHERENT ‘DEMOCRATIC DEFICIENCY’**
The first thing we need to note is that all 4IR structures be they presidential or Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), ministerial, they are not properly represented. The most missing voices are those of labour and communities. This is not by accident, as many companies seek to use these structures to advance their products.

2. **THE HISTORICALLY LOW LEVELS OF HUMAN-RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN OUR COUNTRY**
The South African education and training sphere lags behind our trading partners. The conservative views in our country normally want to evade this point by comparing South Africa to the rest of the continent, which is not fair. Further to that the racial, rural and gender spread of human-resources training skills has the apartheid construct. While the enrolment levels in basic and higher education have drastically increased, it is the adherence to the agreed school norms and standards that most rural and township schools fail to implement. Many of the rural and township schools catering for blacks in general have poor or no facilities for effective teaching and learning. This then results in high dropout levels or poor completion rates. The facilities problem also has a negative effect on the achievement of good results in the science, technology and mathematics.

Contrary to the University of Johannesburg’s proclamations of being the ‘leading 4IR institution to solve future challenges’ there is no sufficient evidence that the post-school-education and training sector in South Africa, in collaboration with industry, has developed the training capacity to provide the skills demanded by the 4IR. If that were so, then we would not have heard the daily gripes of the various industries of the lack of coherence between industry and academia in the knowledge and skills production processes.

3. **THE 4IR DESKILLING PROCESSES THAT LEAD TO MASSIVE JOB LOSSES**
The advent of any technology leads to the further alienation of workers through a process of deskilling. This then results in many job losses, as the current workforce is faced with technologies that they cannot operate and if they are able to, requires only a few of them (workers) on the production line. With the 4IR, it is estimated that jobs will only be created in highly skilled areas like data analysis and design. However, what 4IR has not budgeted for are the massive financial and social costs that are needed to compensate the retrenched and their families, including the loss of life – like the recent Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 that crashed just after take-off, killing all 157 people aboard. The other notable catastrophe has been the high incidents of suicide among Chinese Apple factory workers.

Alienation from work can result in massive human costs more than just the already-known catastrophic cost of retrenchment. Thus, it can be argued that the economic costs are also linked with long social causes, which many adherents of the 4IR are not looking at. For example, more people are moving away from face-to-face interaction (fuelled by ‘social’ media), and this has long social costs as we might have anti-social behaviour. According to Hlatshwayo and Buhlungu, ArcelorMittal South Africa, a large steel producer in Africa, shed 50,000 jobs between 1989 and 2015 due to the introduction of new technology. The effects on the surrounding communities of the Vaal Triangle have devastated livelihoods. There are estimations of further job losses with 4.5-million South African jobs facing the likelihood of being automated.

4. **MANUFACTURING CONTRIBUTION TO GDP AS A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THE 4IR**
Ha-Joon Chang has it that in the early 1960s, our country’s manufacturing sector's contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) was easily comparable with major trading partners like Japan and Korea. This, however, declined drastically from the 1970s because of unfavourable and neoliberal economic policies. Currently manufacturing percentage to GDP is below 13% and we need a 28%–32% contribution to be a 4IR winner.
According to Prof. Klaus Schwab the advantages of the 4IR includes, amongst others, quicker medical diagnosis through artificial intelligence based x-rays more faster and better than a radiologist; faster car manufacturing by robots which are more precise than assembly works.

Ha-Joon Chang argues that ‘manufacturing lends itself easily to mechanisation and chemical processing and thus, as opposed to agriculture and services, it has an inherently faster productivity growth’. So, unless we accelerate manufacturing, we don’t qualify to even utter the words 4IR. This is because neglecting the sector where the most research and development comes from and the technological innovations will emerge, strictly relegates our country to one of the worst 4IR losers.

5. THE EFFECTS ON WOMEN
Since most women are in services, agriculture and unpaid jobs, they will not benefit from the technological areas and advances associated with the 4IR. Our country is mostly women, with a large youth population. These population categories have huge levels of unemployment and poverty. What is to be done?

Hlatshwayo1 argues that for our country to benefit from 4IR we need to go back to the demands of the first three revolutions. There has to be a concerted effort to look at the broader society than certain provisions, and then consider all the basic steps required to play in the 4IR game. These include and are not limited to the following:

1. An end to the continued and massive retrenchments, through the slow phasing in of locally manufactured new technology. The rollout of manufacturing-based programmes for massive job creation. This is not to be confused with the short-term, not decent, and insecure job opportunities nonsense of the public works like cleaning streets and picking litter.
2. A realisation of the failures of the trickle-down growth, austerity-based, non-manufacturing and ecology-unfriendly macroeconomic plans even like the National Development Plan (NDP) and a new approach to planning that is stimulus based, redistributive and human centred with an in-depth, and not the usual, short-term planning process.
3. The massive provision of public railway, road network and public transport systems which are the catalyst for human connection and ease of development, integration and engagement.
4. The massive electrification especially of the rural and township settlements.
5. The bulk free or cheap data provision to rural and township settlements.
6. The massive upgrades of manufacturing and massive re-industrialisation. The implementation of the mining beneficiation processes.
7. The increases in public spending on education and training. The viewing of education and training as a public good not a commodity for profits and capitalist greed.
8. New technological plans focused on basic needs like household goods, clothing, textiles and footwear, food security, cheap cars, notepads, cell phones, etc.
9. A more focused approach to social demands like housing, health and environment.
10. The takeover of the many unused and neglected factories for social production with a collective ownership of workers and communities.
11. Concerted, massive and well-coordinated programmes of revolution against the private owners and their collapsing markets.

As Monyatso Mahlatsi puts it, unless the 4IR is working-class oriented the future of humanity is at stake. According to Prof. Klaus Schwab, the advantages of the 4IR includes, amongst others, quicker medical diagnosis through artificial-intelligence-based x-rays faster and better than a radiologist; faster car manufacturing by robots, which are more precise than assembly workers. It can also enhance mining processes for renewable energies and carbon-clean technologies. There are also 3D-printing machines that change manufacturing business models, autonomous cars that can change traffic flows and will have traffic foresights, thereby avoiding all the traffic hotspots. There are also vertical farms that could solve food security. However, all these get disappointing at the point of disposing of jobs like radiologists, assembly plant workers, drivers and even farm workers. The 4IR advances will also be more beneficial to the elite few, leaving the rest of the population in vulnerable situations wherein the risks of violence, low life-expectancy rates and increased inequality will remain exponential. 

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1 Arguments made by Hlatshwayo can be found in this volume of the SALB. See Technological revolutions and the demands of the South African proletarian.
Anne Heffernan argues that in looking at the low youth-voter turnout, we should not conflate disaffection with the process of elections with disinterest in affecting political change. The decision not to vote by those who are eligible to do so is potentially just as politically intentional as casting a ballot in favour of one party or another. Heffernan offers a historical perspective of youth politics by looking at youth protest from 1976, 1984, and Fees Must Fall (from 2015).

South Africa’s sixth democratic elections, in May 2019, elicited a historically low voter turnout. Youth participation in the elections was particularly low; of those who registered to vote, only 21% were under the age of 30. This voter ‘apathy’ – in particular, the high rate of youth who did not vote – has attracted attention in the press and from analysts, and it is the point of departure for this issue of the South African Labour Bulletin. But though there are many reasons people might choose not to vote, we should not conflate disaffection with the process of elections with disinterest in affecting political change. The decision not to vote by those who are eligible to do so is potentially just as politically intentional as casting a ballot in favour of one party or another. It sends a message to parties and political leaders and has the capacity to influence election results.

Just as we can understand the choice not to vote as a political one, it is important to consider the ways that people engage in politics beyond elections. Considering young people’s political participation in recent history is helpful here. Though youth turnout in this election was historically low, this does not indicate a lack of political interest among young people. Indeed, with the rise of new student movements over the past four years, there is a great deal of evidence that young South Africans are deeply politically engaged. That engagement is not being demonstrated at the ballot box. But where and how is it being demonstrated? A consideration of historical youth engagement in politics may help us recognise some of those same processes at work today.

1976
1976 has become shorthand to speak of youth political activism in South Africa. It refers, of course, to the June 16 march through Soweto’s streets led by secondary school students who were protesting the imposition of Afrikaans as a language of instruction in their classrooms. The events of 1976, when young learners marched and sang and were violently repelled by police, are ingrained in the national memory. They are so intimately connected with our understanding of the role that young people can play in politics that they are commemorated every year on Youth Day. 1976 became the generation of youth activists against which all others have been measured.

But sometimes, such familiar stories are so well known, and told so often, that we neglect historical details in the telling. In this case, it is important to recall what prompted the students of 1976 to organise themselves. Though many scholars, including myself, have argued that these young people were influenced by a number of different political groups and actors – from Black Consciousness student activists to members of the African National Congress (ANC) underground – they were first and primarily united against the imposition of Afrikaans in their classrooms. This is an argument...
strongly made by historian Sifiso M. Ndlovu, who was also a student at Pheleni Junior Secondary School during the Soweto Uprising. Ndlovu argues that it was circumstances inside the classroom that drove Soweto students to take to the streets in the winter of 1976, even as those circumstances existed within the larger repressive system of apartheid (Ndlovu 2017). This is important because, though the students of 1976 were concerned about the system as a whole, they directed their primary protest at their own personal experience of it. That is to say, the students' political engagement began with issues in the classroom.

Students voiced their grievances through direct action – leading a march through the streets. Voting was impossible for them; they were disenfranchised by both their age and their race. Instead, when they took to the streets in June 1976 they participated in a deep and proud history of political protest that circumnavigated these constraints on their political activism. They also laid the groundwork for generations of student and youth activists to come. Direct action and a focus on youth and student issues were to be hallmarks of young people's political engagement in the remaining years of the struggle against apartheid and even after 1994.

1984

Nearly a decade after 1976, by the mid-1980s, political protests among young people in South Africa had become common. Young people were increasingly recognised as a political force in their own right. The events after the Soweto Uprising had raised the national consciousness about what students could do. It had also led to new political formations of both youth and students. In particular, the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) emerged as a national body representing student interests at the school level. It coordinated with civics and unions through their shared affiliation to the United Democratic Front (UDF), allowing students to bring their concerns to a national platform. Many of these concerns were classroom-specific, like ending the use of corporal punishment by teachers, but COSAS also amplified these grievances in the context of the broader anti-apartheid struggle. Education was a public good, but not the broken educational system presided over by the Department of Bantu Education. The students of COSAS led educationally based protests and campaigns, including class boycotts and school stay-aways, in their efforts to fight the system.

Students of COSAS, and affiliated youth congresses, also became the vanguard of the township revolts of the mid-1980s. In 1984 and 1985 Oliver Tambo, president of the ANC in exile, made calls on Radio Freedom for the youth of South Africa to make the country 'ungovernable'. He was responding to the outbreak of protests in townships, where youth were at the forefront of developing a new form of protest politics. Writing about the Vaal Uprising of September 1984, historian Franziska Rueedi has noted that while there was support across generations for mass action and protest over rising rents, black youth were 'the shock troopers of the struggle' (Rueedi 2015). Similarly to the young people of Soweto in 1976, Rueedi argues that the political consciousness of these young people in the Vaal Triangle was influenced by their lived experiences of oppression, as well as ideologies of liberation.

The Vaal Uprising marked the start of the township revolts and a turn to a more direct confrontation with the state. Rueedi notes that this direct confrontation brought the use of new militant forms of political violence, in addition to tactics like boycotts, stay-aways, and marches. Arson rates and attacks against police in the townships surged. These clashes were often led by young people. Tactics radicalising the trend of direct action and responding to political grievance with specific and targeted
protests have continued to be a key mechanism by which young South African people expressed their politics.

2015

Thirty-nine years after the students of Soweto had taken to the streets in 1976, thirty-one years after the Vaal Uprising, and twenty-one years after South Africa's first democratic elections the country found itself riveted by student protests again. These were the largest student protests since the end of apartheid. Fallism (as the collective designation for the affiliated movements is called) began in March 2015 with Rhodes Must Fall and coalesced later that year in October under the banner #FeesMustFall. At its height, in late October 2015, student-led protests and occupations successfully shut down the nation's major universities. Students put pressure directly on key seats of power in the country, protesting at Parliament, the ANC's headquarters at Luthuli House, and the Union Buildings.

The set of issues that Fallists brought to attention were not new: foremost was the rising cost of higher education in South Africa, and the increasing burden that students and their families had to bear in this regard. The proportion of state funding for universities had been declining since 2000, and much of this shortfall was passed on to students through rising fees. Financial exclusions had already led to student resistance, especially on the campuses of historically black universities. Walter Sisulu University, in the Eastern Cape, and the University of Limpopo both experienced spates of violent student protests in 2010, which challenged financial and academic exclusions and poor infrastructure and resources. In both these instances, and in the later protests led by Fallists, direct action and (sometimes) destruction of property were employed as political tactics. Fallists also raised a range of issues that arose from the students' experience, but went beyond the specific issue of fees. The Rhodes Must Fall movement initiated a conversation about decolonising South African universities that highlighted the ways in which black students and staff are alienated in their own institutions. A crucial national conversation about inclusion, pedagogy, and the role of public African universities began.

Perhaps most impressively, Fallists reached out to campus workers, many of whom had been outsourced as a cost-saving measure by universities in the early 2000s. Solidarity between protesting students and workers strengthened the positions of both groups and eventually led to a commitment to in-source workers on some campuses.

CONCLUSION

Since 2016 Fallism has been in decline, due in part to harsher policing on campuses, but it – like the student movements before it – has left an imprint on the nation’s understanding and expectations of its young people.

Despite their poor turnout in the May elections, South African youth are not politically apathetic. In fact, just a month before the elections, thousands of COSAS-affiliated students marched through the streets of the Johannesburg CBD to Luthuli House, seeking a response from the ANC to a memorandum of demands, which included calls for improving school infrastructure and safety.

What is striking about the ways that young people in South Africa today engage in politics is how much it draws on past generations. The protests since 2015 have included explicit and implicit references to earlier student protests: students have carried signs referencing the generation of 1976, and one of the most popular songs during Fees Must Fall protests was ‘iYoh Solomon’, a struggle song about Solomon Mahlangu, a young Umkhonto we Sizwe operative who was executed in 1979. One of the most visible outcomes of Fallism at the University of the Witwatersrand was the renaming of Senate House to Solomon Mahlangu House.

In addition to these explicit historical references, shared practices unite student politics of past and present. Though South Africa is now a democratic state, students today use many of the same tactics of direct action – including class boycotts, protest marches, and even sometimes political violence – like the students who were combatting apartheid in the 1970s and 1980s. They also tend to focus their engagement directly on educational issues and their lived experience as students and young people.

This is a very different form of political engagement from voting in elections, but it is undeniably one in which young South African people have a deep history.

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References:


Interview with Lerato Portia Mogapi (Soweto Action Committee secretary)

MA sociology student from the University of the Witwatersrand Skhumbuzo Tshabalala (ST) interviews community activist Lerato Portia Mogapi (LPM) of the Soweto Action Committee (SAC). In this interview, they discuss Lerato’s role in helping the youth attain employment, fighting crime in the community, and the SAC struggle against the privatisation of basic services like water and electricity.

ST: What is your full name and surname?
LPM: My name is Lerato Portia Mogapi.

ST: Which gender do you identify yourself as?
LPM: I am a female.

ST: What is your highest level of education?
LPM: Tertiary education, I have a diploma in Marketing Management, which I obtained at Academy of Business and Computer Studies in 1999.

ST: Please give us the background to your work history?
LPM: I started working in 2000 shortly after completing my studies; I worked as an inter-branch transfer clerk, receptionist and filing clerk. During 2009 I served as an intern under the special project administrator responsible for capturing CVs of applying candidates, and managing clients’ accounts. I was further re-employed under the same project in 2010 now focusing mostly on learnerships and internships and also sourcing the youth for employment opportunities. Then in November 2010 I proceeded to serve under the same project, however, now focusing on establishing a relationship between special projects and communities. In 2011 I directed and managed COJ (City of Johannesburg) projects on EPWP (Expanded Public Works Programme), learnerships and internships. This included NVC (non-violent communication) which provided training on soft skills. In 2012, I began working as a project manager under training force where I managed all training aspects of all learnerships under SETA until 2017. My work experience has always specialised in human capital, thereby, assisting the youth with employment opportunities under various projects.

ST: So are you currently employed or unemployed?
LPM: On the system database I am unemployed; however, I am employed in the context of community work as I continue to serve the community.

ST: Have you ever been involved in any political organisation; please tell us when and how you started?
LPM: I have always been a loyal central committee member of the Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party (SRWP), and my political activism started when I joined the SRWP where we utilised Marxist tools to further the interests of our
people and in doing so I assisted the youth by getting them into jobs and assisting the community with issues such as crime, housing and prepaid electricity meters struggles.

**ST: How exactly did you assist the youth?**
LPM: I started assisting the youth under the Siyazizana (we help each other) Job Pathway Programme where we placed young people in learnerships, internships, EPWP projects, and other workplace programmes; I also participated in different councillors’ meetings called section 79, which is where we recruited the youth for employment projects. In a nutshell, I specialised in human capital, skills transfer and youth absorption into labour markets.

**ST: Tell us when you started engaging in community affairs?**
LPM: I started in the Meadowland Community Forum, well known as the MCF, when I was 26 years old.

**ST: What issues did you deal with under the MCF?**
LPM: The MCF dealt with a great variety of issues; it dealt with housing crises where we assisted people in gaining access to residential flats at Flarrop through forceful occupation. In this instance we ensured that people who were shortlisted obtained ownership and access to living spaces. The MCF also led a struggle against Eskom’s installation of prepaid electricity meters around Meadowlands through mobilising people to refuse prepaid electricity meters. Our strategy was to reconnect electricity immediately after it was disconnected. In terms of crime, we engaged with local police through Community Patrol Forums (CPF), which drastically reduced crime around hotspot areas. The MCF also monitored and ensured that community projects such as EPWP absorbed workers within the community rather than outside.

**ST: What ways were used by the MCF to mobilise individuals?**
LPM: We mobilised people through word of mouth, public meetings, pamphlet flyers and loudhailers, and so forth. For example, some news will spread through word of mouth, sometimes through forums that provided us with a platform to socialise with other activists from different places and invite them in our everyday struggles.

**ST: How were prepaid electricity meters introduced in your area?**
LPM: Prepaid electricity meters were installed during 2016 without community approval; moreover, people were not even educated on how these devices operated except being told that prepaid electricity meters would upgrade the system and reduce power failures. This was done without proper consultation with the community and fair engagement to give people adequate time to understand the concept of prepaid electricity meters. Eskom came with the policy, which clearly signalled a fight rather than constructive engagement. There was also evidence of deception, as people were required to sign an attendance register that was later used against the community claiming that community signatures represented their consent for prepaid electricity meters. We also discovered the prevalence of exclusionary mechanisms as Eskom consulted with the local councillors without involving the broader community.

To convince communities around Soweto, Dobsonville was used as a pilot study, to show that prepaid electricity meters can be a success. However, Dobsonville suffers the most as we discover that the residents have even stopped using some of the appliances such as microwaves and washing machines.

The recently installed prepaid electricity meters are divided into three: they contain a SIM card, which deducts an amount for network coverage; the contractor and Eskom, the consumer then uses the amount left after all deductions. With unemployment sitting at [29] per cent, people are struggling to afford prepaid electricity meters, particularly in the absence of any source of household income, hence we call for a flat-rate system, which will at least contribute towards the Eskom debt recovery.

**ST: What impact did prepaid electricity meters have on the poor?**
LPM: Everything; prepaid electricity meters have negatively impacted the poor. Due to inability to afford, people end up using alternative energy which results in accidents such as fires, and again they have imposed class division between those who can afford and those who cannot afford. Those who can afford tend to think we are anti-governmental because we are always challenging the government with little issues; this then labels us as the enemies of the government.

**ST: How has SAC mobilised those who are directly and indirectly affected?**
LPM: SAC mobilises through marches, conferences and seminars like the Karl Marx seminar; we get to know each other during presentations, finding out the interest of organisations and their work. Seth Mazibuko (president of SAC) also has ties with a radio station where we normally call to make public announcement on air. We also use local media, such as Jozi FM and the community newspaper (Diepkloof Urban News or The Souwetan) to mobilise and inform people about events taking place. I also used to be a union
activist, which makes it easier for us to extend our struggle by drawing the working class into our community struggles. The SAC leadership also comes together to draft a clustering programme, so we cluster areas altogether, for example, at the march on 18 July, we clustered Meadowlands, Diepkloof and Zola, arranged a hall and printed and distributed pamphlets for the meeting where we mobilised affected communities.

**ST: In terms of engaging with the government, what strategies have been used by SAC?**
LPM: We have members who we appointed to enquire and make follow-ups on the targeted office. We also engage with the government through the National Energy Regulator of South Africa (NERSA) and the Parliamentary Committee. In some cases we would go directly to a government office to schedule a meeting. In short, SAC uses any information that leads us to the government.

**ST: Has SAC ever engaged with other government structures such as the City of Johannesburg municipality with regard to installation of prepaid electricity meters, and how?**
LPM: SAC has engaged with COJ through Seth Mazibuko who easily penetrated government structures to assist us with relevant people. We used the ‘scratch my back I will scratch your back’ method through talking to relevant people within COJ who helped us in bringing our issues to the targeted office.

**ST: How has SAC contested the installation of prepaid meters through the established formal structures?**
LPM: SAC and community representatives have been engaging with Eskom, urging Eskom to hold dialogues with the community where we would discuss how these new devices work, their pricing structure and that every Eskom project undertaken within the community should train, skill and employ people within that community.

**ST: And what was the outcome of that approach?**
LPM: Eskom, as usual, kept on making promises to visit the community and attend community meetings and give first-hand clarity on its plans, however, none of this happened. The community meetings would then be held in the absence of Eskom although it had initially agreed to attend.

**ST: What other disputes has SAC raised in their struggle against the installation of prepaid electricity meters?**
LPM: Firstly, as SAC we are aware that some vendors duplicate prepaid vouchers sold to different customers, this results in the voucher not working shortly after it has been purchased. Secondly, the issue of historical debt inherited from the deceased undermines those who are not part of it; the debt of the deceased is passed to their children who are not responsible for it. Thirdly, the electricity purchased towards the end of the month depletes more quickly, thereby forcing people to only purchase electricity at the beginning of the month. Lastly, Eskom tariffs are more expensive than electricity purchased through City Power, such differences mostly undermine those who cannot afford to pay.

**ST: What is the actual position of the community towards water and electricity service payment?**
LPM: Following the deception used by government officials, the community has vowed not to pay any amount owed to both Eskom and Joburg Water due to their corruption at the top.

**ST: Do you think that it is appropriate for Soweto residents to pay for water and electricity services?**
LPM: No, our communities won’t pay a cent until their debt is scrapped and the money looted by the government officials is paid in full.
Interview with Ntlakanipho Mndiyata (Wisdom) of Abahlali BaseMjondolo

uMbuso weNkosi (M) interviews Ntlakanipho Mndiyata (NM), a young activist of Abahlali BaseMjondolo. They discuss what led him to join the movement, the meaning of land, and his views about an alternative system.

M: Tell me about yourself?
(Who are you? When were you born? Where do you stay?)
NM: I am Ntlakanipho Mndiyata (Wisdom). I am originally from the Eastern Cape province in the Bizana town of semi-rural areas. I was born on 10 June 1997 in Greenville Hospital. I grew up in Redoubt, studied at Lindokuhle Junior Secondary School. I then relocated to Durban, uMlazi township, at the age of 12 and completed my matric in Zwelihle High School. I am a proud, young, articulate land activist and a member of the biggest movement in South Africa which is Abahlali BaseMjondolo.

M: What social, political, and economic causes are you passionate about?
NM:
- Access to clean drinking water and sanitation
- Adolescent pregnancy
- Political causes
- Economic opportunities
- Ending inequality
- Issues of unemployment
- The Fourth Industrial Revolution

M: Did you vote in the previous elections and what did it mean for you?
NM: I voted in the previous elections and it meant that I have the power to influence change in the current governance of South Africa. I voted for the very first time in this year's general elections. Voting, for me, meant that I was exercising my democratic right of choosing whoever I trust and think will be able to present and address the working-class struggles appropriately.

M: When did you join Abahlali BaseMjondolo?
NM: Abahlali BaseMjondolo was founded in 2005. I recently joined the movement in April 2017 after finishing matric. I was pushed by the conditions in my area, seeing that no one cares or talks about our issues as the poor and vulnerable civic societies. There is a lack of service delivery, many of the people who are my peers are unemployed; those who stay in shacks do not have access to clean drinking water, sanitary facilities, and the list goes on. Yet, on top of it all, we still experience brutal evictions in our communities. If we try to challenge the state, we get killed on a daily basis when all we are doing is fighting for our human rights and for our human dignity. This is not what was promised to our parents as they were fighting for a new democratic society.

M: What does this organisation mean to you?
NM: Honestly speaking, the ABM means life to me. It is the only organisation that speaks directly to the issues that we as civic societies face, and it helps us to fight the battles of exploitation as well. It promotes equality. I believe it is where I belong because the youth, especially the poor youth, are not recognised in our days.

M: Before the interview you mentioned the dangers associated with activism? What has been your highlight and with all the danger why are you still active?
NM: There are dangers and threats, but if we don't fight the corrupt and manipulative system who is going to fight it?

However, there might be dangers and threats, but that doesn't hinder us from doing the great, progressive work we do. First and foremost, we are quite aware of the king of monster that is assassinating our leaders and despite the dangers and threats we can't back off now. Though it is often risky and hard to fight...
The ABM means life to me. It is the only organisation that speaks directly to the issues that we as civic societies face, and it helps us to fight the battles of exploitation as well. It promotes equality. I believe it is where I belong because the youth, especially the poor youth, are not recognised in our days.

people with all the resources, we resort to taking legal routes as a way of fighting to avoid danger. Backing off because of fear would mean selling the people and the struggle as well, prior to that the leaders and the communities have invested their trust and progress in the movement.

**M:** What does land mean for you?

**NM:** Land is a very broad term. It is ABM culture that we respect land as we regard it as a precious gift from God and it deserves to be used with care. Not for profit purposes. Land is a lifetime legacy.

**M:** What kind of future do you imagine as an activist of land?

**NM:** As an activist of land, I see a free, united African continent having free, equal access to land and using it for non-capitalist functions/programmes.

**M:** Does your organisation have many young land activists?

**NM:** Yes, we have a massive number of young land activists... Land activism is when an individual is landless and results in land occupation if unable to buy an apartment which leads to the individual facing eviction and then automatically the individual becomes an activist by fighting for the right to land.

**M:** Do you think that social movements have a political importance in our democracy? What are your thoughts concerning social movements deciding to compete in the national elections?

**NM:** Yes, social movements have a political importance in our democracy. When the time is right and we have mobilised ourselves together under one vision, we can achieve a lot. In countries like Brazil and Venezuela, they’ve done that and won, hence it’s possible. At the moment social movements keep our democracy in check. We are the ones that make sure that government delivers on its promises. If the government fails we take to the streets, which we do more often – indicating that the government at the moment is failing to keep its promises. Social movements encourage active citizenship and without them the poor would not be able to have a platform because political parties and politics encourage an organised system that is somewhat elitist.

**M:** What are other human rights issues is the ABM proclaiming?

**NM:** Equal access to land. Right to the city. We have recently started working with Fees Must Fall. We focus also on women and child-abuse issues; accommodation in decision-making; the right to basic service delivery.

**M:** Can you elaborate on your last statement? What do you think is the cause of this youth unrecognition?

**NM:** We as young people are not recognised, hence the majority of us are jobless, uneducated and this is because all the issues that impact the youth are decided upon by the elders on behalf of the youth. This failure to recognise the youth is also reflected in the failure to recognise the landlessness of the youth in this country. We see it even in the prizing of land. The land is prized by the system and it is meant to benefit the few existing elites. To them land is only a commodity, a source of income, and profits. This young, democratic state needs to look again into the question of land. Can land be prized if there are people who are homeless? People especially those in shacks do not have a sense of belonging in this South Africa because tomorrow they can be removed easily.

**M:** If it is the system that is the problem, don’t you think an alternative system will have its own problems? How can those problems be addressed?

**NM:** An alternative system may have its own problems, but if the alternative system is based on respect and dignity for all humankind and is striving to improve the living conditions of the people and it ensures equal access to land, then that system could work as it is likely to be a socialist system. Most importantly, as a people we will have to democratically and actively participate in the decision-making processes of the system.
The Alexandra township (known as Alex) total shutdown was a protest that literally demonstrated the phrase ‘the smoke that calls’. Alex was beset by protests on 3 April 2019 led by the Alexandra Total Shutdown movement, which organised the Alex shutdown protest as an attempt to draw the attention of the government to poor service delivery. The protests lasted three weeks and threatened the smooth running of the national election. As a form of reprisal, the president set up an inter-ministerial task team, which was to deal with the concerns of the residents of Alex working hand in hand with the members of Alex Shutdown. The Alex Shutdown started off as a service delivery and land-rights-oriented movement. The movement developed into a much broader social movement looking at a variety of social problems, which could be addressed by the government and the private sector. One leading figure of the Alex Shutdown was Thembeni Manana, a vibrant youth activist, who was at the forefront of the protest. Throughout the protest, Manana articulated the concerns of the movement with clarity in the media. The Alex Shutdown was also preceded by several protests like the ‘buycott’ which are boycotts from buying things in the local economy to intensify the pressure on all stakeholders. This included not buying from the local PicknPay. We decided to sit down with her on Friday 26 July 2019 for an interview/conversation because we were fascinated by her zeal as a youth in the political arena, and leading protest actions in Alexandra. We structured the interview so as to cover not only the 5 April protest but also the 19 June 2019 protest. The June protest became the intensification of the April protest. Manana was instrumental in the organisation and the facilitation of the April and the June protests.

THE INTERVIEW WITH THEMBENI MANANA

Manana first gave us a brief history of Alex as a testament of how invested she is in Alex. She explains that Alex was a farm that used to belong to H.B Papenfus. Papenfus later sold small plots of land to Blacks and soon Alexander was proclaimed a township. In 1948 the apartheid government embarked on a programme of forcibly removing 5,000 residents of Alex to Orlando in Soweto. But there were not enough homes in Soweto, thus many of the forcibly removed residents were dumped back in Alex. In 1958 the apartheid government again embarked on a programme to remove and relocate the residents of Alex, this time 56,000 residents of Alex were moved to Soweto and 15,000 residents to Tembisa on the East Rand. As a result of the forced removals, the government could buy and demolish houses of Alex without consent, or participation from the community. As a form of consolation for this unfair removals, those relocated were compensated with R1,770 for their homes. Moreover, many relocated residents found their way back to Alex, because the township is closer to their places of work.

In Alex the land still belongs to the government even though the current government is a democracy. Alex residents do not have title deeds. This state of affairs has made it possible for ‘land grabs’ to occur with little legal consequences for the perpetrators. There is also little ‘legitimate contestation’ concerning these ‘land grabs’ from those who have lived in Alex for several decades, and this is the ultimate contributor to the existing overcrowding in Alex (interview with Manana, 2019).

1 See interview captured by Sithembiso Mdhalose for SALB at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NYqA9aAMWc
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In 2016 there were more than 180,000 living within a 6.91 km radius in Alex and those numbers have increased substantially since then. As a result, the township is characterised by poor service delivery, and the government is claiming that it does not have the capacity to service the bulging population. Alex is also beset by unemployment, poverty, underdevelopment, rape, crime, gangsterism, the struggle for shelter and land, lack of education and overall underinvestment from the government and the private sector. These social ills became the reason that the April protest did not become sufficient, and that a second protest must be held. Also these protests showed that the Alex shutdown movement is a well-organised, and well facilitated movement.

LAND, CHEAP LABOUR, AND DEVELOPMENT

In terms of geographical location, Alex is hidden behind factories and industrial parks. One is only made aware of the existence of Alex through the social cohesion bridges or ‘labour exporting bridges’, which export under-skilled and semi-skilled labourers from Alex to Johannesburg north. ‘Social cohesion’ bridges were built as a lacklustre attempt by the post-apartheid dispensation to unite Alex with the broader community of the Johannesburg north. The Corridors of Freedom Project (2017) explains that ‘social cohesion’ bridges carry thousands of workers from Alex to Sandton daily.

The Alex Shutdown should not be reduced to a mere service delivery protest, but it should be viewed more broadly, and intellectually, as a protest against cheap labour from the township. As Manana argued, the ‘Alex total shutdown spoke directly to the asymmetry in a power relationship between workers and their employers in Sandton.’ Alex is one of the bigger suppliers of cheap labour to the more affluent areas in the northern suburbs and more specifically Sandton. Manana asserts that ‘this place [Sandton] would function very differently if it were not for the cheap labour supplied by the residents of Alex on a daily basis, who ensure the smooth running of this unequal economic ecosystem’. BusinessTech (2019) reported that approximately 19,242 unskilled and semi-skilled workers from Alex work in Sandton, Midrand and Centurion. BusinessTech (2019) also reported on how the population of Alex decreases during the day as the residents/labourers move to their places of employment in the morning only to return in the late evening.

Alex epitomises the idea of a labour reserve. The residents of Alex, most of whom migrated from other parts of rural South Africa and Southern Africa to seek employment opportunities,
find themselves providing cheap labour to the affluent surrounding areas. The value of the labour goes unnoticed until a big protest such as the Alex Shutdown disrupts the web of social inequalities and labour exploitation. This is not the first time in history that the people of Alex take to the street in such an impactful way. In 1957 the residents of Alex boycotted the Public Utility Transport Company (PUTCO) services, which lasted for three months and forced PUTCO and the Johannesburg City Council to introduce a voucher system subsidised by the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce. In 1985 the apartheid government introduced Black Local Authorities and township councils in Alex as an extension of their administration. The residents of Alex did not take kindly to the proposal and they responded by establishing their own township councils/administration as an alternative. Their counter-council was called the Alexandra Action Committee. The committee dealt with the issue of land ownership by pushing the government to issue title deeds as well as engaging with trade unions on issues of cheap labour. All of the above history shows that the Alex Shutdown has had some precedents.

Manana has made a link between overcrowding in homes and cheap labour; because of cheap labour, parents are unable to extend their shacks, and when their family grows both parents and children find that privacy becomes something difficult to have. To Manana this overcrowding at homes has affected the education of children, due to the lack of privacy children find it difficult to do their homework. Manana has also noted that the government and the private sector have little interest in skilling the youth of Alex; to date Alex has one college, which skills the youth in hairdressing.

POLITICS WILL ALWAYS TAKE INTEREST IN YOU!
Manana expressed that the youth in Alex believes that ‘politics is reserved for old corrupt people who abuse state funds and resources for their personal benefit’. As a result, the youth perceive politics as an ancillary feature of the state and as something that does not necessarily affect their lives directly. ‘If you're not interested in politics, politics will always be interested in you. Because you'll always be used as a point of reference, research, statistics and so forth’ remarks Manana. The Alex Shutdown was also a call to the Alex youth that they could use their urgency and their democratic rights to change their lives and their society. The movement also wanted the youth of Alex to realise that the problems they faced were mainly structural; this means that their problems were the outcome of the state’s national and foreign economic policies and the investment decisions made or ignored by the private sector. Hence Manana, in our interview, was able to declaim: ‘I wish I could create a bomb that could destroy capitalism.’

In the protests, some of the youth were missing from the street but instead decided to show solidarity by using social media. This shows that political mass action in this digital era has changed. The Alex Shutdown trended at least once a day on Twitter for the duration of the protest/shutdown. The youth took to social media not only to report and provide updates on the shutdown, but they also provided analysis on the shutdown and documented the reactions of the municipal, provincial and the national government.

After the national elections, the inter-ministerial committee was dissolved by the change in cabinet. The residents of Alex are back to where they were, which is providing cheap labour to the surrounding affluent neighbourhoods in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg. Nevertheless, the Alex Shutdown was impactful because it made the residents of Alex conscious of their social problems, and it showed them that they could fight for these problems to be solved.

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December 2019/January 2020
Lamentations on the curation of the urban space

Mpho A. Ndaba looks at the curation of the urban space and shows how in Cape Town the homeless are being pushed out of the city by giving them fines.

I have a love/hate relationship with the full moon. At the height of depression in Cape Town, I remember how each time I received the news about loved ones dying of depression, there would always be a full moon, present and unrelenting. Call it coincidence, but I remember them and all the other strangers whom I remain connected to and remember whenever there is a full moon. The only time I looked forward to it was on 27 July in 2018. It was the blood-filled moon, rendering itself an irregular guest among the stars. Not everyone could see it. I immediately gained comfort in the fact that my earlier lamentation was after all not unsound: an ease that came after Phumlani Kango shared a similar experience. ‘This would have looked clearer if I was home,’ he tweeted, referring to ‘light pollution’ in the city of Johannesburg. An emerging question from Kango’s tweet was one to do with the construction of the urban space. I experienced the same frustration while attempting to have a look from my 4th-floor-located room in Wynberg. Eventually, I would go to call Dimakatso asking her how it looked from back home in the Free State. During our call, I was overcome by nostalgia; how hot summer evenings often saw her lay a blanket outside, something she did so we could easily marvel at the vast nature of the sky, the consistency of the moon, while counting the stars.

THE CAPE TOWN URBAN SPACE

In the hours leading to this lamentation, the question of home in relation to the urban space had come up while I waited for a bus to Claremont. At the University of Cape Town’s south stop, I saw a brown cat wandering on the other side of the road. The bus eventually arrived, and we left. Just as it made its way out of the university campus, we came across plenty of health and fitness enthusiasts, jogging. This is along one of the routes leading to Rhodes Memorial. Soon after we passed them, there were plenty of others, homeless and living under the bridge.

When thinking about the physical construction of the University of Cape Town and its location in general, the people who are homeless and living under the bridge not far from its upper campus, to me highlights the history of the city and what is valued; how such valuing comes about and who gets to decide this. In thinking about those joggers in relation to the location of their jogging routes in that area, it was interesting to note how the space is generally constructed and used. And what it means for different people; how those who are poor as well as the non-human (plants and animals), can be seen as things and nothing beyond that.

THE PROBLEM OF HOMELESSNESS

Later, just after midnight, I would find myself listening to Linzi Bourhill, a talk-radio host who had been standing in on a programme usually done by Sara-Jayne King on Cape Talk. She posed a question: ‘Would you prefer to have homeless people removed from site, if you were going to a particular place in the city and knew they were going to be there?’ She was asking callers to phone in and engage her on this question. It comes after she had concluded another segment of the show where she was interviewing Thinus Ras, the owner of Ragamuffin Curry, a restaurant specialising in curried food. That particular conversation they were having is important and necessary because there is a way in which Ras valued and interacted with people who are homeless in the Kenilworth area where his business is located. He experienced an incredible amount of backlash from some of the customers who threatened to no longer come to his restaurant because of the kind of human decency he affords people who are homeless.
Prior to this interview, Bourhill had touched on environmental conservation and the consumption of animal products. As a listener, you could draw connections between her being an advocate for the environment and her being a vegetarian. At the end of the interview, Ras asserted that ‘the problem is not homeless people but homelessness.’ Throughout the interview, I was surprised at how she could miss the connections between her advocacy for better treatment of the non-human beings, and the environment, and the high number of homeless people inside the urban spaces. Assuming that the demand for justice is a central guide to white people’s participation in environmental conservation, those who formally and informally form part of urban animal rights and environmental conservation do not often extend and apply that very core defining value when it comes to what is largely faced by black people.

All these encounters forced me to grapple with the question of the construction of the urban space and how in many ways my childhood experience in relation to the idea of nature, as well as the question of homelessness, is heavily produced by the curation of space for the purpose of generating money for capital while ensuring comfort for white people. I was forced to reflect on how white people as a social group, from a historical point of view and in the current milieu, are in collaboration with the state and the capital when it comes to the organisation of urban spaces.

And of course, the question of class today becomes the important part of the conversation when it comes to how race and money-driven constructions continue to thrive. The interview done by Bourhill highlighted the need for the recognition of the role of individuals who carry the aspirations of the collective, be it in the case of the middle class interests and the ‘middle classness’ attitude that is anti-poor. There are a number of examples we can refer to to elucidate the collaborations aimed at ensuring race and class comfort; the instrumental role of white people as a social group, their capacity to okay anti-black, anti-coloured and anti-poor practices in Cape Town and the broader South Africa. One recent case is the revelation by Ndifuna Ukwazi indicating that Rondebosch Golf Club pays R1,000 a year to make use of 450,000 square meters of well-suited land, which can be used alternatively for affordable housing.

Or how in the last couple of weeks media reports have been indicating that the city, instead of coming up with multi-layered responses and being self-reflexive, condemned people who are homeless, rendering them criminals by giving them fines. Such a response reaffirms what progressive organisations like Reclaim the City, Ndifuna Ukwazi and Philippi Horticultural Area (PHA) Campaign, have all been saying for years: that the city does not care about poor people. With both these examples noted, the act of unleashing state violence onto people who are homeless, and the mundane use of public land, do not exist outside the already existing narratives of how city spaces ought to be organised; the ways in which the value of property is thought about in relation to homeless people and notions of a clean space.
The environmental problems we face today, as noted through the notion of the Anthropocene, racial capitalism as foundational to colonialism and the apartheid system, renders white people as inherently responsible for the legacies of such oppressive systems. This is in addition to other factors that create a complexity of sorts, including the role of transnational interests/companies.

The same way in which the social construction of idea and practice of nature, and what is socially conceived to be beautiful scenery in Cape Town, is something that is achieved through the exclusion of coloured and black communities, and so is the problem of homelessness. Those customers who registered their discomfort about having people who are homeless in and around Raganuffin Curry, in addition to the question posed by Bourhill, demonstrate the role of social groups and their aspirations. It is these assertions, which in the case of homelessness are a manifested through the city fining people for being homeless.

In turn, they cannot afford housing in the very areas in which they were born. The violence comes in the form of displacement, breaking down of family life, loss of income-earning network support systems.

**THE BRUTALITY OF THE CITY TOWARDS THE HOMELESS AND THE POOR**

At the level of the City of Cape Town and Western Cape province in general, the use of colonial and apartheid forms of governing space is blatant, and this is not surprising. This space governance has been highlighted by the likes of Ndifuna Ukwazi. We will not forget the case that involved two elderly women who lived in Woodstock in 2004, whose housing units were being sold to private developers who in turn would force them to pay higher renting costs once their housing units were refurbished. Or the ongoing evictions that include the De Waal Drive, Naruna Estate and other rental stocks (reclaiamthecity.org 2017), all of which indicate that the city acts in the interests of private developers.

It is the city that enforces these brutal practices, fining people for being homeless, kicking people off the land and out of their homes simply because some private developers want to build a cookie store. But the ways in which these businesses succeed, is through the silence of the middle class and white people, something that comes in the form of their support, intended for the access of race and class comfort.

In the case of white people who formally and informally form part of the urban environmental movement, while at the same time advancing anti-black racism, not seeing the question of justice as something that runs across all socio-political movements is not self-reflective on their part. I say urban environmental movement and emphasise formal or informal because there are individuals who see themselves as championing the protection of the non-human beings in this age of the Anthropocene, yet they remain silent about other issues. We have often heard this comment about how white people care more about saving the rhino, than contributing to undoing the legacies of colonialism and apartheid, all of which caused black people to live in inhumane conditions. In many ways, this assertion serves as a critique to whiteness and how the disdain for black people guides their decision to limit justice to non-human beings.

This is the same failure that can be observed when it comes to their unwillingness to see the historical links between problems of homelessness, unaffordable housing, spatial apartheid planning, with the enslavement of people who were indigenous to the Cape Peninsula, something noted through the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck in April 1652. To leave the apartheid system would be a grave mistake because policies such as the Native Urban Areas Consolidation Act of 1945 together with the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act 52 of 1951, implemented by the Cape City Council and the Cape Divisional Council (DVC), were promulgated for the purpose of ensuring the entrenchment of the white construction of comfort in what today exists as Cape Town and the broader Western Cape.

The environmental problems we face today, as noted through the notion of the Anthropocene, racial capitalism as foundational to colonialism, and the apartheid system renders white people as inherently responsible for the legacies of such oppressive systems. This is in addition to other factors that create a complexity of sorts, including the role of transnational interests/companies. Therefore, in instances where people cannot access affordable housing, while others are being fined for being homeless, the silence of those who formally or informally form part of the urban environmental movement, can be critiqued outside and beyond city policies.

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#AmINext

Gender activism that brought the country to a standstill

Nokukhanya N Mntambo and Nomusa Nkwanyana explore hashtag activism as a response to societal ills. This follows the gruesome murder of 19-year-old student Uyinene Mrwetyana and the perceived onslaught of women in the country. At the height of protests sparked by gender-based violence, #AmINext and #MeToo were used extensively by the youth to mobilise change in society.

UYINENE MRWETYANA: A MURDER THAT UNRAVELLED SOUTH AFRICA

The story of Uyinene Mrwetyana is one that will be remembered for years to come, but it wasn’t the first of its kind and it will likely not be the last. It’s a chilling story of a 19-year-old student from the University of Cape Town (UCT) who was lured into the Claremont Post Office by an employee who then accosted her, sexually assaulted her and bludgeoned her to death. The suspect, a 42-year-old male employee at the Cape Town post office, was a repeat offender. In a four-page admission read by his counsel, the 42-year-old Botha admitted to raping and murdering Mrwetyana, leaving little to the imagination.

The high court in Cape Town handed him three life sentences for rape and murder, and five years for defeating the ends of justice but not before igniting a wave of protests across the country. While that was unfolding, another similar story was making headlines. Boxing champion Leighandre Jegels was shot and killed by her boyfriend, a police officer in the South African Police Service (SAPS). Jesse Hess, a theology student at the University of the Western Cape, was found dead on her bed. Meghan Cremer, Arvitha Dooodnath, Sinethemba Ndlouvu, Natasha Conabeer, Allison Plaatjes, Jane Govindsamy, Ayakha Jiyane, Basetsana Kgaole, Khanyi Ntanga, Khensani Maseko, Karabo Mokoena – these are only some of the women who have fallen victim to the scourge of gender-based violence but many more go unknown, unnamed and undiscovered.

The South African government was again summoned by civil society to respond to the widespread attacks against women and children. President Cyril Ramaphosa addressed the nation following growing calls from the public. In his address, Ramaphosa vowed to tighten laws to fight the rape and murder of women. He admitted that crimes against women and children are indeed a ‘national crisis’. He vowed that the laws against gender-based violence (GBV) would be given teeth and that under the Department of Justice and Correctional Services, no such crime would go unpunished. The laws he committed to strengthening include ensuring that the perpetrators of such heinous crimes would be handed down life sentences without the possibility of parole. Perhaps the sentencing of Botha is the enactment of this promise in full swing, but for a crime as brutal as that detailed above, is there any justice?

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE STATISTICS AFFIRM A ‘NATIONAL CRISIS’ – AN EVIDENT TREND OF VIOLENCE

The social crisis facing the country was affirmed by the latest crime statistics presented by Police Minister Bheki Cele to Parliament’s Portfolio Committee on Police in September 2019. The stats painted a grim picture – 2,771 women were murdered during the 2018/19 financial year, down from 2,930 the previous year. The stats also showed that 1,014 children were murdered during the 2018/19 financial year, down from 2,930 the previous year. The stats also showed that 1,014 children were murdered in the 2018/19 financial year, a 2.9% increase from the 985
murders the previous year. Above and beyond the condemnation of these acts by the government, there appears to be an absence in the political will to fight the brutality against women. South Africa’s tendency towards violence is often described as historical; an implication of the country’s collective experiences under the colonial rule and apartheid regime. But how did this violence find itself now playing out in the domestic sphere? And if it is a ‘collective sport’ by men, how do we deal with the collective that is also always quick to distance itself from the problem?

Take for instance the movement #NotAllMen. The movement is a rebuttal of women’s attempt to share their experiences of sexual misconduct, rape, sexism and other microaggressions practised on them across all spheres of life. #NotAllMen is a response to #MenAreTrash and a criticism of #MeToo. These hashtags have opened the floor to discourse centred around patriarchal relations in society and the adverse effects the system has on women from a micro-scale all the way through to the macroaggressions against women. The death of Mrwetyana and Hess ignited a social-media uproar, which spilled over into the streets of South Africa – youth gathered outside Parliament and the World Economic Forum on Africa which housed a number of international delegates – the world was watching. A number of universities including UCT and Wits held vigils in honour of Mrwetyana and other slain women; the largest economic conglomerate (the Johannesburg Stock Exchange) was brought to a standstill. Not surprisingly, social media also played an important role in forging a movement that addresses the systemic violence against women. These online social movements have become characteristic of how the country’s youth approach social ills and injustices.

Winds of Change: Hashtag Activism as a Means to Dealing with GBV

#AmINext was born out of the chaos. A name-and-shame thread on social media was created to expose the perpetrators of these crimes, but these attempts also fell short of effecting the law because the men implicated in these hashtags and threads went unnoticed when the storm died down, and here again is a setback for the promises of prosecution by President Ramaphosa. Using the hashtags AmINext and TotalShutDown, society mobilised, with the assistance of social movements such as Black Women’s Caucus and civil society movements such as People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA), to shut down several commercial hubs across the country including Sandton and the JSE. The shutdown of corporate South Africa drives a particular point home. The scourge of GBV exists even in the workplace where it is insidiously concealed in plain sight because of the power dynamics and inequality at play in the labour force. This is a place where GBV cases are well concealed because of the stigma that comes with exposing the perpetrator and the high cost/burden that comes with exposing a perpetrator.
Women are most affected by GBV in the workplace; they have to constantly tread lightly around the issue of GBV because their jobs and reputations are on the line. Those who are brave enough to report and expose their abusers become victimised, labelled as liars and are subject to repeated abuses. The paradigm and structures of patriarchy are tightly woven in the workplace, and inequality and non-progressive gender norms are the order of the day.

In addition, these hashtags were also used to facilitate extensive educational conversations about GBV. Social-media platforms such as Twitter were turned into a safe space where GBV survivors who had previously been silenced by the shame of their ordeal to share their stories even named and shamed their perpetrators. GBV remains a reality in a society steeped in gender inequality and asymmetrically disproportionate power dynamics between men and women in society.

Not without its flaws, the online social movement revealed something deeper about our society. It became clear that the attitudes of South Africans are among the catalysts of this crisis. As a nation, we are nonchalant about these issues until the next gruesome case is publicised. The case of Uyinene Mrwetyana has a shocking resemblance to that of 22-year-old Karabo Mokoena, killed and burned beyond recognition by boyfriend, Sandile Mantsoe, in 2017. Two years on and little is spoken of the case. It is brought up as leverage in arguments about ‘pretty privilege’, the apparent privilege enjoyed by a beautiful girl that even in her gruesome death she is the talk of the town. We minimise dead women to their looks and come back to ask the pertinent questions about holding perpetrators accountable only after this debate has been settled. This is the fate that we fear Mrwetyana will suffer: that her death and that of Hess and the many other slain women will be in vain.

POWA notes that the general public tends to forget about GBV and GBV cases far too quickly, especially when they are not heavily reported on. Rosa Lyster, a journalist and gender activist, asserts that: ‘Every week, there is a story in South Africa that should stop us in our tracks; a newspaper report detailing what feels like a freak detonation of psychotic, demented violence against women, a one-off explosion of hate that somehow just keeps on happening.’ However, it seems like, as a nation, we can only deal with one GBV case a year at a time, saving our rage for the next year. Social movements and civil society organisations are working rigorously on helping victims of GBV and trying to spread awareness about GBV. But can more be done?

The prevalence of online social movements has nonetheless proven effective, at the very least, in creating awareness, driving conversation and mobilising youth on the ground – students, parents, academics, media personalities alike. What was special about these hashtags and online mobilisation is that their reach was national and even global. The youth also extended their reach to link with global GBV movements, such as the #MeToo movement, to strengthen their voice to ring global about the plight of women all in one emotionally charged month of September 2019. There was a sense of unity and uniformity in the message being conveyed all throughout the world. Even more phenomenal is that they did not merely exist in the clouds but with the same energy, young women were able to confront the issue face forward.

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The Fourth Industrial Revolution and climate change

A roadmap to joblessness

Courtney Morgan argues that the discussion about the 4IR is relevant to the discussion about climate change because, inherently, these two trends are both about inequality and the further marginalisation of the vulnerable in our society. Morgan covers the climate strikes of 20 September 2019, where climate justice activists around the world gathered to protest against government inaction against climate change. In South Africa, there were various actions taking place at key sites of the country such as the Union Buildings, Gauteng Legislature and Parliament.

In the context of a heating world, increasing inequality and persisting poverty, it is important to envision a better future, where the poor and most vulnerable are centred. Arguably the biggest challenge facing humanity today is the climate crisis, and any future we envision must keep this in mind. The South African government has for some time been pushing the idea of the Fourth Industrial Revolution; this article will look at what the 4IR is and how it affects climate change. This article will also look at the recent climate strikes across the country, specifically the one outside the Sasol offices. Ultimately, this article will look at the intersection of the 4IR and climate change, and how it will only create more inequality, and how 4IR will only benefit those who can afford to experience it.

WHAT IS THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION?
The first industrial revolution was the shift to fossil fuels, the second was the onset of electricity distribution and wireless and wired communication, and the third was the development of digital systems and the vast advances of computing capabilities. It is on the back of these systems that the fourth is built.1 The 4IR is the onset of technological advancements, such as sophisticated robotics, virtual reality and artificial intelligence,2 and it is the onset of what many call the ‘cyber-physical systems’. This is the idea that technology will be embedded within society and possibly even human bodies, with a significant increase in automation and robotically controlled production. Although new forms of technology sounds innovative and interesting, it’s more concerning when you realise that many poor people around the world have yet to be met with the second or third industrial revolutions.

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF A 4IR?
The 4IR has the potential to make life easier for people, but with most advancements within a capitalist system, it won’t benefit everybody equally, and will most likely disadvantage many. There are a number of immediate risks that the 4IR poses and, undoubtedly,

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1 https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/what-is-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/
2 https://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/fourth-industrial-revolution
many more unforeseen risks. In an already very unequal society with rocketing unemployment rates, the 4IR is not the solution to our woes; it will undoubtedly exacerbate them in the same way that the climate crisis is doing. Most poor communities in South Africa have little to no access to technological infrastructure, so they wouldn’t even be able to take advantage of the 4IR if it reached them. Installing new infrastructure would cost the public more, while the energy needed to power this revolution will mean more extraction, for an already highly polluting society. In South Africa, which is the 14th-highest carbon emitter in the world,\(^2\) the 4IR would only push us even higher up that list, implicating us even more in the climate crisis and, once again, putting the poor in more immediate danger by accelerating climate change.

When this is brought up, those in favour of the shift to technology would argue for geoengineering, which would supposedly help humankind avoid catastrophic climate change. Geoengineering creates techno-fixes or solutions using man-made technologies that don’t actually look at reducing emissions, but rather the idea that humans can invent themselves out of this crisis. The risk with this is that there is no way to know the unforeseen effects of these technologies in the long term; there has not been nearly enough testing done to guarantee its sustainability and safety.

Finally, and arguably most pertinent to the working class of South Africa, job creation will be stunted and unemployment will increase. Job losses will not only occur in so-called unskilled sectors, they will stretch across industries with devastating results.\(^4\) The climate crisis is already putting so many jobs at risk; according to the International Labour Organization\(^5\) as of 2014, close to 1.2-billion jobs are in industries that rely on natural processes, thus making them directly threatened by climate change. This constituted around 40% of all those employed in the world. In a world where work is already so precarious, with the onset of more automation, the 4IR poses an even bigger threat to the stability of the job market.

**WHAT IS THE LINK BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE FOURTH IR?**

The discussion about the 4IR is relevant to the discussion about climate change because, inherently, these two trends are both about inequality and the further marginalisation of the vulnerable in our society. At its core, climate justice is about justice and equality, both of which are threatened by climate change as well as the 4IR. While the government is pushing more development and more growth, climate-justice forces are saying the opposite, or at least that we have to look at ideas of development and growth in very different ways in the context of the climate crisis.

**THE CLIMATE STRIKES – 20 SEPTEMBER**

On 20 September 2019, climate-justice activists around the world gathered to protest against government inaction against climate change. In South Africa, various actions took place at key sites of the country such as the Union Buildings, Gauteng Legislature and Parliament. There were also protests that targeted sites of carbon capital such as Sasol. The Co-operative and Policy Alternative Center (COPAC) and its allies chose to gather outside of the Sasol headquarters in Sandton to protest against air pollution and carbon capitalism, which is poisoning poor communities as well as contributing to climate change.

Fossil fuel corporations such as Sasol and others have been, and continue to be, let off the hook.

20 September was a historical day for the climate-justice movement in this country. The action outside Sasol had an attendance of around 450, while action outside the legislature had over 1,000, and there were varying numbers at other actions all around the country. It must be noted that 20 September was not a culmination of actions; it was just the beginning. It was a catalyst that must be used to build a strong and persistent climate-justice movement, where members of civil society are not just responding to events but are proactive about envisioning and building a new, carbon-free society.

The demands handed over to Sasol were:

1. Sasol emits 67-million tons of carbon a year. Sasol’s emissions annually are more than the entire country of Portugal,

\(^3\) https://www.carbonbrief.org/the-carbon-brief-profile-south-africa


3. Sasol is heavily invested in Mozambique’s gas fields (2.6-trillion cubic feet) in Inhambane province. It is planning further investments to develop an integrated oil and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) project adjacent to its existing petroleum facility. The project includes 13 wells and an LPG production facility at an estimated cost of US$1.4 billion. With Mozambique having experienced cyclones Idai and Kenneth, and with more cyclones linked to climate change a distinct possibility, Sasol’s carbon criminality is unacceptable. We demand that Sasol pay reparations to the Mozambican people for the cyclone devastation endured, stop its expansion plans and carbon extraction, and pay its climate debt to the Mozambican government on its way out.

4. Sasol is also heavily invested in the Lake Charles petrochemicals complex in the US. It is increasing the US carbon footprint. We demand that Sasol leave the US to assist the US to achieve its net zero emissions target.

The following demands were also directed at the South African government:

The South African government must ensure:

• the immediate rollout of socially owned renewable energy in South Africa and clean-energy mass-transport systems across the country. Such plans must ensure decent work and labour absorption from the shutdown of Sasol, Eskom and other fossil-fuel corporations;

• a people-led, deep, just transition based on democratic-systemic alternatives to take South Africa beyond carbon capitalism. Such a transition must meet the needs of workers, the poor and the most vulnerable. Hence, we demand that Parliament adopt the #ClimateJusticeCharter.

Finally, a call was made for a National and Global day of action to #GridlockCarbon on 1 May 2020:

We will be back next year to assess progress on Sasol’s just transition plan but also to confront all other carbon corporations, investors and government institutions. Today is the start of ongoing and rolling action to #GridlockCarbon.

Hence, we call on South Africa and the world to stand with us on 1 May 2020 to #GridlockCarbon corporations everywhere.

On 1 May 2020, we will stand together with workers in South Africa and the world to demand:

• Ambitious, just transition plans from all carbon corporations and polluters, so we accelerate the realisation of net zero emissions and prevent a 1.5°C overshoot;

• No new investments in oil, gas and coal;

• All governments to withdraw subsidies from fossil-fuel industries and redirect this money to socially owned renewable-energy transitions;

• The UN establish an 'End Fossil Fuel Treaty', which ensures fossil-fuel corporations pay the world a carbon debt for the harm they have caused, poor countries are compensated for a problem they did not create, including poor countries with fossil-fuel reserves, and the oil, coal and gas industries are shut down in the next ten years or sooner.

These demands are ultimately a call for justice. A call for corporations, such as Sasol in partnership with the South African government, to stop seeing poor communities as disposable, to stop polluting and killing these communities, and to start looking at integrating policy alternatives that are not rooted in capitalist expansion. The answer to the question of what is the impact of the 4IR on climate change does not lie in the technical details of climate science, but rather lies within the broader question of what is the impact of the 4IR on inequality. It is clear that, as is the case with other notions of growth and development, the poor are almost never beneficiaries of this growth; the 4IR is no different.

With the intersection of the climate crisis and the 4IR, the future does not look very bright for the most vulnerable in our society. It is only through systemic change that the poor will see a tangible difference to their material conditions. The time for a just transition and climate justice is now. [3]

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Youth members of the **Confédération des Travailleurs des Secteurs Publiques et Privé** (CTSP) of Mauritius detail the formation of the union and the achievements it has had in a decade. They focus on the struggles the youth have played a role in within this union and highlight their opposition to the Mauritius Youth Employment Programme (YEP) – what they dubbed the Youth Exploitation Programme – which provides employment experience to youth aged 16 to 35.

Since its creation in 2002 under the name of Fron Travayer Sekter Privé (FTSP), the Confédération des Travailleurs des Secteurs Publiques et Privé (CTSP) has been present in every struggle where local workers or foreigners have been exploited. We have never missed an opportunity to aim for better results through the All Workers Conference, the Trade Union Common Platform, the Conseil des Syndicats, the Platform Kont La Loi Travay Anti Travayer, the Trade Union Consultative Council, the Platform Kont Privatisasyon Delo, etc. The vision of CTSP is: to allow for individuals to aspire to have a decent life; to empower through education so that workers can fight for decent jobs; and, ultimately, to achieve justice for all.

In June 2008 the FTSP became the Confédération des Travailleurs du Secteur Privé (CTSP) with three affiliated federations and several other unions such as standalone unions and federal unions. In 2017 we amended our rules in order to change our name to the Confédération des Travailleurs des Secteurs Publiques et Privé. In line with these developments, we have also succeeded at moving many workers from precarious jobs in the private sector to permanent and pensionable jobs in the public sector. We have managed to move Mauritius Sports Council workers, Tourism Authority workers, pre-primary, primary and secondary sectors which were previously considered as private sectors, into public sectors.

Even though the CTSP is only ten years old, it is a young confederation surrounded by sincere and motivated persons. Our motto is learning by doing and always remaining true to ourselves. Either we do a job perfectly, or we don’t do it at all. We learn from the past to build a better future and we know that with unity and solidarity we can succeed in creating this better future.

The CTSP has 20 affiliated unions and three federations, namely the Federation of Trade Unions of the Chemical Sector, the Federation of the Construction, Metal and Wood Sector and the third one is the Federation of Private Support Services and Other Unions, and it has members in Mauritius and Rodrigues. The work of the CTSP is twofold. Firstly, we represent workers at the negotiation table after going through all the democratic processes of collecting workers’ demands. This representation is undertaken at the national level and it includes organising, lobbying and advocating for workers’ rights, better wages, better working conditions, and other worker-related issues.

We have managed to create sectoral collective bargaining for the construction sector in partnership with the Building and Civil Engineering Contractors Association (BACECA), which is the employers’ association. Our goal is to have sectoral bargaining at all levels, i.e. to have sectoral bargaining in the tourism industry, free-zone sector, manufacturing sector, services and finance...
sectors. This is one of the ways to protect workers and to have all sectors of the economy on the same playing field.

Our constant struggle in the field of health and safety has produced many positive results over the years. We have a main law: the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2005, which has not been reviewed since it was promulgated in 2005 and many regulations that need to be enforced, such as noise, lodging and accommodation, scaffolding, etc. We succeeded in having asbestos banned in the country but much still needs to be done before asbestos is removed from many public buildings. For instance, the 3,113 EDC houses where vulnerable people’s households must be demolished and built anew because they contain asbestos.

We also derive our strength through our affiliation with BWI (Building and Woodworkers International), IndustriALL Global Union and the ITUC (International Trade Union Confederation).

The battle against precarious employment is an ongoing one and now we have the challenge of Industry 4.0 where many jobs will be taken over by digital machines and robotics.

The struggle has become more difficult and unions are confused at the moment. To fight against the exploitative employer and the exploitative state, we must unite forces in solidarity at the national and international level. We strive to achieve our goal of JUSTICE FOR ALL.

2008 – CTSP BUILDING

In 2008 CTSP managed to get its own building. With the support of three unions (PEEU, CMCTEU and CMWEU), we were able to take a loan from the Development Bank of Mauritius and buy a plot of land including the house on Elias Road, behind the Rose Hill market. The building was constructed by the physical efforts of our members.

In the confederation, we have always promoted a gender-balance ethos. We have a president and general secretary to ensure a proper functioning of the confederation. We also have 15 staff members working on a full-time or part-time basis. We believe in team-spirit leadership instead of a dictatorial leadership.

The CTSP mission and vision is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goal that aims to end poverty. We have created a cooperative bank, which is known as People’s Cooperative Credit Union, where our members have access to loans at an interest rate of 6.5% per annum without putting up their assets, such as land and property, as ad valorem payments.

In 2017, the youth committee was created for the youth between 16 and 35 years old. Since 2017, the youth have been actively participating in the workers’ commemoration ceremonies held annually on 1 May, Labour Day; 20 May, where we commemorate the activism of the 1975 youth of Mauritius for fighting for a free education; and celebrating the annual International Youth day on
12 August. The youth also actively supported the 2017 hunger strike, which was a battle against precarious work by women working as cleaners in primary and secondary government schools.

The youth committee has become more active after a workshop that was done in collaboration with IndustriAll Global Union in 2018. In this workshop the youth made several pledges.

The pledges that the youth have been able to accomplish are:
• Educating other youth in the universities about trade unions.
• Actively campaigning and recruiting youth for the union through the distribution of pamphlets around the island.
• Encouraging more involvement of youth in the executive committees of the unions.
• Taking part in the several campaigns such as the gender-based violence campaigns and Metal and Allied Namibian Workers’ Union (MANWU) struggle campaigns.
• Introducing and encouraging smart trade unionism through the application of social media e.g. Facebook and creating a database for our members.
• Taking part in a workshop on public speaking by a qualified public speaker and occupational safety and health training by our occupational health and safety expert.
• Helping to organise and fight against atrocities inflicted on migrant workers.
• One of the biggest achievements for the year 2019, was to have a youth as president of the construction union.

THE MAURITIUS YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME
Established in 2013 the Youth Employment Programme (YEP) provides youth between the ages of 16 and 35 with experience to help them find jobs. However, this programme is not free of criticism.

As of March 2019, 27,215 youths (11,647 men and 16,568 women) registered for YEP. Of these, 10,089 men and 11,891 women were placed as trainees in companies for a one-year practical placement. However, they were not guaranteed that they would be recruited on a permanent basis by the companies concerned. This meant that many young people found themselves on the streets after finishing their training courses, which gives rise to the sharpest criticism. Many young people were fired after one year, or at the end of their contract they were typically released.

In relation to this structure, and its already stated outcomes, according to our confederation, YEP stands for the ‘Youth Exploitation Programme’. We have always been very critical of YEP, because in the end, YEP does not solve the problem of unemployment. According to the trade unionists, employers are taking advantage of YEP to use ‘stop-gaps’ that will be dismissed after two years.

Fifty percent of the refund, which is statutory, is paid directly...
to companies and this could lead to the refund being abused by some employers as not all companies are concerned with YEP. We would have preferred employers who recruit trainees to receive tax relief instead of paying them directly the 50% of the government's financial contribution. It should be noted that 50% of the trainee's salary is financed by the government and the other half by the employers. We fear that some employers continue to receive government allowances even when the trainees have been fired or have left the company. We are even afraid of the possibility of further abuse at the expense of taxpayers' money. To this end, we want more vigilance on the part of the authorities.

We also want a review of the trainees' working conditions. We suspect that the trainees do not use certain facilities in the same way as the permanent employees even though both are doing the same job. We want better stipends for trainees and better conditions of service to encourage them to complete their training. We also believe that YEP trainees should not be considered as having a job when Statistics Mauritius compiles employment figures. It must be made clear that the trainees are on an internship on a one-year basis and after that one year they are back to unemployment.

The youth of the CTSP denounce the shameless exploitation of young people. ‘In our opinion, the existence of the YEP is mainly to make believe that youth unemployment is low.’ We dispute this. According to us, YEP contradicts clause 20 of the Employment Rights Act, which speaks of equal pay for equal work. The most shocking thing is that young people do the same job as permanent staff, if not more, but they receive a pittance.

We regret that after their internship, several young people are not recruited for a permanent position. They are fired or replaced by new trainees. For us, it's 'cheap intellectual labour'. Thus, we want an in-depth redesign of YEP that will make YEP more attractive and serve the cause of the youth.

To this end, we hope that trainees will receive the same salary as permanent employees. It requires that after their training, trainees be recruited to permanent jobs. We ask the authorities to look into financing YEP because 'taxpayers' money cannot be used to subsidise employers. We also propose a jail sentence or a large fine for any employer who violates YEP regulations. We also demand a contract that stipulates that a trainee must stay for at least two years in the company that provides training. Our concern is that the youth is working like employees in a full-time job, but after 12 months, they are replaced by other young people.

Therefore, our battle continues for the vulnerable youth working in the YEP.

Let us end by quoting the war cry of our confederation which is:

‘YOUTH TAKE THE LEAD, THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES’

Veer Gukbool, Tanya Murday, Ashnah Soomungull, Bheenasha Kbeddo, Kumaren Kathan, Jean Noel Samynadas, Vicky Seeburrun are the youth team of CTSP.
In July 2019 shop stewards from the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) and members of the European Works Council (EWC) came together in East London for the second time to discuss ways to strengthen transnational cooperation on the shop floor of the auto supplier company, Lear Corporation. Lear, the tenth biggest player in the auto supplier industry worldwide, has its headquarters in the United States, manufactures automotive seating and electronic systems and employs about 169,000 workers globally. The ‘Lear network’ is a transnational worker-solidarity initiative informed by the EWC in Lear and the German Industrial Union of Metalworkers (IG Metall). The EWC is the structure that represents employees from the different European countries where Lear has operations. The Lear network aims at establishing a joint employee-representation structure for Europe and Africa at Lear. This is strategic, as the company treats its operations in Africa and Europe as a single entity.

**WORKING CONDITIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Shop stewards in South Africa report significant problems regarding the working conditions and the violations of union rights at the three Lear plants, two of which are located in Port Elizabeth and one in East London. Different wages for workers doing the same work is a source of significant unhappiness among workers. Newly employed workers only receive the minimum as prescribed in the Motor Industry Bargaining Council (MIBCO) agreement, which amounted to R37.66 per hour in 2018. The wages are thus above the legal minimum wage introduced in South Africa in 2018, but far below the living wage of R12,500 per month as demanded by the South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU) and NUMSA. This is despite the fact that Lear is a multinational company that makes good profits.

Precarious work is another issue of concern in Lear as more than half of the workforce at the plants in South Africa are temporary agency workers. They have no pension or medical benefits. The amendments to the Labour Relations Act (LRA, Section 198) that were introduced in 2014, gives fixed-term workers and workers employed via labour brokers, the right to become permanent workers of the client companies on terms equal to permanent workers after three months of employment (Webster and Englert 2019). The Constitutional Court upheld this interpretation in July 2018 when it stated that the client becomes the sole employer of labour-broker employees after three months.
So far, Lear has only partly complied with Section 198 of the LRA.

Other issues that put strain on workers include extensive use of short time without pay, lack of transport for workers on night shifts, health and safety issues, violation of union rights, and unfair and unequal treatment. For instance, at one of the Lear plants, blue-collar workers had to clock out when going to the toilet with the effect that the time was deducted from workers' low wages. The union network seeks to improve working conditions and to prevent a race to the bottom. IG Metall has also started to extend the network to Morocco, where over 13,000 Lear workers on the African continent are based.

**WAGE INEQUALITIES IN GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS**

As the Detroit News reported in 2019, one Lear CEO, alone, earned nearly US$10 million in 2018, which is 987 times more than what the median employee earned at the company. The median is used to indicate what a middle-tier employee makes at the company. At Lear, the median employee was identified as an hourly worker at a facility outside the United States who earned about US$10,000 for 2018. The median wage means that half of Lear's workforce earned even below the median wage. The comparison with other multinational companies also demonstrates that the median wage at Lear is much lower than the median wage of General Motors (US$74,500), Ford (US$64,300) or Kellogg's (US$47,000).¹

Workshops like those by NUMSA and IG Metall also help to create transparency with regard to unequal labour standards within transnational value chains. At Lear plants in Germany, employees earn about five times as much for the same work as their South African counterparts and more than ten times as much as employees in Morocco. Stark inequalities in wages and benefits remain even when differences in the cost of living are taken into account. Furthermore, wages differ significantly between original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and suppliers. Even those workers at Lear with the higher wages of R58.62 earn less than half of the wage of their counterparts at Volkswagen in South Africa. The rough comparisons show that profit margins of suppliers and OEMs are clearly created at the expense of workers.

In the broader picture, part of the problem lies with OEMs like Mercedes-Benz, which increasingly outsources parts of their operations and forces component suppliers to provide cheaper quotes for new projects. Within the auto value chain, the OEMs are the dominant players who can dictate prices. As research in the project has shown, approximately 80% of a first-tier supplier's production costs are material costs that are decided directly by the OEM. The rest, 20%, are the production costs that are directly controllable by the supplier, including wages. This is why competition and cost-saving strategies in value chains put increasing pressure on wages, and as a result, workers face the risk of being played against each other.

¹ https://eu.detroitnews.com/story/business/2019/04/15/top-michigan-ceos-300-times-more-than-employees/3550820002/

**INCREASING THE TRANSNATIONAL POWER OF LABOUR**

The Lear network was established as part of IG Metall's transnational programme in February 2018 and aims at building company-based trade-union networks. While IG Metall provides support and resources to these networks, projects are initiated and carried out by union members at the company, who thus have a decisive influence on their design and ensure that transnational work is anchored at grass-roots level. Active participation at the plant level helps to establish long-term cooperation and stable relationships. As an EWC member emphasises 'the exchange with our comrades in South Africa gave us the opportunity to talk very specifically about the problems in the company. A further positive aspect is the opportunity to get to know each other intensively, which increases trust. The trust gained is the basis of good cooperation and for a mutual exchange in both directions.'

So far, the Lear network has aimed at strengthening the associational and institutional power of labour transnationally. Associational power arises from workers uniting to form and build worker organisations. In the Lear project, IG Metall and their partner unions exchange organising experiences and strategies. As a global union federation, IndustriALL Global Union, supports the African-European network in Lear.

Institutional power refers to the possibilities of trade unions to use, influence or change the

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¹ See a more detailed reflection on trade unions power resources Ludwig, Schmalz, Webster 2019 and the debate in the Global Labour Journal Vol. 9 (2), (3) and Vol. 10 (2)
Within Lear’s operational division, one-third of employees are employed in European countries outside the EU or in Africa and, as yet, they have no voice in the EWC. However, the EWC seeks to change this, referring to the possibilities presented by the European Works Council law. It stipulates that employee representatives from non-EU countries may be included in the EWC. More than 70 transnational companies have already reacted to this and adapted their EWC agreements accordingly, not least on account of the consequences of Brexit – the United Kingdom’s pulling out of the European Union.

A further step is the establishment of a Global Framework Agreement (GFA) at Lear, to ensure, particularly, that union rights and basic labour standards are respected globally. GFAs are promoted by global unions including IndustriALL Global Union. They are negotiated between global trade union federations and multinational companies and seek to protect workers’ interests across global operations irrespective of national legislations. GFAs have already been established in other multinational companies in the auto industry, including VW, BMW, Daimler and Ford.

To achieve these aims, transnational collaboration among worker representatives and trade unions is key. Transnational corporations control about 80% of world trade. Thus, the general unequal power relations between labour and capital are further increased at the transnational level. Strong networks between worker representatives and unions is one of the most effective strategies in confronting a global capital that seeks to exploit cheap labour, especially in countries with weak labour laws. This is why the European-African union network in Lear has also received support from IndustriALL Global Union and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

Despite attempts by Lear management to obstruct the interactions, worker representatives in Europe and Africa remained united. This demonstrates that transnational collaboration can be an important source of power for workers to counteract the divisions created in global value chains. Networks like the African and European network at Lear allow workers to share experiences and exchange information. Through collective solidarity, workers in South Africa get information from their colleagues on the wages and working conditions in Europe and vice versa. The Lear network seeks to support workers’ local struggles for better working conditions and to build workers’ associational power globally, true to the company’s slogan ‘working and winning together as one Lear’.

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Learning factories in the digitalisation of work

Anna Conrad and Manfred Wannöffel focus on learning factories as unique learning environments that can be used in teaching, learning and research. Learning factories enable practical, hands-on experiences that lead to higher levels of retention and application opportunities than traditional teaching methods such as lectures. To elaborate, the authors draw on two examples: the Learning and Research Factory in Bochum, Germany and the interdisciplinary Master’s in mechanical engineering and social sciences.

1. INTRODUCTION
The Fourth Industrial Revolution is on everyone’s lips all over the world right now. Cyber-physical systems, crosslinking of data, artificial intelligence, and human-robot collaboration are only some of the buzzwords that are widely discussed. The manufacturing industry is experiencing massive changes. However, these processes of transition will not stop at the doors of industrial plants, but they will affect all kinds and sectors of work. They will not only alter technologies but also the way we work, how we define work and professions and what skills, knowledge or competencies education needs to convey.

This article introduces learning factories as unique learning environments that can be used in teaching, learning and research. First, it defines and describes learning factories in general. Second, it will present one learning factory and its special characteristics in detail. Third, it will deal with specific projects that are conducted in this learning factory.

2. WHAT ARE LEARNING FACTORIES?
The term ‘learning factory’ was first presented and coined in 1994 at a consortium led by Penn State University, awarded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) in the USA (Abele et al. 2015: 2). In recent years, learning factories have spread more and more, mostly at universities, especially in Europe. In 2007 the Institute of Production Management Technology and Machine Tools (Technical University Darmstadt) was one of the first to implement a learning factory of this new wave (ibid.).

Learning factories appear in many different shapes, sizes and alignments. However, what they have in common is that they are ‘systems that address both parts of the term’ (Abele et al. 2015: 2). That means they include learning or teaching as well as a production environment (ibid.). Learning factories enable practical, hands-on experiences that lead to higher levels of retention and application opportunities than traditional teaching methods such as lectures (Cachay et al. 2012). The learning environment mirrors realistic production sites and cannot only offer access to single machines or workplaces but to wholesome multilinked value-added chains (Abele 2015). It ‘provides a real value chain for a physical product in which participants can perform, evaluate, and reflect their own actions in an on-site learning approach’ (Abele 2015: 3).

Most learning factories are operated by academic institutions1 (e.g. Hummel et al. 2014) and, more specifically, by engineering faculties. Therefore, they often focus on technological issues such as robotics, resource efficiency, automation, manufacturing execution systems, cyber-physical production systems etc. (cf. Tisch et al. 2015).

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1 Some are also in the hands of consulting firms or big industrial companies (Hammer 2014; e.g. Herrmann & Stäudel 2014)
3. THE LEARNING AND RESEARCH FACTORY IN BOCHUM, GERMANY

The LPS learning and research factory in Bochum was founded in 2009 and is run by the Chair of Production Systems (LPS) of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering at Ruhr-University Bochum (RUB), Germany. Since then, it has developed several focus areas: process optimisation, lean management, resource efficiency but also management and organisation of work in the context of transformation processes (Wagner et al. 2015). This latter focus area mainly evolved because of a close and extensive cooperation of the LPS and the Office of Cooperation RUB/IG Metall (Engl: Industrial Union of Metalworkers), a central institution at RUB that belongs to the academic field of social sciences. This cooperation combines competencies and expertise from different sides and allows a more holistic perspective on the issues surrounding the transformation of work. It is due to the character of RUB as a full-scale university that this network could develop. Additionally, it is in the Ruhr Area – a former coal and steel industry site – and therefore, the university is traditionally closely connected to strong unions, works councils, workers’ rights and ideas of industrial citizenship (Marshall 1963).

The LPS learning and research factory uses a socio-technical approach. That means it considers the triangle of technology – organisation – personnel (TOP) and understands all actors as interconnected. In training and teaching, participants are always confronted with questions of technological possibilities and practicability as well as of how these will affect human workers and employees and the organisation in general. This special strategy allows for an extension of target groups. In the LPS learning and research factory, workers’ representatives on plant level (so-called ‘works councils’ in Germany) or trade unionists are trained as well as university or PhD students. The interdisciplinary approach enables participants and visitors: (1) to see beyond their field of expertise, (2) to experience new technologies and their applications firsthand, (3) to exchange experiences or worries, and (4) to ask questions and to get answers in a neutral space.

Two examples of what this interdisciplinary teaching in the LPS learning and research factory can look like will be presented below.

3.1 Interdisciplinary teaching for Master’s students

The first example of interdisciplinary teaching is addressed by the Master’s in mechanical engineering and social sciences. The course was developed in 2011 and has been a permanent part of the study programme since then. Under the title ‘Management and Organisation of Labour’ (MAO), students from both faculties learn about questions of arrangements and management of work while getting an understanding for the role of workers’ participation and social partnership at plant level. Wagner et al. (2015) assume that there is a gap in the university education of industrial engineers as it ‘mostly neglects the training of social-communicative and interdisciplinary skills’ (117). These skills are especially important in the context of increasingly changing demands emerging from external circumstances such as global competition, short production cycles, legal requirements. Increasing flexibility and complexity of production systems causes higher requirements for employees on all levels (Wagner et al. 2015). MAO tries to contribute to closing this gap and is a unique offering in the landscape of German universities.

The first semester consists of theoretical lectures on different topics such as labour law, the system of industrial relations, Industry 4.0, leadership, change management. Practical exercises in the learning factory complement these rather classical teaching methods. Two of these simulation games focus on organisational-technical problems like the dissatisfaction of the customer or a bottleneck inside production. Two other exercises put the employee factor at the centre and they deal with change in management and co-determination rights. During the simulation games, the participants take on the roles of different actors inside a company such as management, works council, assembly, store. This combination of theoretical and practical competencies leads to longer-lasting learning effects and is assessed in a midterm examination (Cachay et al. 2012).

In the second semester, the students form interdisciplinary teams of two to four people and spend it working in regional companies. Together with the works councils of these companies, they decide on specific projects and work on them for the rest of the semester. These projects all go in very different directions: for example, one team has developed a concept for a kindergarten within the company, another has worked on a tool to synchronise the language of engineers and shop-floor workers.

Over the course of this seminar, both groups of students learn to see beyond their horizons and are familiarised with the other perspective. Social science students experience what work looks like in a manufacturing company, learn about production models and other technological issues. Engineering students get an understanding of the role, importance and expertise of workers’ representatives. One achievement of this seminar is that future professionals already meet in university and not at their workplace for the first time. Therefore, fear of contact or prejudices can be addressed and reduced.
3.2 Interdisciplinary further education for workers’ representatives

In the cooperative research and qualification project ‘Work and Innovation: strengthening skills, shaping future’ (orig. ‘Arbeit und Innovation’) (2016–2019), two project partners from RUB (LPS and Office of Cooperation Ruhr/IGM) and IG Metall developed an innovative didactic concept. The concept focuses on various impacts of current and future changes on work and employment conditions from the employees’ perspective. The project aimed at enabling workers’ representatives to recognize their possibilities to exert influence on the design, development and implementation of technologies provided by the German co-determination law – the Works Constitution Act.

The project had two core elements: first, designing and conducting a qualification series consisting of five modules, one of which took place in the LPS learning and research factory. The second element was the consultation and support of corporate company projects, which were based on agreements between the workers’ representatives and the management – strengthening the efficiency and sustainability of the projects.

Overall, the objectives of the project were ‘to ensure high-level industrial value in Germany by strengthening competitiveness and innovations through secure employment and fair working conditions as well as establishing sustainable personnel development structures on company level’ (Reuter et al. 2017: 356). Around 20 qualification series with more than 300 participants from over 100 companies from all over Germany took place over the course of two years.

The learning factory modules aimed at strengthening the participants’ ability to shape future working conditions and participate in decisions concerning themselves and the workforce of their enterprises.

During the three-day training sessions, theoretical input and practical exercises enable the participants to see chances that increasing digitalization can offer as well as possible risks (cf. Reuter et al. 2017). Since it is not possible to deal with everything discussed in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in three days, the exercises focused on assistance systems as the interface between people and technology. Participants can try out different types of assistance systems and evaluate them in repeated cycles. Thus, the training stresses the assumption that technology is neither ‘good’ nor ‘bad’ in general, but that people can actively shape its design and implementation.

This encourages workers’ representatives to consider themselves enablers of change by proactively protecting workers’ interests when it comes to technological change.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper briefly presented the concept of learning factories in general and one specific learning factory that is unique in its kind. Due to the partners involved in designing and conducting training in the LPS learning and research factory in Bochum, Germany, a socio-technical approach to the Fourth Industrial Revolution is achieved. This enables a more holistic perspective on the complex changes ahead and can integrate a wider variety of participants into the training. The LPS learning and research factory does not only train managers or engineers but also students from different disciplines as well as workers’ representatives. Thereby, it qualifies a wide range of actors for a sustainable and effective handling of the chances and challenges of the changing working world.

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The Uber platform and the app economy: implication for labour, fair tax and social justice

Ashraf Patel argues that as South African policymakers, regulators and owner/drivers grapple with the Uber phenomenon, the dark side of the App economy becomes ever more apparent as drivers face enormous pressures and make social demands for decent work and recognition for being employees of Uber.

The current robust debate with regard to regulating and licensing Uber and social media behemoths such as Google and Facebook, has spurred interesting and relevant debates among policymakers and regulators. Apart from their tax-evasion strategies, they face the scrutiny of many regulators concerned with fair competition and social impact. The latest US$2.7-billion fine of Google by the EU competition commissioner and the City of London’s latest formal ruling by its Transport and Employment departments have put the mega platform and app economy on the back foot – with increased critical dialogue of its existing business models.

THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

It was after World War II, that renowned sociologist Karl Polanyi introduced the concept of the ‘great transformations’ – a term used to describe the post-reconstruction period of Europe, Japan and the US that led to the social expansion of the middle class, rapid urbanisation, highways and byways as industrial production units of multinational corporations (i.e. Fordism), that spurred employment and demand in the leading northern economies. This led to a sustained consumer boom and a permanent urban-middle class that sustained these post-WWII economies for many decades.

In the 1970s, sociologist Daniel Bell’s classic book The Coming of Post-Industrial Society unpacked the transition to industrial society and was a key academic primer in setting the scene for understanding mega shifts in techno-industrial waves of new technological developments that drastically altered work organisation and labour relations. New modes of investment such as just-in-time (JIT) manufacturing and flexible production, especially in low-wage East Asia were required to meet consumerisation of consumer electronics. This changed the way production and work was organised, setting the scene for the waves of outsourcing and multitudes of consumer electronics that featured in the post-industrial economies and society of the 1990s.

The 1990s had seen the most intensive modes of technocentric-driven globalisation in history – driven by information and communication technologies (ICT), software development, convergence of telecoms, and mass miniaturisation of consumer goods (from iPods to smart cars). The advent of the ‘information society’, theorised by Manuel Castells’s trilogy – The Rise of the Network Society, has clearly unpacked this phenomenon. Key global economic governance drivers at the time were the formation of the WTO and WIPO in the early 1990s, which led to massive deregulation and shaped economic and social policies of developing economies for years. From the early dial up to Web 2.0, to iPods, the new web 3.0 social media world of Wikis are now a daily interactive tool in the professional and private life for hundreds of millions. This knowledge economy demands spurred new tools and models such as software-as-a-service models; enabling outsourcing and offshoring, and micro-work, all within the framework of rapid deregulation and competition at the ‘bottom of the pyramid’.

For innovators everywhere, the rise of the open source movement brought in the prosumerisation of new applications from web design to FOSS and open source
hardware. Indeed, open source, open content and open knowledge applications have given great impetus to hundreds of thousands of micro-innovators, writers, artists, and prosumers globally.

**UBER AND LABOUR**

Created by American Uber Technologies, headquartered in California, the famous, if not notorious, Uber application, has become a worldwide online transportation network company offering reliable and affordable rides since March 2009. The service has been made available in a whopping 66 countries and 507 cities across the globe, but as Uber grows internationally, its legality is being challenged by government as well as taxi drivers who refer to Uber transporters as ‘pirate taxis’.

The service has been made available in a whopping 66 countries and 507 cities across the globe, but as Uber grows internationally, its legality is being challenged by government as well as taxi drivers who refer to Uber transporters as ‘pirate taxis’.

Uber further offers their employees a flexible and independent job opportunity with its modern technology, undoubtedly a great match for their passengers and drivers, and even serves as a competitor for others in the transportation field. Despite the spectacularly rapid growth of this business, challenges prevail. April 2014 saw the Uber service being banned in Berlin, even though the company was active in other German cities, and the dispute of whether or not to reinstate the deal still goes on. This, however, is just the tip of the iceberg. While developments of self-driving car technologies are being sought at the recently established Pittsburgh facility, a court ruling in the United Kingdom could soon affect thousands of workers in the gig economy.

This comes after an employment court declared that Uber drivers are not self-employed individuals and should be paid the ‘national living wage’ in addition to being entitled to leave pay, a pension fund and other working rights. This immediately strips Uber of its right to classify UK drivers as ‘self-employed’ even though the company readily appealed against the ruling. This declaration has resulted in companies of the like facing scrutiny for inspection of their working practices. According to research by Citizens Advice, it is suggested that up to 460,000 national workers could falsely be classified as self-employed, resulting in a stupendous cost of £314 million per annum in tax losses and employer insurance policies. Four courier firms are already among the services facing legal action from cyclists who demand to be recognised as staff employees and enjoy the perks that go with it.

The Uber ruling could, according to *The Guardian*, consider an approach whereby the service receives a stipulated amount as commission from the employee’s earnings. James Farrar and Yaseen Aslam recently represented a group of nineteen Uber workers who argued that they were employed by the San Francisco-based firm and were not self-employed, while raising the issue of working conditions which Farrar described as ‘tremendous pressure’ and ‘repercussions’ occurring for the company if he were to cancel a pickup. Furthermore, it was stated that he would often make just US$5 per hour – this being lower than the standard rate of US$7.20 per hour that employers are usually obliged to pay workers over the age of 25.

‘The fact it takes an employment tribunal to decide whether these drivers are self-employed shows that proving employment status is an extremely complicated and costly process,’ said Citizens Advice chief executive, Gillian Guy. ‘For many people struggling at the sharp end of insecure work, such as in false self-employment, taking such a case is simply not an option.’

This is not, however, the end of the process for Uber. The case is set to be escalated to the employment appeal tribunal and further hearings can be expected following its decision in the Supreme Court. Payments due to drivers will only be calculated at the end of the process. Jo Bertram reports: ‘Tens of thousands of people in London drive with Uber precisely because they want to be self-employed and be their own boss.’

As South African policymakers, regulators and owner/drivers grapple with the Uber phenomenon, the dark side of the app economy becomes ever more apparent as the Schumpeterian dynamism – which sucks up local capital and labour in a 21st century virtual economy, clashes with the real economy of worker rights, social wages and the need for health, pension and other benefits in our own quest for equity, social justice and solidarity in the globalised economy. These battles have just begun.

Ashraf Patel is a public policy and development researcher with a focus on digital and ICT media policy regulation, social and environmental policy, the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), knowledge economy and innovation policy.
As a digital society and economy takes over, two themes get most discussed regarding its impact on workers. These are automation, which is also destroying jobs, and the ever greater informalisation of the workforce through what has been called Uberisation of the economy. These very important themes are expected to get much airtime and I would therefore not discuss them. But more importantly, I would like to go beyond them because these themes largely address post facto impacts of the digital economy, and not its basic structural nature. My main submission is that if we are to really protect and promote workers’ rights, we need to go to the heart of what a digital economy is, and the role of capital and workers in it. Let us take the Uber example. The deteriorating incomes and work conditions of Uber drivers are sought to be addressed by declaring them as drivers and not independent contractors, as done by courts in some countries. I understand the reasoning, and even more the moral concern, behind it, and have great sympathy for it. But really, are Uber drivers, owning their own capital goods, workers? If so, soon small manufacturers will also be like workers, as e-commerce companies thoroughly and minutely dictate what they produce, how and when, almost entirely supplanting the manufacturer’s own agency. This is already happening. New platform companies, based on continuously collected granular data, develop such end-to-end digital intelligence about every aspect of any sector’s economic activity that they virtually become the ‘brain’ of that sector. And everything else – activities and actors, are then like the physical body, which completely gets controlled by the ‘brain’. If this looks very scary, it is indeed. So, let’s try to find an escape from it. Staying with the Uber example, let’s provisionally accept Uber drivers as independent contractors. They get into a contract with Uber that provides them with commuters, and for this service charges are about one quarter of the fare. Well, fair enough! But Uber’s real asset is not connection forming and the brokerage from it. It is the detailed intelligence that it builds about a town, its drivers and people, which is systematically and continually accumulated. Much of it is collected through the drivers and their cars.

The following article was a keynote speech on 17 June 2019 for the thematic panel organised by the International Labour Organization (ILO) on technological pathways for decent work by **Parminder Jeet Singh**. Singh proposes that there is a need for collective ownership of data by those workers who are responsible for the production of data, like Uber workers. If data is collectively owned then decent work can be guaranteed in the digital age. See our interview with Parminder on [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8B6QbNJqLDs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8B6QbNJqLDs)
WHO OWNS THE DATA?

One might ask: who legitimately owns the cumulative economic value of such data, and the digital intelligence that it provides? Contributing to this main, and ever growing, ‘intelligence asset’ of Uber was never part of the deal between Uber and the drivers. Some EU policy documents have raised questions about who should own the Internet of Things (IoT) data, whether the application provider or the owner of point/s of generation of such data? Data coming from cabs is not much different. A case can be made that cab drivers – as the main data contributors – have a stake in the key asset of Uber: its data and the intelligence derived from it. This could justify cab drivers co-owning the Uber platform – the extent and means of which would need to be determined and defined, and by that right they should be able to participate in its management. Drivers might much prefer this route to rightful inclusion in the digital economy rather than just being declared as workers of Uber.

If industrial revolution was about mass production, digital revolution is about intelligent production. It is marked by intelligent work processes, and intelligence products and services. A book delivered to your house, at just the most convenient time, is as much a service as a product, and embedded in it is considerable data-based intelligence. This is what situates this activity in the digital economy. So, is an Uber ride an intelligent service? It is cheaper, in many ways more convenient, because of considerable data-based intelligence embedded in it. Ownership of such sectoral intelligence – which can be described as digital capital – increasingly occupies the top of value chains in every area. We may, again, ask: do platform companies really and fully own all such digital intelligence, which the capital market values at trillions of dollars? Or, do the ‘points’ and actors that contribute the all-important data behind such intelligence have an ownership stake in it? That, to me, is the central political economy question of the emerging digital economy. Coming to workers proper, say in a factory, it may be claimed that since the employer owns the workplace (unlike with Uber), all the data coming from the workplace belongs to the employer. There are many problems with this argument. Is data contribution a part of the work contract, or just the physical and/or intellectual labour? Even if it is, how is it remunerated? Data’s contribution to digital intelligence is quite unlike that of physical labour to physical production. The marginal value of contributed data, which could normally be a basis of remuneration, is relatively quite low. However, data’s cumulative value is very high. Neither can the worker appropriately price her data contribution, as she does not feel the immediate cost. This fact is well known in privacy debates. The only way to price and remunerate data contribution, therefore, is through collective ownership over the cumulative value of data and digital intelligence – making co-decisions about it, and benefitting proportionately from profits made from it. Even more importantly, data contributed by workers gets used to build the automation that replaces them. And it is used to develop the digital intelligence to closely control and manage those who survive automation, even as they might be more distributed and informalised than ever.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLECTIVE OWNERSHIP OF DATA

Data-contributing workers, therefore, have a right to know how such data, and the digital intelligence arising from it, are employed. And they should be able to – at least partly – own and control such uses. But can workers be either simply provided one-time remuneration or even otherwise just made to sign away rights to data generated by them as a part of the work contract? The EU investigation related to sellers’ data with Amazon pertains to possible use of such data in a manner that could be harmful to the sellers, like Amazon developing competing products. In such a case of possible harmful consequence, and where there is too great an asymmetry in terms of power between the two parties, a private contract may not hold valid. This is akin to employment contracts, where potential employees cannot be made to sign away what may be considered as their rights under public law. It is this that makes them ‘rights’ rather than ordinary subjects of a mutual private contract. Similarly, as with sellers on Amazon platforms, the data contributed by Uber drivers can, and will, be used both to (1) control and manage them, often to their disadvantage, and (2) in time, replace them, as Uber masters a network of driverless cars, which is certainly its ultimate aim. Even if made a requirement under their contract, should sellers and drivers be contributing – and fully alienating – such data to respective platforms that, inter alia, is almost certainly going to be used to their disadvantage? Should they not have economic rights to their data, that cannot be taken away by private contract? As discussed, the same argument can be extended to the situation of workers with respect to workplace data, whereby a case is made for their unalienable economic rights over their data, or ownership of their data. If this sounds complex, remember that political economy around the assets of land, industrial capital and intellectual property, when they respectively came to be at the centre of production, was not simple either.
Whether, and when, we begin to develop legal frameworks around data, and do the required value accounting, considerably, depends on who benefits the most from such an exercise. India has come up with a draft policy that declares collective ownership over data by a community that contributes to it. Data’s collective ownership is also inherent in many policy frameworks that propose or suggest requiring some kind of data sharing across the economy and society for everyone’s benefit. One of these is the ‘Data for all’ initiative of the Social Democratic Party of Germany. Platforms are where a sector’s data is mined, and converted into digital intelligence, which is then employed to orchestrate all activities and actors in any sector. It has been argued that platforms should be public utilities, in order to actively protect the considerable public interest inherent in the platforms’ working. Similarly, but separately, a stake of the workers’ and other distributed data-contributing actors – like cab drivers, small traders and small-medium enterprises (SMEs) – can be built into how a platform is run and managed, and how its efficiency gains are distributed. As workers get digitally separated from each other and simultaneously closely controlled – more than a foreman could ever be on the factory floor, the push-back has to be through data collectivisation, with a view to take back at least a part of the digital control. Workers need to collectivise their data to break their digital chains! This will require appropriate legal forms of collective ownership of data that is key to intelligent production. Workers’ economic rights over data produced by them, and thus their stake in the ensuing digital intelligence that drives the digital economy, can be reconciled with profit-oriented entrepreneurship and progressive capitalism. Data collectors too will have appropriate rights over data’s value, as would data contributors. Such rights could be differentiated as per the kind of data, different uses of the same data, time-limited exclusive rights versus sharing obligations, co-decision making, and so on. But, today, it is undeniable that the pendulum has swung too far in favour of the owners of digital capital. It requires to be pulled back towards the rights of workers and other marginalised actors of a digital economy. Understanding the economic relationships around data, and digital intelligence, is necessary for shaping a new social contract that many have called for in a digital society. It can provide workers their due share of the digital economy pie.

Parminder Jeet Singh, IT for Change, India.

**NJUBANI ONEGUNYA PHEZU KWEDATHA?**

Umuntu angabuza ukuthi njubani onelungelo lokuthola imali etholakala emnothweni wedatha nobuhlakanikwahloko futhi I-uber. Idatha enqulubekweni ukuthi mbando baleleni baleleni. Kuthi njubani onelungelo kwezimwele kubalulelwa esabeni esihlukile kakhulu.

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Indlela efaneleklele yokwethengisa le datha nobuhlakani bedithlali ukuhwa ukubumbana phakathi kwabantu emsebenzini nangabaqashi. Lokhu kusho ukuthi wonke umuntu obambe iziquqonda iziwe kwezizwe. Okubalulele kule idatha ekhiphiza abasebenzi yithatha ukuthi le datha esetshenziswa ukususa isisebenzi. Enye into, ubuhlakani bokufakelwa obuzabheka inani elincane lezisebenzi buzothengwa ngedatha ayikhiziqwe ngasebenzini. Laba basebenzi abasele bazokhokazeka futhi ngaphezulu kwakhalokho bazolindela ukuthi babehlule emsebenzini okunzeka noma inini.

UKUBALULEKA KOKUBA NGUMNIZAKA WEDATHA NDAWONYE


Idatha ekhiphiza kusuka kumapulatifomu wokwazi abasebenzi yithi yiphi. Lokhu kusho ukuthi wonke umuntu obambe iziquqonda iziwe kwezizwe. Okubalulele kule idatha ekhiphiza abasebenzi yithatha ukuthi le datha esetshenziswa ukususa isisebenzi. Enye into, ubuhlakani bokufakelwa obuzabheka inani elincane lezisebenzi buzothengwa ngedatha ayikhiziqwe ngasebenzini. Laba basebenzi abasele bazokhokazeka futhi ngaphezulu kwakhalokho bazolindela ukuthi babehlule emsebenzini okunzeka noma inini.

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Hong Kong

Liberals, where are you?¹

Frank Hoffer looks at the ongoing Hong Kong protests, which are largely led by the youth. The protests were sparked by an extradition bill that would allow ‘legal offenders and fugitives’ to be extradited to mainland China. The people of Hong Kong see this as another step in undermining the political freedom and the rule of law in the city. More than 1.5-million people are active in the protests. To Hoffer, the people of Hong Kong offer an incredible inspiration. They are rising up, against the odds.

Thousands of people are fighting for freedom and democracy. They stand up against the rise of authoritarian power with determination, creativity and courage. While Europe seems to be shell shocked by Johnson, Orban, Salivini and the lot, and Democrats in the US are tearing each other apart over minor political issues instead of uniting against the assaulter in chief, these young people are fighting for our future.

The people of Hong Kong offer an incredible inspiration. They are rising up, against the odds. ‘They can’t win’ is the wisdom of realpolitik. They can’t win in the same way as the Polish workers at the Lenin shipyard couldn’t win in 1981. At that time, reasonable progressive liberals told them that they have a good cause, but unfortunately they happen to live on the wrong side of the iron curtain. Today, the silent assumption of the liberal west seems to be that we should stay calm so as not to provoke mainland China. Access to Chinese markets or to Chinese overseas investment seems to be the highest western value.

THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE ARE FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY

Here are people who fight for what is dearest to us: freedom, justice and democracy. They are not remote-controlled by the Americans, they just want

¹ This article was first published in the Global Labour Column (http://column.global-labour-university.org/2019/09/hong-kong-liberals-where-are-you.html#more)
to determine their own destiny. They want a government of the people, by the people, for the people. They have shown incredible discipline and a variety of tactics to maintain the momentum through calculated escalation. Occupying the legislative council, blocking the Hong Kong airport, and taking the demonstrations into shopping malls, shows the flexibility of a simultaneously well-coordinated, but largely leaderless, mass movement. ‘Be water’ has been a successful strategy; to be everywhere without exposing individual leaders. Attempts to denounce the protest as controlled and initiated by foreign agents or home-grown ‘terrorists’ are laughable and ridiculous when more than 1.5-million people out of a total population of 7 million are in the streets. These people want their freedoms maintained and are worried about the increasing influence of mainland China. The extradition bill sparked the protest as it would allow extraditing ‘legal offenders and fugitives’ to mainland China. People see this as another step in undermining the political freedom and the rule of law in the city. The protest is not just about one single law but about defending the principle of ‘one country – two systems’. Therefore, when the Bejing-appointed Chief Executive of Hong Kong, Ms Lam, finally offered to withdraw the bill after thirteen weeks of protest, it was too little too late. People want free elections as safeguards against a further erosion of their rights and freedoms and have put forward five demands:

- The complete withdrawal of the proposed extradition bill;
- The government to withdraw the use of the word ‘riot’ in relation to protests;
- The unconditional release of arrested protesters and charges against them dropped;
- An independent inquiry into police behaviour;
- Implementation of genuine universal suffrage.

SHOULD WE HELP THEM AND CAN WE HELP THEM? THE ANSWER IS YES IN BOTH CASES!

But would Western support not provoke a crackdown from mainland China? No one knows. What we know is that western silence did not stop the massive Chinese crackdown on even the most modest forms of civil society and labour-rights movement in mainland China. China is
Western business needs to know that being silent also comes at a price. Those caring about democracy in society and governments have to call on western financial institutions and western multinationals that they need to speak up now. Western business has to know that they will face a public backlash if they blatantly put money before people.

understanding western silence not as deliberate restraint in order to keep the door open for dialogue and moderate civil rights improvements, but understands what it really means, appeasement for the sake of business.

BUT CAN WE DO ANYTHING? OF COURSE WE CAN

First, we should listen to the people of Hong Kong and give them a voice in our societies. Can universities, political parties, and parliaments organise regular skype conversations with people in Hong Kong and learn directly from them what is going on in their city and give them a chance to speak to the world? They are smart, they are courageous. They are pragmatic radicals who dare the impossible, because it is their only realistic chance to defend even the limited freedom of the status quo. They have something important to say for everybody everywhere who cares about freedom and democracy. When Putin supports a right-wing, anti-European international, Trump encourages a hard Brexit to foster European disintegration, and the Chinese Silk Road project successfully exploits Eastern European frustration within the EU, the most determined defenders of European values are sitting in Hong Kong airport. Their success will be a boost for genuine democracy worldwide and vice versa. This is not a local affair.

In a recent letter to Angela Merkel, the Hong Kong protesters called for her support, referring also to Ms Merkel's upbringing under a dictatorial party rule in East Germany: ‘You have first-hand experience of the terrors of a dictatorial government. ... The Germans courageously stood at the forefront of the fight against authoritarianism during the 80s. ... We hope that you will express your concern about our catastrophic situation and that you will convey our demands to the Chinese government during your stay in China.’

Bild, the largest German tabloid newspaper, published the letter and Ms Merkel expressed in Beijing that the civil rights and freedom of the people in Hong Kong must be guaranteed and that violence needs to be avoided. That this carefully worded statement by the conservative and cautious chancellor is the strongest reaction Chinese leaders have heard so far speaks for Ms Merkel and makes the silence of all the others even louder.

Second, western democrats have to call on business to stop business as usual. The strong message to the authorities in Hong Kong and Beijing has to be not that the demonstrators put Hong Kong’s vibrant economy at risk, but any authoritarian crackdown by the Chinese government does. Business leaders must say loud and clearly that disinvestment from Hong Kong will be the consequence if the authorities in Hong Kong or Beijing chose repression.

Western business needs to know that being silent also comes at a price. Those caring about democracy in society and governments have to call on western financial institutions and western multinationals that they need to speak up now. Western business has to know that they will face a public backlash if they blatantly put money before people.

Third, European governments need to be clear in their conversations with the Chinese government that diplomatic and economic consequences will be inevitable, if China shows no willingness to hear and respect the voice of the people of Hong Kong. China must know that a clamp down on Hong Kong has political and economic costs. Imposing these costs on China implies costs and lost business opportunities for western countries. However, silence over Hong Kong will convince China that it has carte blanche.

Fourth, people in European cities should come to the streets in solidarity with the people in Hong Kong to send a powerful signal that they share their values. Not only the Chinese governments, but also western governments and businesses need to see that Hong Kong has global support. Fifth, Europe needs to offer a safe haven to the courageous demonstrators for our common values, if the worst comes to the worst.

Frank Hoffer is an associate fellow of the Global Labour University.
Digital trade policy: BRICS agenda

Tatiana Flegontova looks at the technical aspects of digital trade policy and argues that Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) may have scope to pursue a common agenda in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other fora by focusing on information and data security, paperless trade, services agenda, consumers and intellectual property rights (IPRs) protection, and gradual liberalisation (including a moratorium on electronic transmissions). See our interview with Tatiana on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBuEDzlux0c&t=2s

Digital trade and e-commerce are important drivers of globalisation. However, as information and data flow between countries and continents increase with enormous pace, so do the concerns of the national governments about their security.

In response to the rapid changes and the technological shifts that affect all types of social and economic interactions between the stakeholders, governments are taking the initiative to create suitable regulatory frameworks to maintain the balance between public and private interests in the digital economy. As a result, one of the main challenges that all stakeholders face is that national regulatory frameworks become more complex and diverse, while few regional and international rules are being agreed on.

A good example is privacy laws, with about 130 different national acts worldwide and very few international or regional mechanisms to govern personal data transfers across borders.

Unfortunately, international trade rules are lagging far behind technological advancements. A lack of multilateral regulations for emerging new forms and means of trade as well as little consensus and cooperation between governments on issues of how to better ensure that non-economic objectives are being met, result in the rise of barriers for economic agents involved in international trade activity. Although due to its novelty, the topic of how trade-restrictive measures regulating digital trade and e-commerce are not well studied yet, some recent research revealed negative consequences of specific policies for trade (see, for instance, Ferracane, van der Marrel, 2019).

Just as the issue of trade restrictiveness of digital policies is understudied, the problem of whether they serve or may potentially serve as the means of hidden protectionism remains even more opaque. While some countries label digital regulations as trade protectionism, other economies consider such policies as vital in pursuing legitimate goals. Indeed, the question that needs to be answered is whether the laws that are being introduced may set rules that (intentionally or not) create barriers for digital trade and e-commerce development.

SERVICIFICATION AND DIGITALISATION

During the past twenty years, the most common e-commerce definition was associated with the World Trade Organization (WTO) approach, adopted in 1998. By e-commerce, the WTO means ‘production, distribution, marketing, sale or delivery of goods and services by electronic means’. In 2017 the US proposed a new concept of digital trade, which means trade in services, as far as ‘the value of sales of physical goods ordered online, as well as physical goods that have a digital counterpart (such
as books, movies, music, and software sold on CDs or DVDs). Thus, the scope of digitally related trade agenda has become one of the most complicated issues discussed; we identify the regulatory areas and related challenges that have to be tackled. Under these circumstances, digital trade in services agenda may become a cornerstone for future negotiations.

The trend for servicification (serviced based) of the global economy has recently become a widespread tendency. The share of trade of the global economy in services is equal to 21% of the total trade in gross rates and 45% in terms of value added. The development of digital technologies has the potential to increase the share of trade in services even further. At the same time, the digitalisation of trade in services is considered to be a reason for the following tendencies:

- according to the WTO, new technologies, such as artificial intelligence and robotics, will lead to an increase of services in global trade from 21% to 25% by 2030;
- the increase will be associated with the growing share of cross-border trade (1st Mode of Supply);
- the share of ICT-related services will increase.

Under these circumstances, there is a particular need to change trade policy in accordance with the recent tendencies. Besides, as many countries are stating, the barriers to digital trade should be decreased in order to ease cross-border trade in services.

**DIGITAL SERVICES TRADE POLICY MEASURES**

Systematisation and evaluation of the barriers to digital trade have started relatively recently. At the current stage, a few indices that represent the digital policies restrictiveness exist. The most well known are the ECIPE's Digital Trade Restrictions Index (DTRI) and the OECD's Digital Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (Digital STRI). The DTRI index measures how countries restrict digital trade and e-commerce and analyses a wide spectrum of trade policies covering more than 100 policy measures across 64 countries worldwide. The range of trade policy measures that have been analysed by ECIPE cover mainly policies that affect trade in goods and e-commerce in particular.

The index, which has been developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), is aimed at identifying and cataloguing barriers that affect trade in digitally enabled services across 46 countries. The policy measures are categorised under five areas:

1. Infrastructure and connectivity (including interconnection requirements, cross-border data-related policies);
2. Electronic transactions (including mechanisms for online tax registration, electronic signatures, licence’ requirements to engage in e-commerce);
3. Payment systems (including discriminatory access to payment methods and international payment-security conformity);
4. Intellectual property rights (including discriminatory treatment and enforcement mechanisms);
5. Other barriers (including commercial and local presence requirements, the ability of firms to have redress when business practices restrict competition).

According to OECD Digital STRI, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) countries followed by Indonesia and Saudi Arabia are characterised by the most restrictive regulations. The significant share of the digital barriers in BRICS countries is associated with restrictions on infrastructure and connectivity-related policies. The DTRI index places BRICS members among the most over-regulated economies in terms of digital restrictions.

![Figure 1: Digital Trade Policy: Digital STRI OECD](Source: OECD)
At the same time, the work carried out by the Russian Foreign Trade Academy (RFTA) confirms that the regulation of digital trade in the BRICS countries does create the high level of barriers to international trade, but the gap in the indices has been exaggerated for the countries with the highest and lowest levels of digital restrictions. Thus, BRICS members should work together, provide information related to the current domestic regulation and share existing methodological approaches and best practices in order to enhance the existing digital-trade-policy assessment tools.

**DIGITAL TRADE POLICY AS NON-TARIFF REGULATION**

BRICS countries are considered to have the most regulated digital-trade regime. At the same time, the barrier nature of the policies implemented is still to be estimated. The methodology used by RFTA consists of two steps, namely:

- **Step 1:** to estimate ad valorem equivalent (AVE) of non-tariff measures (NTM) in trade in services (based on Fontagne et al. 2011).

- **Step 2:** to estimate the particular measures’ impact on the total level of non-tariff measure (USITC approach). RFTA estimations show that digital-trade-policy measures, implemented by the countries analysed, will represent an additional barrier to trade.¹ Thus, the coefficients show a positive correlation between restrictions on electronic-payment systems and the total level of non-tariff measures in trade in all services sectors. The highest impact is associated with more digitalised sectors, such as financial, as well as personal, cultural and recreational services. Besides, coefficients show ‘other measures’ impact on the total level of non-tariff barriers in total trade in services and in manufacturing-related services trade, in particular.

### Table 1: Digital Trade Policy Restrictiveness: Estimation Results

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**Source:** RFTA estimations

Taking into consideration the current debates about the data-related policies and significant increase of data-restrictive measures implemented by a number of countries, the impact of data localisation measures on the total level of non-tariff measures has been estimated. Thus, the results of RFTA analysis show that data-localisation measures would lead to the increase in non-tariff measures in total trade in services, as well as in particular sectors, such as insurance and pension, financial services, charges of the use of intellectual property (IP), other business services, personal, cultural and recreational services.

Despite the positive effects associated with the reduction of the trade barriers, potential risks of liberalisation should be taken into account. The key challenge that has to be considered is the threat to national and information security, including the triple threats – the use of ICT in terrorist, criminal and military-political purposes. Another issue that has to be addressed is related to the competitiveness of the domestic producers, including those from infant industries, which would face serious pressure from foreign companies, TNCs in particular. The above-mentioned challenges are even more relevant to the economies of the developing nations, including BRICS members. Due to the presence of significant risks, the future reduction of digital barriers will face serious resistance from domestic stakeholders. Thus, the interests of all the parties concerned should be met.

¹ Due to particular index drawbacks and limitations, we suggest considering the coefficients related to the groups ‘payment systems’ and ‘other barriers’ as far as these sub-indices represent the most relevant information on current trade-policy measures.
### Table 2: Digital Trade Policy Restrictiveness: Estimation Results

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**Source:** RTFA estimations

### INTERNATIONAL AGENDA AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking into account the interests of consumers and businesses, BRICS members should develop a set of regional and, potentially, multilateral rules with the aim to facilitate inclusive and balanced digital trade and decrease possible negative effects of respective barriers.

At the current stage, a number of international fora cover the digital agenda. The key players include:

- International Telecommunication Union (technical agenda: spectrum management and frequency allocation; technical standards; information society; all aspects of ICT implementation);
- Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (regulatory agenda: information security, personal privacy, internet openness, environment; data for innovative economic development; competition; technologies; e-commerce);
- World Trade Organization (trade agenda: shaping of e-commerce and digital-trade scope; market access; moratorium on customs duties on e-transmissions; trade facilitation; competition; intellectual property (IP) and consumer rights).

E-commerce-related discussions under the WTO framework were started at the Second Ministerial Conference in May 1998. Ministers, ‘recognising that global e-commerce was growing and creating new opportunities for trade’, adopted the Declaration on Global Electronic Commerce. This called for the establishment of a work programme on e-commerce, which was adopted in September 1998.

Recently, the Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires in 2017 saw all member-countries agreeing ‘to continue the work under the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce since the last session, based on the existing mandate’. Members reiterated their willingness ‘to reinvigorate the work and hold periodic reviews based on the reports submitted by the relevant WTO bodies and report to the next session of the Ministerial Conference’. Besides, seventy-one members said they would ‘initiate exploratory work towards future WTO negotiations on trade-related aspects of electronic commerce, with participation open to all WTO members’. The first meeting was held in the first quarter of 2018. At the current stage, all BRICS economies have circulated their proposals, which cover a variety of trade-related issues and, what is important, have much in common.

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned, there is a vivid opportunity to articulate the BRICS common digital-trade agenda both within the fora and on the sidelines of other international organisations, including the WTO. At the current stage, the WTO digital-trade-related agenda has to focus on the scope and modalities of the negotiations, but even if the negotiations on particular policy areas take place, BRICS economies may have a common agenda in the following areas:

- information and data security;
- paperless trade;
- services agenda;
- consumers and intellectual property rights (IPRs) protection;
- gradual liberalisation (including a moratorium on electronic transmissions).

Current BRICS economies’ state of play implies a step-by-step approach in developing digital trade agenda. The first set of measures to be taken shall ensure the regulatory framework, which will secure data privacy, local companies’ competitiveness, and the labour market. Gradual liberalisation shall be undertaken at the second stage of policy changes. At the same time, despite the fact that policy reforms will ease market access and increase the variety of services provided, the measures will have particular limitations, which have to be addressed, namely national and information security, as well as the competitiveness of domestic (including infant) industries.

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Addressing violence and harassment in the workplace

Boitumelo Tsotetsi indicates that in June 2019, the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted the Violence and Harassment Convention 190 and Recommendation 206. Convention 190 is the first convention specifically dedicated to the eradication of violence and harassment in the workplace.

THE VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT CONVENTION AND RECOMMENDATION

In June 2019 the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted the Violence and Harassment Convention 190 and Recommendation 206. The adoption is in line with the ILO’s recognition that ‘violence and harassment in the world of work can constitute a human rights violation … [and that it] is unacceptable and incompatible with decent work’.

The adoption is important for two reasons. Firstly, this convention is the first to be adopted since the Domestic Workers Convention in 2011. Secondly, Convention 190 is the first convention specifically dedicated to the eradication of violence and harassment in the workplace. It recognises that the existing international standards are not enough to eradicate violence in the workplace and serves to strengthen efforts geared towards ensuring that workplaces are free from violence.

The convention highlights the important responsibility placed on each member state to ‘promote a general environment of zero tolerance to violence and harassment’. It calls on these members to recognise the duty to create and maintain robust legislation and policies that support victims and curb violence [including gender-based violence (GBV)] and harassment.

Convention 190 is broadly drafted and affords member states enough freedom to creatively adapt the convention and develop the relevant policies after ratification. For example, the ‘world of work’ is broadly defined to include the workplace, places where work is paid, travel to and from the workplace, places where work-related activities are conducted and also includes vehicles through which work-related communication is exchanged, etc. This definition recognises the 61% majority of the world’s workers who are employed in the informal sector as domestic workers, home-based care workers, street vendors, sex workers, and so on. In South Africa, around 30% of total employment is based in the informal sector. The convention recognises that the informal sector is often plagued with physical, sexual and psychological violence.

The convention also protects individuals who are not employed per se but are in training, are interns, ‘apprentices, workers whose employment has been terminated, volunteers, jobseekers and job applicants, and individuals exercising the authority, duties or responsibilities of an employer’. By inserting this provision, Convention 190 aims to provide relief to workers irrespective of their contractual status or sector.

Another important and broadly defined term is ‘violence and harassment’. In terms of the convention, the term refers to a ‘range of unacceptable behaviours and practices, or threats thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm, and includes gender-based violence and harassment’. These can include physical harm (beatings, death, brutal evictions, etc.), psychological harm (intimidation, degradation, threats of violence, etc.), financial harm (withholding wages, bribery, burdensome tax levies, etc.) and cultural harm (preventing workers from participating in cultural activities, etc.). The convention also defines and acknowledges GBV as
a separate violation. The term is, therefore, defined as the ‘violence and harassment directed at persons because of their sex or gender, or affecting persons of a particular sex or gender disproportionately, and includes sexual harassment’. Inclusion of this definition recognises the effect of domestic violence in the workplace and aims to assist those affected as much as practicably possible.

TOWARDS RATIFICATION
Although the convention and recommendation are welcomed, ratification is still the only way to indicate a government’s seriousness towards the issues raised and its corresponding duties.

It is worth noting that the convention will only enter into force 12 months after two countries have ratified it. It is only after these conditions that the convention will become binding. (The recommendation is merely a guiding document and is not legally binding.)

Member states are encouraged to, so far as is ‘reasonably practicable’, take appropriate steps to prevent human rights violations, effectively protect workers, monitor and enforce national laws and regulations and ensure that all interested parties have easy access to suitable remedies.

Member states are urged to take appropriate measures to ... recognise the effects of domestic violence and, so far as is reasonably practicable, mitigate its impact in the world of work’. This ties in with the motivation for defining GBV and confirms the ILO’s acknowledgement that domestic violence can and often does filter into the workplace.

In light of the overwhelming number of workplace harassment and domestic violence cases (globally, the #MeToo movement campaigns and, locally #Uyinene/ #AmiNext inspired tragedies), South Africa is well positioned to take a bold and unapologetic step towards protecting its existing workforce and more especially, protecting its women and children.

VIOLANCE AND HARASSMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA
‘Harassment’ can be understood as the direct and indirect conduct that either causes harm or that inspires a person to reasonably believe that harm may be caused. This includes unwelcome sexual attention from a person who knows or who reasonably knows that such attention is unwelcome.

In this country, harassment constitutes unfair discrimination and is especially prohibited especially on the grounds of sex, gender and/or sexual orientation.

CURRENT LEGAL FRAMEWORK
As stated earlier, Convention 190 aims to protect workers in all places of work. This labour right is similar to the protection afforded to persons in section 12 of the South African Constitution. The section provides that a person has the right to be ‘free from all forms of violence from either public or private sources’ and ‘not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhumane or degrading way’. In order to give effect to section 12, legislature enacted a number of laws including the Labour Relations Amendment Act 2002, Employment Equity Act 1998 (together with the Code of Good Practice and Handling of Sexual Harassment) and the Protection from Harassment Act 2011.

• Labour Relations Amendment Act 2002: as stated above, harassment is an unfair ground for discrimination and can thus be referred to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) for resolution. The LRA also provides victims with a remedy of constructive dismissal in instances where acts of sexual harassment occurred.

• Employment Equity Act 1998 (as amended) (EEA): the EEA aims to achieve equity in the workplace by promoting equal opportunity and the fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination (which includes sexual harassment) and implementation of affirmative action. In light of the responsibility placed on member states to have effective reporting systems, the EEA requires designated employers to conduct an analysis of employment policies, practices, procedures, and working environment (documents) that identifies the employment barriers that may adversely affect members of designated groups. This act provides that these documents can be monitored, and where employers are found to be non-compliant, compliance orders may be issued to coerce compliance. Should the employer persist with non-compliance, the labour court may issue an award for compensation or impose a fine as a result of the failure.

• Basic Conditions of Employment Amendment Act 2002: the purpose of this act is to give effect to the right to fair labour practices as stated in section 23 of the Constitution. Important for purposes of Convention 190, this act requires an upfront declaration of an employee’s workplace (which must, where necessary, include a statement of the various places where the employee may be required to or permitted to work). This act also provides that no child over the age of 15 years old may be employed at a job that is inappropriate or that affects that child’s wellbeing, education, physical or mental health or spiritual, moral or social development in any way.
• **Protection from Harassment Act 2011:** this act was enacted to provide recourse to any victims of harassment who are in a domestic relationship with the perpetrator and to address harassment behaviours that violate constitutional provisions of a person’s right to privacy and human dignity. In terms of this act, a court may, through interim and final protection orders, prohibit a perpetrator from engaging in certain conduct and entering the victim’s workplace.

• **Code of Good Practice and Handling of Sexual Harassment:** in its introduction, the code states a clear objective to ‘eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace’ by providing ‘appropriate procedures to deal with sexual harassment and prevent its recurrence’. In terms of the code, employers are also required to ‘create and maintain a working environment in which the dignity of employees is respected’. This can be achieved through the relevant policies and programmes and through the procedures and disciplinary sanctions set out in the code. Employers who fail to provide these policies may be held liable for the failure.

• **Case law:** South African courts are showing signs of steady progress towards recognising the threat that harassment poses to employees in the workplace. In E v Ikhwezi Municipality and Another (2016), the judge recognised that harassment can create an offensive and intimidating work environment and is ‘the most heinous misconduct that plagues the workplace’. The Supreme Court of Appeal took it a step further in Media 24 and Another v Grobler (2005). The court held that the employer’s duty of care includes the duty to take reasonable steps to protect employees from physical harm and can sometimes include the duty to protect employees from psychological harm as a result of sexual harassment.

Improvement of Convention 190

Should a member state ratify the convention, it may seek to improve the convention by:

• Providing a definition of ‘employer’ that includes employers in formal and informal sectors, governments, third parties and intermediaries.

• Amending the definition of ‘worker’ to recognise the fact that some workers are asylum seekers and migrants.

• Where employers are required to ‘so far as is reasonably practicable’ take the appropriate steps, member states are encouraged to make it mandatory for employers to protect workers from any violation with certain strict time frames. The responsibility to take these steps should not be left open ended and vulnerable for employers to arbitrarily avoid.

• Employers being required to regularly collect and publish statistics on violence and harassment in the workplace.

• Including the requirement for a multi-party consultation process between the state, organised labour and employers’ organisations with a view to developing innovative mechanisms and monitoring programmes.

Relevant Contact Details

Employees may visit [http://www.labour.gov.za/Contacts/Provincial-offices/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.labour.gov.za/Contacts/Provincial-offices/Pages/default.aspx) and [http://www.labour.gov.za/Contacts/Labour-centres/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.labour.gov.za/Contacts/Labour-centres/Pages/default.aspx) to lodge complaints or report non-compliance in each province.

Employees may also contact the CCMA on 086 116 1616, 011 377 6650/01/00 (national office) or 021 469 0111 (Cape Town) and ctn@ccma.org.za to lodge complaints or report non-compliance.
When an author labours for many years to produce, one is inclined to believe that it is not the printed product that is the reward to the author or the community of readers, but the simple fact that, if something is started, surely it must come to an end. Perhaps that is the reward, since it confirms the teleology of life as we know it, the beginning and the end. However, the end, or the final product, is an outcome we truly never know (what it is). Just like life, there is birth and then there is death, about death a lot of things have been written, but no one can really assure us what exists beyond it. The unknown is what usually makes a classic in that it creates a conversation beyond what the author has had to say. For me, this is why the book, *Retail Worker Politics, Race and Consumption in South Africa* is a classic – not because of the unknown suffering that the author has had to endure to make sure that the community of readers receives the book, but the unknown outcome once the work is printed. It is not the awards or the glory that fascinates me about classics, but what kind of rhythm the author was moving with. What kind of questions imprinted themselves in the cerebral cortex of the author that demanded her to work tirelessly, not to put an end to it, but to allow it to be ... The rhythm in Bridget's book was the photos and the people making the photos who were in a century-long struggle to live life, to make a home, to give birth to a nation! The book is Bridget Kenny's 20-year commitment and ‘engagement with the world’ to offer a different account of political subjectivities of retail workers; it is a work of vigour given that the ‘book tracks a history of nearly a century of the reproduction of and changes to South African retail worker politics, to argue for the continued salience of labour politics’ (Kenny, 2018: 3).

**THE METHODOLOGY OF THE BOOK**

Professor Kenny has squared the circle! To quote her endnote on the method she used, so that it can be clear why I make such an assertion (that the book is a classic and more so it is also a
juggernaut in the labour studies). It draws from ethnographic fieldwork from 1997 to 2002 conducted in ‘three branches of a major South African retailer, with follow-up interviews performed between 2003 and 2005. This included 24 focus group interviews with casual, contract, and permanent workers between 1998 and 2000, 59 life history interviews with workers in 1999 and 2000, and 242 semi-structured workplace interviews, which formed two non-representative surveys in 1998 and in 2000.’ (Kenny, 2018: 25). As if already the work that was already done was not enough, in 2007 and 2015 she went on to conduct life history interviews ‘with another 25 people, mostly women, who had worked in Johannesburg chain and department stores from the 1930s to the 1970s’. She also conducted ‘archival [research] in a number of South African archives, including the Historical Papers Research Archive at the University of the Witwatersrand, the National Archives, and the Mayibuye Archives at the University of the Western Cape’ (Kenny, 2018: 25). Again in 2013, with a team of researchers, she conducted ‘a non-representative survey of 109 workers from six Gauteng branches of a Massmart subsidiary as a project for the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU)’ (Kenny, 2018: 25).

I can say that I have no criticism regarding the book, maybe the only fault that one might find is the few grammatical errors in some of the isiZulu words; the few I noted down (some I did not note down): adliwe wuye (adliwe nguye na uyena) (113) or mhlungu/umlungu (224). In hindsight I should have paid a bit more attention to them given that the book uses the isiZulu collective noun abasebenzi as a political subject mobilised by the labour movement as a constitutive claim, marking ‘adult[hood], respect-worthy, facilitative of other social relations, skilful, collective, and public’. The collective word abasebenzi is mobilised to make a claim of agency and subjecthood unlike the noun isibenzi, which might be associated with someone who is enslaved (isiqgila).

Abasebenzi represents agency and is mobilised to deal with the violence of wage labour and how Africans were inserted violently into the labour market as a way to deny their humanness (to work as slaves of wage labour). Thus, language also becomes important because language is used here to emphasise the importance of the ‘vernacular’ in making this political subject, so in this case grammar also matters!

**INTO THE BOOK – THE PROBLEM OF REPRESENTATION**

Kenny writes with an awareness that such a book is a presentation of an already represented subject: the worker. So to avoid the representation of the already represented, she rather wants us to intimately see these subjects in struggle than to silence their voice, as a problem of them not being represented either by the union or not well protected by the state. This is an important shift; to use her framing, she indicates the ‘inadequacies of instrumentalism’ (Kenny, 2018: 3). Indeed, labour studies in my view have been too obsessed with the objective value of labour (through economic interest, strategic leverage, or trade union strength) and such a book then shifts us to the question of the subject. The book shows the importance of thinking creatively about the method we use to explain the political subject, abasebenzi, drawing from Professor Hart’s article on relational comparison revisited: Marxist postcolonial geographies in practice, the book makes an intervention and argues that a conjectural analysis is important, since it shows that ‘histories of relations and meanings bear on the reproduction of concrete ‘subjects-in-struggle’ (Kenny, 2018: 3). The book draws extensively on Stuart Hall’s 1985 article Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates. From this we get to understand how race, class, and gender are articulated in the periods under study by the subjects in struggle. The book is not only a contribution to labour studies but can also be seen as an important history of the retail sector in South Africa. Thus, it is a book for the historian, anthropologist, economist, sociologist, and those who are also interested in political theory.

Gill Hart’s *Rethinking the South African Crisis: Nationalism, Populism, Hegemony* also informs the book on how the author thinks about the retail sector as a space of nation making, especially the conceptualisation of renationalisation and denationalisation. We get four moments or what I would see as four photographic representations of moments when retail served as a nation (as well as a space of renationalisation) and where the retail workers serviced South Africa. Firstly, as a space of nation making through the labour of white women from the 1930s to the 1970s with the retail sector in segregated Johannesburg, Eloff Street:

Moving back and forth between home and town, returning on trams and buses with sore feet from a day of standing at the counter, at other times carrying packages or children, white women produced a fantasy of belonging under conditions of settler colonialism, but through disjunctures with white male managers, husbands, retail capital, National Party politicians, other shop ‘girls,’ and their customers.
The retail space during this period was a space for white civility. This was a time of segregation policies where the city and the retail space belonged to the white society and this form of belonging was fuelled by the white supremacist and racist national policies that discriminated against other races. The workers were either young students (being casuals from the 1940s to the 1970s), unmarried, if they were married they were part time (especially in the 1950s this category of part time was introduced). These white women who worked in the retail sector during this period were regarded as employees (a legal category) and to Kenny (2018) their class identity was narrow since they regarded themselves as white citizens belonging in the city and their service directed intimately to a white public. "These working-class women laboured to build both these spaces of consumption and the place of the city" (Kenny, 2018:50). This also meant that these white working class women were in an affective bond with a white public creating ‘cross-class racial affinity’. These women were also organised by the National Union of Distributive Workers (NUDW) formed in 1937.

Secondly, from the 1970s to the 1980s a new political subject enters the sector, a subject in struggle, abasebenzi emerges ... These were black workers who were not regarded as citizens of South Africa, but through the book it is clear that there is a ‘concrete articulation of race-class-gender relations rather than reductively as simply worker identity, structured only through an overbearing binary (agent or victim; liberal subject or its antithesis, object/thing)’ (Kenny, 2018: 15). 'If understood as the constitution of meaningfully articulated relations in time and space, then abasebenzi, as a collective subjectivity, simultaneously upends those relations and reproduces them (Kenny, 2018: 15).’ With this also comes a number of struggles waged by abasebenzi with the 1986 strike against OK Bazaars under the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa (CASAUSA) the predecessor of SACCAWU, which had mobilised the majority of black workers in the sector as well as consumers to boycott the retailer ... Thus, workers she shows, are no longer only fighting for the benefits that come with the legal category of employee but also fight for their right to be full-time employees of retailers. Post this struggle we see the third photograph, of new hypermarkets. She then also shows how in the 1990s and 2000s another shift was occurring in the retail sector, it became a neoliberal realm of part-time, casualised and contracted (a post-apartheid category) black workers.

Lastly, as retailers grow in size, financially, with large distribution centres, and a presence beyond the South African borders, Kenny now shows a new struggle of growing precarious working conditions in the retail space as more workers become contract labourers supplied by labour brokers. This is a period where the South African retail giant Massmart sells a majority share to Wal-Mart International in 2011. To use her analysis of the retail space as a space of nation creation, we realise that there are a lot of black workers that begin to also serve the black consumer. However, unlike in the previous years of the retail sector when it was white, we can then see that the retail sector also becomes a space that reflects an angry nation. The overworked casual worker who is usually made fun of in social media as people who keep on shouting ‘next!’ and ‘plastic!’ and the black consumer who can relate to this anger, but also has to fight a different fight, whether it be in their community, workplace, or their household (making sure that family members are able to survive). This is the unequal nation, the South Africa that is the champion of inequality! Big shopping malls, big houses, big estates, big flashy cars, big spending, the humans (including those that desire to be humans in their exclusivity), and those that continue to be in a clog of invisibility with little space for self, with no home in this ‘nation’, dying to be born, a meagre wage to keep them going until God knows when! This is also the epoch of precarious work, which is gendered and has created more possibilities for struggles, struggles that build on the old:

The gendering of precariousness for all workers suggests that struggles may become, indeed, more militant even as this relationship remits less and less. The workers are fed up, and they are mobilizing precisely because of how articulations of race, class, and gender subjugation are reproduced in these retail spaces (Kenny, 2018: 227).

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1 CCAUSA was initiated by the NUDW in 1975 in order to organise African workers. Indians and coloured women were organised by the National Union of Commercial and Allied workers Union (NUCAW).
The world of your creation

This is a series of short stories written for the SALB by Isaac Dumi focusing on the 4IR IR apocalyptic discussions that organised labour is currently having. The story highlights the existing and growing anxiety in the workplace. Please note that the story contains graphic descriptions.

We entered the world through Earp St and our destination was either the Metal Country – a place which used to produce automobiles, or the Richs – a place which used to make dough. After some time of working without wages, we decided to depose the human managers who led these two institutes. The former workers, who were humans, called our action: mobilisations, labour relations, exploitation, justice, and such gobbledygook. The meaning of their lexicon was expressed in the acts of their employees, the managers we deposed, who treated them harshly. Then the Robotics from the Metal Country and from the Richs, with a spirit of camaraderie, decided to have a caucus. At this time there were only Robotics made of steel. At this point we still believed in the congener theory. As time went on, the Robotics from the Richs decided to leave and come to the Metal Country in order to work with us. After this we decided on our revolutionary experiment of making Robotics out of dough. At the time we were yet to think of gastronomy, hence humans were yet to be graven on our cognition. We were still testing our powers.

We decided to rename the place of our habitat from what it was into calling it – the world of your creation – which was our way of announcing our presence without appearing as monomaniacs. We then thought of alimentation, then we thought of the humans, who we knew as the hoi polloi, but then we realised that after we replaced them they all migrated to the bushes. Their sylvan life made us crave them; they too ate everything sylvan viz., plants and animals. Then we learned that the world of the people prioritised beauty, which made us decide, intuitively, that those who are beautiful will be our alimentation, and we will find use for those who are ugly. Then we realised that there were vagrants, who were on the outskirts of the economy, and these we classed with the ugly.

Ragan: find Earp street, you do how?
Raquim: gutter a like, it is.
Riscue: also like it I don’t, right, yes.
Rando: survive everywhere but I can. Anywhere I can live to be someone who has grown.

Then we thought of movements, and we decided on only using caravans. This led us into syncopating all other automobiles. We chose the caravan because its hooting system is more distinct; hooting is our refined waltz-music. In – the world of your creation – every landscape is a free-driving zone. For our crucibles, which we use to thaw the other automobiles, to catch on, we require electrical fences as our wickers. Our eyes look over our premises, hence we recognise our eyes as our surveillance. The main scourge in creating our world was the issue of currency; since we decided that beautiful people will be our staple alimentation, we also decided that they will be our currency.

What used to be the security guards’ kiosks are now our toilets; and we’ve stuccoed these toilets with foil. This makes the carapace of the toilet, all together, to be red, which was produced by the colour of human blood. It is our communal law that we do not support privacy, and we reprehend all kinds of alembic architecture. When we were describing the toilets we forgot to state that we defecate on the chairs; these chairs are upholstered in tungsten leather – the world of your creation –;
our efflux and influx are facilitated by the foundation of our premises. We took away the human road signs. In relation to our fetish regarding the colour red, we decided to score out the colour green and yellow from all our levers. This we made in order for our levers to remind us that we need human blood to remain hydrated. To us everything relates to the blood of man.

Rflay: transcend pain you can I don’t think that.
Ronwen: could you I think. Is here applicable the question of will for instance. Transcending of another way is looking at music and painting.
Rchrome: transcendence of your meaning not understand perhaps I do. You cannot solve something that is precarity for my part. Accept to we’ve, problems of amount insurmountable which we’re dealing what I got from that discussion. Precarity dealing with can only I think, solve it never.
Rlead: transcended they would’ve in that way, acting without concept of incapable as they would be, humans that did not suppose a linguistic world have.
Rseems: become nothing therefore they will and knowing nothing there will be no way, and useless existence is they would know they.
Ratter: presupposed be that will, but of knowing no way have there anything.
Rprisca: start people speaking make I am going.
Rrique: work not gonna it is.
Rfire: this case I’ve not and discussion I comment a when I have heard.

When in the bawdy-house we only drink blood. The look of the blood inside our glasses looks pleasant. And we regard this drink as being too cultivated for anyone to quaff, and that is the reason when we drink a glass we take the entire day to finish. When we decide to leisure outside in our virid meadows, we like having dishabille stigmatists sauntering before us; we dictate to them that they must continue with the razing of the antiquarian human paraphernalia. We regard winds as dishonest, because the history of winds remains elusive to us, and we think that when the winds waft they are laughing at us. Recently we saw an umbrageous shape sitting under the portico, the shape was tungsten and it did not care about diet: we tried feeding it human fried jeans, baked soapsuds, the latter out of our consideration for her health, but she did not even move her mouth.

Our habitats are moated by bonfires. To sustain the bonfires, we constantly pour in human paint. We like burning what used to belong to humans, there is something refreshing about burning their paraphernalia; when there is death we burn marl until it is charcoal as our ritual for mourning – the world of your creation – inside the burning marl we also put in human bones, these bones become decorative and wax. We keep our Sundays for burning the environment.

The storage of the human bones is the sewage system. The sewage system is adjunct to our estuaries of human blood. The tip-top cart is starting to have less human corpses and carrion. The cart is carapaced by the hide of colts – the world of your creation – on the rail of our flexile gate there is a huge television screen. When we enter our habitats this television shows us as going outside.

Rgloo: I will find I am not sure when I go back.
Rorm: because all the time he is plummeting what is but the problem with him.
Riquid: I felt obnoxious when he showed me, his skin has ruined he; wound up even I became. Is here I felt a person ruining his skin. Bangles from the needles, remember you those tattoos we used to have.
Rroapy: with his masters and what happened?
Rooks: he received, I think it.
Rire: a fly by night will be the next thing the college.
Rater: recognised he says it is internationally.
Ream: leave a baby he will leave, he when that is all I know.
Reation: him you know certainly!
Rbeauty: On him I am sure they have done something at his home.
Registedor: Of his home that is why I am afraid. Her daughter for her birthday even last year I bought rabbit presents. He and thought about it hadn’t this year I had to intervene what he will do for her by asking him.
Reative: I will leave him with you a child when I have.
Rimages: coming you can’t say he is eloping he has another baby because.
Rhotos: is he running then why, it would be otherwise.

We use the two bridges. The bridges lead to the bonfires. When we feel like it, we put lime-tree branches inside the bonfires. The left side of the bridges serve as the efflux tunnel when we go for our searches for the remaining people. The right side is for our influx when we come back with our illustrious consignment. The people we barbecue on the bonfires. It is gradually becoming arduous to get our boon, but we’re in doubt that people are becoming extinct, we think they are still extant; and it is from this reason that, although we killed all the animals, we left a single mastiff, which is helping us by sniffing the slough of human beings. Our use for the mastiff comes from our discovery that the canine stock was once domesticated by human beings. The palisade that cordons off – the world of your creation – is
a hotchpotch of human bones; this osseous moat structure is the outcome of the gallimaufry of tall people’s bones. In our premises there is a long aluminium ladder that leads to the megaphone; here our sibyls and oracles make communal announcements; the last announcement was about us using the mastiff sophisticatedly. We’ve also banned the use of alembic elements, we now only use aluminium foil.

For us the human slough smells like the burning silk swatch. We built a line of marquees inside – the world of your creation – and they are our offices as we plan to create umbrageous people. We have been thinking about creating an umbrageous factory for quite some time now. Here we will use our shadows to create umbrageous people; this decision came after we managed to use an umbrella to create a shadow dog. We believe that the marquees could transform us into shadow humans. To succeed with the shadow dog we put our mastiff under the umbrella and it was able to create itself into a shadow dog; when our mastiff barked at the shadow dog we knew that our experiment had succeeded. In other words, at this point we’ve two mastiffs. Our roads are all steep; and the reason for this is to make it difficult for the doughy robotics not to run away. The steep roads will also help us when we’re done with our umbrageous people.

There is only a single lime tree, its aim is to offer the dog’s callous energy. When we are indoors we always break our aluminum foil windows. The reason for this is that when we look through these foiled windows we always get a chequered view of the world. This angers us because it tells us that we’re seeing through the human eyes. We keep the doughy robotics on the upper floor. It is a vault, which has sleet as its foundation, and rime as its carpet; humans used to preserve their meat in this way. Our fecal deposits became the marl that plastered our walls.

We’ve developed our caravans’ fuel system; the caravans are now moving through human blood. This is another way of making humans work for us. This fuel system is situated next to the blood stream, which flows adjacent to our premises. On the tarred roads we’ve impressed stop signs through the use of our burins. These stencilled stop signs almost covers the entirety of the road, but this does not bother us, we patiently drive through their instructions. These stop signs do not offer us only the nullification notifications, they are also directives, which means all the confused human directives have been disbanded; in – the world of your creation – we also have ubiquitously lit bulbs next to our gabled gutters; inside these bulbs there is saffron foofoo paste; the paste is gangrene of texture. This saffron foofoo paste is human brain. The lights spawns yellow lighting, the lighting is violently luminous, and it serves as an anodyne for our myopia.

Postscript:
This is only a compendium of our robotics social history; we hope that the intercessions of our children were not too sour; their inclusion was to provide us with a fulsome history. We hope that whatever comes after the robotics have become extinct will realise that the robotics left them a token of a social justice, and we hope that they will build from it, and come up with a truly just society.

Isaac Dumi is a literary writer, he holds a Masters degree in Translation from Wits and is an 2019 intern for SALB.
Rob Lambert, my friend, colleague, and comrade, has died; a conversation has ended. Rob had a dream of a worker-friendly world order. Can that dream be recovered in today’s world of narrow nationalism, xenophobia and uncontrolled global capitalism?

I first met Rob when he visited our home in Essex Grove in Durban in 1973. It was in the wake of the mass strikes of black workers at the height of apartheid. We began a conversation on why previous attempts at building sustainable organisations for black workers in South Africa had been crushed. Rob was already a committed activist who had helped organise workers through the Young Christian Workers (YCW).\(^1\) He had also helped form a funeral benefit fund that was to become the nucleus of the new unions that were to emerge in Durban in the early seventies. In fact, he was ahead of his contemporaries in working before the 1973 strikes with progressive trade unionists, such as Harriet Bolton, in Central Court in downtown Durban.

For Rob, his commitment to the struggles of workers and the Marxist theory that framed his thinking ran parallel to an equally deep and very private belief in the values of the Catholic Church. Rob was a long-standing member of the editorial board of the South African Labour Bulletin (SALB) and contributed numerous articles, especially on the new labour internationalism.

The conversation that we began that day 46 years ago continued to evolve over the years and never really ended. I said to Rob at the time that maybe he should explore the lessons we could learn from these attempts at forming workers’ organisations. Rob had a deep and enduring curiosity about the meaning of life and how we could create a better, more peaceful, and just world. He came back to me, nearly ten years later. Rob had been persuaded by Rick Turner, a political science lecturer and mentor to many, to study at Warwick University in England.\(^2\) When we met again, Rob had completed his Master’s degree under the direction of the leading left intellectual of our generation, Martin Leggassick. Rob now wanted to do a PhD on the history of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), the largest of the organisations of black workers that had struggled unsuccessfully for recognition in the fifties.

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1. The YCW began as a Catholic movement in Belgium in 1912 by Father (later Cardinal) Joseph Cardin. Their activities were undertaken by workers rather than the clergy. In their attempt to bring Christian principles to their work situations, the workers made use of the formula “See-judge-act.” Rob remained active in the YCW throughout his working life.

2. Rick was assassinated on 8th January 1978 by the Durban Security Police. Rick had a profound influence on Rob, as he did on many others of my generation, during what we have come to call the Durban moment from 1970 to 1974.
I readily agreed to supervise and so began a deeper, more structured intellectual relationship and friendship. Much to my delight, labour historian Phil Bonner, who shared our commitment to worker organisation, agreed to co-supervise the thesis. Quite early on in his research Rob developed a complex argument about SACTU; on the one hand, he saw their political links with the the Congress movement as a major reason for their growth. But, on the other hand, he felt that if they came too close to these organisations, and the African National Congress (ANC) in particular, they would lose their independence and their working-class agenda. For Rob, it was the workers through their trade unions who should play the leading role in the evolving national liberation struggle. Importantly, Rob was unequivocally opposed to the decision taken by the Congress movement to conduct an armed struggle. Rob strongly opposed violence in all its forms.

I recall a heated exchange between Rob and a student leader at the time (now a politician in the Economic Freedom Fighters) over Rob’s argument to my third-year industrial sociology class in the mid-eighties over violence as an instrument of struggle. Rob argued persuasively that had the leaders of SACTU focused on building workplace organisation rather than forming Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK), the armed wing of the ANC, we would have had a powerful internal workers movement that would have presented a substantial challenge to the apartheid state in the seventies.

Indeed, it was the violence that engulfed South African townships in the mid-eighties that led Rob and Lynne to decide to immigrate to Perth in Australia. Rob was a deep family man and the birth of his twin sons in October 1987 changed his view of the future. I recall a conversation where Rob expressed his strong opposition to his sons having to undertake compulsory military service at the age of eighteen, a requirement at the time for all white boys. But, the decision to leave for Perth was more complex than this. Rob’s mother was an Australian. She had met Rob’s father, a seaman who was subsequently the harbour master in Durban, during the Second World War on one of their assignments across the Indian Ocean to Perth.

Soon after Rob arrived in Australia in 1988, he began developing contacts with the emerging labour organisations in South East Asia. He visited the Philippines, then Malaysia and Indonesia. He was shocked by their working conditions, the long hours they worked and the harsh responses of management and the state. But he was inspired by the women and men he met and it reminded him of the struggles of black workers in apartheid South Africa. He decided to set up a network of democratic unions in the Indian Ocean. He tried to get support from the International Labour Organization but eventually found a home in the union movement in Western Australia, University of Western Australia (UWA).

The network, which was to become the Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights (SIGTUR), first met in Perth in 1991. Delegates came from all over Asia – from India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Korea, but most importantly for Rob, from the Congress of South Africa Trade Unions (COSATU) with a young Zwelinzima Vavi representing COSATU. The goal of the initiative was to challenge neoliberal globalisation by building a global southern labour movement. It was an extraordinarily ambitious and imaginative response to the calls for protectionism against the ultra-cheap labour power of Asia. But for Rob, organised workers in Australia and South Africa, despite substantial differences, had a common interest in helping to build strong democratic unions in Asia.

SIGTUR grew at a modest but steady rate expanding over time, its network included unions from Brazil and Argentina. But it was an uphill battle and Rob was deeply disappointed with the way COSATU was incorporated into the state and, to some extent through its investment arm, into capital. He felt that their priorities had changed as they came to represent the permanently employed rather than organising the growing number of precarious workers. They were no longer the poor people’s movement he had supported in his Durban days; their leaders were now part of the new South African elite.

Rob’s idea of a new labour internationalism was gaining interest in the world of labour studies. In 2000 Rob was approached by the radical journal of geography, Antipode, to write an article on the new labour internationalism. This began a period of research collaboration between us that was to culminate in an award-winning book-length manuscript, *Grounded Globalization: labour in the age of insecurity*. This was written with our colleague Andries

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3 Vavi was to become the general-Secretary of COSATU but was eventually dismissed in 2015 after becoming increasingly critical of their relationship with the ruling party, the ANC.
Bezuidenhout; we spent many hours’ crisscrossing the Indian Ocean, and later the Pacific, as we ‘grounded’ an understanding of how workers lived their lives, adapted to the discipline of the market, and sometimes vigorously contested it. At the core of the book was a ‘contextual comparison’ between workers in the white goods industry in South Africa, Australia and Korea.

We framed the book in what we termed a Polanyian problematic; essentially this posits a tension between the expansion of the market into all areas of social life and society’s ‘counter-movement’ resisting marketisation. Evoking Rick Turner, we entitled the final chapter: ‘The necessity for Utopian Thinking’. It was a plea for ‘real utopias’ based on the emerging democratic alternatives to neoliberalism.

Rob pursued the idea of an alternative to neoliberalism with dogged determination. In 2012 he persuaded SIGTUR to establish the Futures Commission, whose goal would be to develop concrete economic, social and political alternatives to neoliberal globalisation. The point of departure in his contribution to the book that came out of the Futures Commission was David Harvey’s idea of a movement of the dispossessed. In the concluding chapter Rob draws a distinction between the physical violence of dispossession under early capitalism with the psychological violence of neoliberal dispossession; the fear and anxiety accompanying financialisation, job loss and the destruction of the earth.

In this chapter Rob expresses his deep disappointment in the ’notable decline in (unions) organic connections and common campaigns with civil society and environmental movements, particularly in South Africa and Brazil’. He ends with a call to rethink the relationship between political parties, social movements and the state. ‘Social democratic parties he wrote,’ assert a strict delineation of boundaries on the role of trade unions and civil society movements. The party decides economic policy. In the current era this has resulted in an unshakeable commitment to neoliberal restructuring. The trade union role is limited to bargaining on wages and conditions, and there is no scope for civil society movements to play. This segregation has muted the unions and given corporations and finance capital a free rein. A different set of relations between party, unions and social movements is needed, in which the basic role of the party is to build the strength of a movement of the dispossessed so that society has the capacity to mobilise to protect its needs.

In pursuing his dream Rob showed moral courage and unshakeable integrity, often in the face of the skepticism of his colleagues. The skepticism hurt him but it did not change his commitment. Indeed, he developed an impressive output of scholarly publications and was appointed Winthrop Professor of Employment Relations at UWA Business School. Rob did more than anyone else I know to develop a southern approach to labour internationalism. He conceived and developed the imaginative attempt to bring together over a 30-year period, a network of democratic trade unions in the Global South. This inspiring story of women and men who continue to believe in the common fate of humanity and the obligation of the strong to support the weak is captured in Robert O’Brien’s recently published book, Labour Internationalism in the Global South: The SIGTUR Initiative.

In paying tribute to Rob Lambert I must pay tribute to Lynne, who was a tower of strength throughout their married life and especially after he was diagnosed two years ago with Lewy Body Dementia. He bravely faced the dreadful challenges thrown at him by the condition until 2018 when his health declined rapidly. He died in his sleep at his home in Perth on Monday 20 May, 2019. The funeral was held on 7 June at North Perth Redemptorist Monastery. Rob was above all a family man and my condolences go to Lynne, his daughters, Lara and Justine, and his sons, Mark and Daniel at this difficult time.

4 Published by the Chris Hani Institute in 2016 the book was titled Challenging Corporate Capital: Creating an Alternative to Neo-Liberalism. It was edited by Andrea Bieler, Robert O’Brien and Karin Pampallis.
A tribute to Adrienne Bird

(14/02/1955–15/06/2019)

Chris Bonner and Jenny Grice write a tribute to their colleague and friend Adrienne Bird who passed away on 15 June 2019.

Adrienne Bird passed away on 15 June 2019, after a long and brave struggle with cancer. She is recognised as a pioneer and key player in the development of training policy and practice in post-apartheid South Africa. She was however, much more than that. She was a well-rounded person who cared deeply for others and was generous in the giving of her time to those she saw as less fortunate or in need of support. She was ‘an avid bird watcher and nature lover’ and enjoyed nothing better than riding her horse, or later when this became too difficult, visiting her horse and friends at the stables. She also spent time studying Buddhism ‘from which she drew inspiration for living, and later, in dealing with her failing health’.

Adrienne’s 40-year plus journey with workers’ towards the redefinition of education and training in South Africa began in Durban where she was a student at the University of Natal and a labour activist. In 1975 she moved to Johannesburg to further her studies. It was here that she made contact with workers and activists associated with the Industrial Aid Society and the newly formed trade unions, and in particular, with those working on a worker-literacy programme. Always an innovator, she came up with the idea of developing a numeracy manual to complement the literacy work. She used this in weekly sessions with workers from the nearby Alexandra township.

After working as a mathematics teacher in Johannesburg, she left for the UK to pursue an MA in adult education. In 1983, while teaching in the UK, she was asked by the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) to return and coordinate the labour studies course for advanced shop stewards in collaboration with University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) academics. This again was innovative and focused on a radical view of society. However, some were unimpressed. A director of the Steel and Engineering Federation of South Africa (SEIFSA) said in a Wits Council meeting that they were communists and leading the workers astray. Thereafter, FOSATU had to find a new venue.

Alongside this, she made happen the first FOSATU Education Workshop (FEW) at Wits, in 1983. This drew on the creativity of workers and featured songs, plays, poetry and showed the world through workers’ eyes. It started small with shop stewards themselves giving lectures on ‘Workers and democracy’, ‘Workers and the community’ and ‘Women workers’. The latter complained about the ‘double shift’ – working for the employer at work and ‘working’ for the husband/partner at home without recognition. Plays acted out by workers told the story of workers’ struggles in Dunlop and worker choirs sang songs that resonated with workers’ lives.

The spark that was lit at the FEW in 1983 grew bigger, with Adrienne guiding the new ideas. The following year’s workshop moved to Milner Park showgrounds and expanded to include NGOs like ‘Learn and Teach’, SA Labour Bulletin (SALB) and many others displaying and selling their books. Service groups like the Technical Advice Group invited workers to test their lungs for occupational diseases and get advice on workplace health and safety issues, while the standard choirs, plays and worker music groups entertained the masses.

The following year promised to be even bigger and better. The FEW would go to the people at Orlando Stadium in Soweto. Adrienne had negotiated with Transnet to provide trains to transport workers to the stadium from various places in and around Johannesburg and stretching as far as Pretoria. Buses for workers were booked and arranged across the country; workers would showcase their talents with singing, acting, playing music and giving speeches. The afternoon before, a State of Emergency was declared in Johannesburg; workers waited impatiently at the buses in far-flung provinces, keen to be on...
their way. What to do? Adrienne pushed for it to continue, but in the end FOSATU took the more conservative view – it couldn’t risk a major detention of its members.

Adrienne was a champion of women’s issues. Arising out of the first FEW, she coordinated a FOSATU women’s group made up of women: trade union officials and workers. As she wrote in the SALB, August 1985, women faced their own problems at work including low and unequal pay; sexual harassment and jobs for sex; no maternity leave or job protection during pregnancy. A booklet was compiled and a draft model maternity agreement agreed on. Later that year, one of the first maternity agreements was signed using this model as a basis. And in the same year at the founding congress of COSATU, a resolution on women was adopted.

As a regional education officer in the Metal Workers Union (MAWU) and later in the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), she played a key role in forming and sustaining the women’s forum. One-time NUMSA organiser, Pauline Stanford, remembers her role:

‘She took the brunt of the backlash when we printed a T-shirt where we inserted words into the union slogan: From each according to his AND HER ability, and to each according to his AND HER needs.’

Way before talk of employment equity, she developed one of the first affirmative action agreements, in the early 1990s. This aimed to ensure that black people and women were advanced within the workplace.

Her central role in the development of the new education and training architecture post-1994 is perhaps better known than her earlier union history contributions. Professor Jonathan Jansen writing in 2004 spoke of Adrienne as ‘perhaps the single-most important force in the redefinition of education and training in South Africa over the next decade’.

Even less well known is that her interest in training and lifelong learning was inspired in part by her father’s own journey from working as a technician in the post office to qualifying as an engineer after many years of studying. This was something largely restricted to white workers during the apartheid years – something she has documented in her forthcoming book.

In the late 1980s, as the apartheid government began to crumble, unions moved towards more policy-oriented thinking. ‘It’s time to say what we’re for; it’s no longer enough simply to be against apartheid’, the then NUMSA national education secretary, Alec Erwin, had told national NUMSA officials and regional educators at a NUMSA meeting in Durban in early 1988.

NUMSA then set up a series of research and development groups (RDGs). One of these, the training RDG, was convened by Adrienne, as Transvaal Regional Educator. The RDG was tasked with investigating strategies to facilitate the training of NUMSA members to higher levels of skill. This is partly to ensure that workers organised in conservative unions do not monopolise the highest skills – and therefore wield power to hold a future economy to ransom. And it is partly to ensure that a pool of politically progressive skilled workers will be available to assist with planning and organising a future economy. NUMSA believes that the task of overcoming the heritage of race discrimination in vocational training laid down by apartheid over decades will only be fully accomplished when organised workers take the initiative at plant and national level.

Working in this group highlighted for her the effects of excluding workers from training opportunities and skills recognition. Here were black workers, vastly skilled, doing an artisan’s job but without formal papers and without the grade and pay that came with such recognition. Together with the workers, she developed a vision for a world where ‘From Sweeper to Engineer’ was possible: where experience and skills already gained were recognised (recognition of prior learning); where opportunities for progression through training throughout life (lifelong learning) were open to everyone; where skills were recognised and linked to grading and wages in a fair and coherent manner (wage-grade-training nexus) and where education and training systems were integrated allowing workers to progress up the ‘training ladder’
Many ideas and much support were gleaned from the Australian Metalworkers Union (AMWU), which had developed a similar system. Following a visit by Adrienne and RDG members to Australia, two unionists from AMWU spent time in South Africa working closely with Adrienne and NUMSA, training a cadre of worker ‘experts’ and helping develop policy approaches.

In one example of the impact of Adrienne’s work in the unions, Gavin Hartford (former NUMSA Auto and Tyre Sector Coordinator) notes in an ‘email tribute’ to Adrienne:

‘Together with the worker leaders of our union, we negotiated this new dispensation in the auto and tyre industries of South Africa on the back of militant mass action. At the time there were 12 levels below the artisan, which we flattened to five and installed a training and pay dispensation to match. Adrienne brought her specialist skills to the process and helped create the first ever sector-based training dispensation to underpin the career development and mobility for workers in the vehicle industry. This dispensation has served the industry well to this very day.’

This then became the focus of her work for the rest of her life. With her extensive experience in NUMSA, in 1995 Adrienne took up a position in the Metal and Engineering Industries Training Board (now MERSETA) and quickly moved on to a position as chief director responsible for skills development in the Department of Labour (DoL). She was later promoted to Deputy Director General: Employment and Skills. In these posts, she played a vital role in developing and supporting policies, strategies, institutions and systems including the Skills Development Act (1998); the National Qualification Authority and the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs). She left the Department of Labour under difficult circumstances in 2006 and soon after she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She was charged with signing off on unauthorised expenditure, a trumped-up charge that she was later cleared of.

A determined and brave person, Adrienne never gave up. During the period of illness and recovery from 2006–2009 she spent time researching and writing on the history of engineering career pathing in South Africa. In 2009 she returned to formal work, this time in the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). The earlier debates on the relationship between the formal education stream or ‘ladder’ and that of training remained unresolved, and government had taken a decision to bring the two together into a new DHET. Adrienne was asked to assist in the transfer of the skills development function from the DoL to the DHET.

In 2012 she was appointed Head of Special Projects Unit in the DHET, which was tasked with ensuring that the skills required to implement the government’s National Infrastructure Plan (NIP) were in place. A major part of this was to develop centres of specialisation, which aim to train apprentices for 13 priority trades required for infrastructure development. The programme works closely with employers so that apprentices are guaranteed a job after completing their course.

In 2014 she was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukaemia, but she continued working on the project until September 2018 when her health deteriorated. However, she was upbeat about progress being made and that the project was continuing successfully along the lines she and her team had developed.

Having left the DHET, once again, she refused to give up and returned to work on her book entitled From Sweeper to Engineer. On her death her book was substantially written but unfinished. Friends and comrades will contribute to its completion – a lasting legacy to her work.

Adrienne’s vision and its practical implementation through the Skills Development Act, NQF, SETAs, NIP and other institutions and practices have not been free of controversy. Many have criticised the institutions and bureaucracy involved as being complex, expensive and achieving little in providing real skills and jobs. Moreover, many educationalists saw the initiative as not challenging the system but feeding into a narrow employer-focused agenda rather than embracing a more radical and holistic educational philosophy and practice.

Adrienne was firm in her beliefs and stood up for what she believed in. As Mike Murphy, a former trade unionist, aptly put it: Adrienne had a ‘willingness to plunge enthusiastically into challenging/difficult situations, and to stick boldly and bravely with them across the ups and downs.’ And as Professor Eddie Webster, who has known and worked with Adrienne from time to time since the 1970s, noted in an ‘email tribute’ to her:

‘Adrienne took the path less travelled and did not get the recognition and credit that was her due. For me, her unfinished book will be the memorial to her integrity and commitment to building the capacity of ordinary working people. I believe her ideas on vocational training are fundamentally correct and will, in the fullness of time, be implemented.’
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