

Struggle toward Sustainable Society in South Africa**

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南アフリカにおける持続可能な社会への移行の苦悩

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If you want to go fast, go alone ; If you want to go farther, go together.

African proverb (Winkler 2010 : 208).

South Africa is struggling to overcome the negative legacies of apartheid, and its transition to sustainable society presents a huge challenge. Ironically because of the success of ending the racial segregation by the African National Congress (ANC), the post-apartheid ANC government has also been authoritarian. Together with weakened social movements, uncoordinated and ad hoc government policies, persistent energy intensive economy, technocratic implementation of local development plans, all-inclusive notion of sustainability, there seems little coherent thinking until very recently to integrate suitability with economic growth and social justice. While there is no magic solution to overcome the current situation, slow and gradual improvement in communication between different stakeholders may help bridge the still remaining significant gulf between the minority of the prosperous and the majority of poor population. Through such improvement, deliberative democracy might be fostered in the long run, a type of democracy much needed for sustainable future.

南アフリカでは1994年にアパルトヘイトが終焉したが、未だに負の遺産を抱えており、持続可能な社会への移行は決して容易ではない。皮肉なことに、アパルトヘイト体制を終わらせたアフリカ民族評議会(ANC)率いる政権は、それ以前の政権と同様に権威主義的となった。これに、弱体化した社会運動、場当たりの政府の政策、未だにエネルギーと資源に依存した経済構造、地域開発計画の表面的実施、いかようにも解釈可能な持続可能性の概念があいまって、どのようにすれば経済成長や社会的正義と調和した持続可能な社会が実現できるかについてつい近年までほとんど考えられてこなかった。このような状況を改善するための魔法の杖は存在しないが、多様な利害関係者の間において地道で着実な意思疎通をはかることにより、持つものと持たざるものとの格差を乗り越え将来への展望が開けるであろう。そのような取り組みにより、持続可能な社会に必要な討議的民主主義が長期的には培われるようになるのではあるまいか。

1 Introduction

Environmental degradations are now becoming one of the most serious global realities. Unfortunately, the effects of global environmental deterioration manifest unequally throughout the world. A challenge that Southern Africa faces is more daunting than any other regions in the world. This serious challenge derives

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from a combination of two factors. While the climate in this region is warming up faster than the global average, Southern Africa houses one tenth of the world's poorest populations (Bauer and Scholz 2010 : 83). Scholars such as Bauer and Scholz nicely summarize this extraordinary situation as follows :

Due to the combination of the region's particular geographical exposure with low levels of human development, high dependence on agriculture, weak institutions and exceptional levels of inequality, the peoples of Southern Africa are extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change (2010 : 89).

The governments in this region including the one of South Africa are aware of this vulnerability (National Planning Commission 2011 a : 18).¹⁾ Therefore, no time can be wasted in order to make an adequate transition from "business as usual" to more sustainable society. Coordinated adaptation and mitigation measures are urgently needed not as parallel to conventional development plans and programs but as one being integrated within overall development strategies that address, *inter alia*, more efficient resource utilization, fairer distribution of economic benefits, and more socially cohesive and improved governance.

This article focuses on South Africa. There are several reasons for this focus. First, South Africa, along with other emerging BRICS countries, has been recording a good economic growth in recent years. South Africa has also been improving its political and economic status in the world through its membership in G20.

Second, South Africa is, however, not successful in making a transition to sustainable society, which is considered to balance economic prosperity, ecological consideration and equity.²⁾ Per capita GHG emissions is about 10 ton in 2000 and this is (relatively) high. As Table I shows, South Africa's carbon footprint is considerably higher than other countries in the similar GDP per capita figures, and it is only slightly lower than the OECD average (Winkler and Marquand 2009 : 50).

Third, South Africa is unique, as the legacies of apartheid are still evident in variety of ways even after the post-1994 period. South Africa suffers from a huge disparity between the small segment of wealthy population and the majority of the deprived, and its income Gini coefficient, 57.8, is one of the highest in the world (UNDP 2011 : 137).

Fourth, as a result, there is a significant ambivalence by the population against the government

Table 1 Comparison of Carbon footprint

	Population (million)	GDP per capita US\$	Carbon footprint (CO ₂ emissions per capita (tons))	Carbon intensity (CO ₂ emissions per unit of GDP)
South Africa	46.6	10,715	9.8	0.99
Sub-Sahara Africa	781.3	1,945	1.0	0.57
USA	293.6	40,971	20.6	0.57
OECD	1160.5	28,642	11.5	0.45
World	6389.3	9,348	4.5	0.55

Source : UNEP 2011 : 93

formed by the African National Congress (ANC). While people still appreciate the fact that the ANC contributed enormously to end apartheid, the post-1994 government has not totally successful in fulfilling the high expectations of many South Africans. The dissatisfied public has often chosen to protest against the government in the streets, a form of social movement familiar to them since the days of the anti-apartheid struggle. Mistrust between authorities and citizens is far from trivial (Thompson et al. 2011).

A particular attention of this article is then being paid to the cities in South Africa, especially Cape Town.³⁾ Usually, cities emit significant greenhouse gases, as cities are the centers of economic activities. More significantly, due to the historical legacies of apartheid, South Africa is more urbanized than comparable BRICS countries, and the most urbanized in Africa ; as of 2007, 57.5% of the population lives in urban areas (Winkler and Marquand 2009 : 48).

This urbanized South Africa represents revealing contrasts with other cities in the world. As some of the cities in the industrialized North are coming to be well known as innovative “eco cities,”⁴⁾ usually there has not yet been any African cities that have clearly gained the recognition comparable to these Northern counterparts (Swilling 2010 b : 10). It is, thus, indeed very interesting to understand both similarities and differences between Northern “eco cities” and Cape Town. As governance and institutional ability in Cape Town are relatively better than other African cities, Cape Town provides a good example from the African continent that might be more comparable to their Northern counterparts.⁵⁾

This comparison is especially timely as the South African cities hosted the FIFA World Cup in 2010. Through the preparatory processes for this world famous event, significant urban regeneration and infrastructure development took place. It is crucial to examine whether the FIFA World Cup contributed to greening the host cities. It is also interesting to examine whether these processes helped foster social cohesion in divided cities in South Africa.

Through these examinations, I would argue that South Africa is at the critical crossroads. Its transition to sustainable society is far from easy given a multiple factors such as authoritarian characteristics of the “democratic” national government, deteriorated post-1994 associational life, reactive and ad hoc policies by the government, and weak institutional capacity of local governments. This difficult situation cannot be turned around by overnight. However, it appears imminent that both the state and society make coordinated efforts to foster a new culture of deliberative democracy by improving communication in open and transparent ways in order to overcome the still remaining political and socio-economic divides among citizens. Without such improvement, imagining a commonly shared future among different segments of populations not only remain as a distant dream but also encouraging deliberative democracy would not be effective.

2 South Africa in Historical Transition

2-1 Apartheid and the New Constitution

History of South Africa is rich and complex. The European settlers reached this part of the world in the 17th century. There were several serious conflicts between colonialists and indigenous populations. By the early 20th century, it became apparent that the white minority exploited the majority of black and col-

ored populations. The African National Congress (ANC) was formed in 1912 to resist and end racial segregation and oppression. South Africa gained its formal independence in 1961, and by then an elaborated system of apartheid was largely in place. Struggles against apartheid became increasingly widespread, and many lives were lost and still many became political prisoners. The intense and complex negotiations among different political forces finally reached an agreement. In 1994 elections participated by all races took place. A new democratic government led by Nelson Mandela took office. Since the official ended of apartheid in 1994, the new South African government embarked on a series of reforms in several aspects.⁶⁾

While the new Constitution of South Africa does not rest on the “tiers” of government in which center supervises local governments vertically,⁷⁾ it envisions that central and local governments are to form “spheres” of the government in collaborative relations horizontally. This principle reflects the negotiation processes among divergent political forces, some of which preferred more centralized state while others opted for more decentralized one. Accordingly,

the form of the state brokered during these negotiations was a hybrid one. Thus, while the 1996 Constitution speaks of a single sovereign state, the three-tiered (*sic*) structure of national, provincial and local government has many of the features of a federal system, with the devolution of significantly more authority to lower echelons of government than had been the case under the apartheid regime” (Mohanty et al. 2010 : 111).

One important consequence of this hybridity is the mandate question for local governments in addressing climate change and other sustainability related agendas. A strict and narrow interpretation of the Constitution, especially schedules 4 A and 4 B, signifies that environment is matter to be addressed by the national and provincial governments and not by local governments. But in reality, several local governments including the one of Cape Town, as we shall see shortly, have taken measures against climate change mitigation and adaptation. A much broader interpretation is that because the Constitution emphasizes the spirit of cooperation and collaboration between different spheres of the government, it is permissible, or even desirable, for local governments to take specific measures related to climate change and environment as they are the closest governments to people, provided that such local measures do not contradict policies of the national and provincial governments (de Visser 2012).⁸⁾

2–2 Macroeconomic Policy and Transition to a Low Carbon Economy

The ANC adopted the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) in 1994. The RDP focused more on supporting the black majority through redistributive policies. But this “leftist agenda” did not last long, partly due to the serious domestic financial situation. The government then introduced the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy in 1996. This GEAR reflected more of then conventional neoliberalism, and South Africa attempted to invite direct foreign investments to finance much of what was needed for economic growth. But the results of the GEAR were mixed at best. In 2005 the government adopted the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA). Behind its adop-

tion was again a changing understanding among the ANC leadership about the role of the state in promoting development. This change was partly due to the increasing dissatisfaction of many South Africans. Even after the end of apartheid, many remain still poor. Currently in South Africa about 40% of the population is poor, according to the poverty line (R 418 per person per month) recommended by the National Planning Commission (NPC) (NPC 2011 b: 3). Thus, relatively more attention is now been paid to a more active role played by the government. As the governments in East Asia played a critical role in promoting economic growth in since the 1980s, the results have been remarkable. This developmental state is, for some a model which South Africa should emulate.⁹⁾

What is more problematic about the economic management is the transition from so-called “minerals energy complex” to a low-carbon economy. The “minerals energy complex” was formed during the apartheid era, and this complex supported the apartheid political regime. Electricity has largely been generated by cheap domestic coal. Primary consumption of coal for energy in South Africa was and still is the highest in the world (Winkler and Marquand 2009: 51). The coal has supplied cheap electricity, which benefited mineral processing (Fine and Rustumjee 1996 quoted by Winkler and Marquand 2009). As a result, energy-intensive industry has grown. South Africa is one of the 15 most energy intensive economies in the world (Holgate 2007: 474). The “minerals energy complex” is “an integrated partnership between state and private capital, and an equally integral connection between a core set of activities around mining and energy, straddling the public/private debate” (Fine 2010).

Because of the low electricity price in international standards,¹⁰⁾ South Africa did not invest in energy efficiency nor in alternative renewable energy sources (Winkler and Marquand 2009: 52). The national government is aware of this situation and states frankly that this kind of resource intensive growth path is unsustainable (National Planning Commission 2011 a). Making an adequate transition to a low-carbon economy is, however, challenging to say the least, and requires both market and policy instruments in addition to a carefully calibrated short, medium, and long term measures (Winkler and Marquand 2009; Winkler 2010: 168–171). Such transition will likely to invite a coalition of resistance, precisely because the “minerals energy complex” has clearly established a recognizable position within South Africa’s political economy (Resnick et al. 2012).

The difficulties associated with the transition to a low carbon economy, together with a hope for more active role to be played by the government to promote economic growth, present an especially unique challenge for South Africa. While the relative shift away from neoliberal orthodoxies to the developmental state may be welcomed by some, how to reconcile diverse and often competing requirements for economic management is far from easy. This kind of subtle and careful management needs to be done in the face of impatient public: there has recently been a persistent popular protest against the government as the protestors have felt that the government failed to deliver much needed public services (Harrison et al. 2008: 70–71).

2–3 Decentralization and Integrated Development Plan

One of the major avenues through which development was promoted in South Africa is citizen engagement at the community level. This participatory development was hoped to be facilitated by decentralization, which is one of the significant policy trends in the world since the end of the Cold War.¹¹⁾ Since 1994, through a series of major legislations and policy frameworks, several important functions are now designated as responsibilities of local governments. It is especially important that the Municipal Systems Act promulgated in 2000 adopted that all local governments shall prepare integrated development plans (IDPs).

The evaluation of what IDPs have contributed is mixed. On the one hand, the IDPs enabled local governments to prioritize budget allocations, and have also enabled alignment between local development strategies and planned interventions. The IDPs served as a basis for developing local government systems. On the other hand, many local governments did not have adequate capacity to prepare the IDPs and consequently it is doubtful whether the entire processes have resulted in more effective coordination among different offices.¹²⁾ In short, many South Africans could not feel whether the IDPs have contributed in improved service delivery.

The IDPs is inextricably linked with the notion of citizen participation. Yet critics point out that the entire exercise has a danger of reinforcing the divide between the powerful and the powerless, as IDPs have increasingly been reduced to technical fix and administrative procedure in reality. Unless there is a concomitant political process to empower the poor and the less privileged, they cannot claim their newly granted rights and entitlements meaningfully (Thompson and Tapscott 2010). Unfortunately this emptiness appears to be what has happened in many, if not in most, of the places in South Africa (Harrison et al. 2008 : especially chapter 7). As a result, several commentators conclude “there is very little to suggest that much has changed at local government level” (Mohanty et al. 2010 : 24).¹³⁾

2–4 Environment and Sustainability

For addressing environmental management, the post-1994 government has been adopting several policies, which are quite advanced in their intent. Through these policies, the government unmistakably nurtured the discourse of sustainability. For example, the goal stated by the Cabinet in 2008 is to take a long-term transition to a low-carbon economy by seeking the peak of the emission level at least around 2020–2025 and then plateau for a decade or so, then decline afterwards (Winkler 2010 : 5). But how this goal will be attained depends on actual implementation. One of the interesting characteristics about post-1994 South Africa is the gap between the rhetoric and reality.

The definition of sustainability adopted by the South African government tends to be all-inclusive. While this broad definition can be seen as a sign that the government is willing to tackle the challenges ahead with ambition, there has been limited articulation of which aspect of sustainable values are more supported than others in the context of South Africa. Consequently, different people attach different priorities to economic, ecological and social equity aspects of sustainability. This situation has been unfortunately the case for government offices as well, as different officers understood sustainability in quite dif-

ferent ways. The situation has been compounded by the unique legacies of planning in South Africa. Planning (especially physical planning) was a tool of racial segregation under apartheid, and planning and planners faced with the necessity to overcome this negative legacy after 1994. Yet, it was far from easy to realize how planning can and should fit with overall public duties in the new democratic era.¹⁴⁾ As a result, even if separation between development planning and environmental management is not uncommon in many different countries, this gulf has been especially acute in South Africa (Harrison et al. 2008 : especially chapter 9).¹⁵⁾

The division has mainly resulted in technically-oriented implementation of environmental management practices. Quite often, implantation depended on contracted private consultants to carry out environmental impact assessments, and the processes have usually been reactive rather than using sustainability as an entry point to seek broad collaboration across different departmental boundaries and programs. It was much later that such broad and integral initiatives started to receive attention.

One of the important reasons for the technical-centered dominance was that the mainstream environmental policy discourse introduced in the late 1980s and the early 1990s reflected neo-liberalism and ecological modernization emphasizing economic efficiency (Scott and Oelofse 2005 : 448–449). The adoption of ecological modernization by the ANC reflected their preference for modernist thinking.

Yet, this adaptation is problematic in the context of South Africa. The commonly taken positions are associated with seeing environmental management more as technocratic and instrumental processes rather than the ones of social justice that should emphasize such principles of broad social integration, communication and deliberation. Researchers such as Oelofse and her colleagues continue that ecological modernization does not squarely address more critical social and equity questions, especially “who benefits from and who bears the impact of development processes” (Oelofse et al. 2009 : 484). This equity dimension is an especially acute problem in South Africa as the country still suffers from significant inequalities of power and wealth.

In addition, to what extent participatory planning and development at local levels has contributed to sustainability is quite mixed at best. While one of the major planning exercises such as IDPs was hoped to facilitate more integrated thinking of economic development and environmental management, how IDPs have taken sustainability is ambiguous. Analysts like Sowman and Brown report that none of the first round of IDPs has paid explicit attention to sustainability (2006 : 703). Likewise, other scholars such as Harrison and his colleagues also evaluate that “plans which take sustainability as a starting point and central focus are rare, and where environment is included, it is often only considered as a sector focused on ‘green issues’” (2008 : 170). Many IDPs did not consider the relevance of sustainability seriously ; instead attention was paid to more immediate concerns of job creation, housing construction and infrastructure development (Sowman and Brown 2006 : 698 and 703).

2–5 South Africa still in Critical Transition

Our discussions on the Constitution, macroeconomic policies and the transition to a low carbon economy, citizen participation under decentralization, and all-inclusive discourse on sustainability point out that

South Africa is still in a critical transition from apartheid to post-apartheid society. Two issues are particularly noticeable.

First, many of these initiatives are not necessarily generated within South Africa. Indeed, quite few of them – for instance, low carbon economy and participatory development—are expressed by the international community and the South African government adopted them. These externally-driven policy initiatives create tension once they need to be implemented. The external origin also tends to relate to several contradictions among different policy measures. As a result, the whole agenda of environment and sustainability sit uncomfortably with very conventional neoliberal growth model that the ANC has been pursuing (probably until recently).¹⁶⁾

Second, several key policy initiatives are pursued on ad hoc basis without integral thinking. These incoherent policies particularly apply to the issues related to sustainability. “How to reconcile the imperatives of economic growth, poverty alleviation and ‘ecologically sustainable development’ has, unfortunately, not been seen as the central challenge in the post-1994 era” (Swilling and Annecke 2012 : 213). For such coherent thinking, one tends to go beyond modernization, which has been the dominant position in the 20th century. Sustainability is a good example of post-modernist challenge and for taking this challenge one would need a paradigm shift. Yet, the ANC after 1994 has been “waking up in a postmodern era while equipped only with the politics and practices of a modernist past” (Mabin 1995 : 195 being quoted in Harrison et al. 2008 : 241). Consequently, because many of these policy initiatives are the outcomes of ad hoc responses to significant resource constraints and deteriorating environmental situations, they have failed to build institutional capacities and knowledge base that are necessary to make an adequate transition to more equitable and socially just sustainable society in years to come (Swilling and Annecke 2012 : 240).

Table 2 Major Events and Legislations in South Africa

1997	SA ratified United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNFCCC
1997	Environmental Conservation Act, ECA
1998	National Environmental Management Act, NEMA
1998	White Paper on Local Government
1998	Municipal Structures Act
2000	Municipal Systems Act introduced integrated development planning (IDP)
2000–2006	Several cities participated in Climate Protection campaign by ICLEI
2001	White Paper on Spatial Planning and Land Use Management
2002	World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), Johannesburg (Rio + 10)
2003	White Paper on Renewable Energy
2004	National Climate Change Response Strategy South Africa's Initial National Communication under the UNFCCC
2005	Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Municipal Ward Committees
2005	Energy Efficiency Strategy
2005	Urban Environment Management Programme funded by DANIDA
2007	Long-Term Mitigation Scenarios
2008	Cabinet set the target to reduce GHGs.
2008	A National Framework for Sustainable Development in South Africa
2010	FIFA World Cup
2010	National Strategy for Sustainable Development and Action Plan

Compiled by the author

3 The State-Society Relations still in Transition

This situation in which several important policy initiatives are not necessarily rooted in South African society and are ad hoc reactions rather than a reflection of coherent thinking has much deeper roots. The situation is at least partially reinforced by the nature of the post-1994 state as well as that of civil society. Unfortunately, civil society that usually plays an important role to watch state policies and actions, has significantly been weakened ironically, because of the successful struggle to end the apartheid system. A combination of increasing authoritarian tendencies of the state of South Africa and the deteriorating civil society does not present a hopeful situation. This harsh reality is an overall political and institutional situation within which local governments such as the city of Cape Town operates.

Because the ANC, together with other political forces, has finally succeeded in abolishing the apartheid system, South Africans have overwhelmingly supported the ANC to lead their politics in the post-1994 period. Yet, post-1994 South Africa does not enjoy good reputation by political analysts. As the ANC has been almost the only legitimate voice of the nation, there has been no serious political competitor at least at the national level. This hegemony is reinforced by the electoral system of proportionate representation. This dominance has, however, undermined the political legitimacy that the new South Africa desperately needs. Researchers such as Mohanty and her colleagues point out that the ANC, during the apartheid struggle, demanded strong political loyalty among members and followers. With the end of apartheid, nobody could question the authority of the ANC. The post-1994 state resembles, interestingly enough, the predecessor as far as the state does not appreciate meaningful political contestation. The potential critics kept distance, as they did not wish to be treated as disloyal to the ANC as the successful political liberator (Mohanty et al. 2010 : 14–15). Mohanty and her colleagues then conclude with a following strong expression :

The upshot of this combination of factors has been a degree of behaviour among the ruling party similar to that of a one-party regime, where the boundaries between state and party become blurred and accountability runs increasingly upwards rather than downwards (Mohanty et al. 2010 : 116).

Under these circumstances, it is thus no surprise that citizen engagement and participatory decision making much promoted by IDPs become very tokenistic, as those in power do not feel the real necessity to listen to grassroots voices (Baccaro and Papadakis 2009 : 270). The political leaders tend to look upwards to please senior party members and do not pay enough attention to downwards to discuss how to improve living conditions with constituencies.

The story on the side of civil society has also undergone an ironical shift. The struggle against apartheid contributed to the emergence of viable civil society to some extent. But, during the struggle, the focus of collective action was on political mobilization rather than organizing viable social movement. Thus, as the apartheid system was abolished officially, many NGOs and CBOs (including those related to labor unions) have lost political and economic influences. Many of the leaders joined the public and private sec-

tors. The change was at least partly reinforced by the way in which foreign donors redirected their financial support to the new ANC-led government. In addition, the civic society organizations in former townships and informal settlements lost their momentum and integrity to organize community mobilization in the new era (Mohanty et al. 2010 : 112).¹⁷⁾

Moreover, perhaps as similar to other African countries, for most of South African population, “democracy was an entirely novel experience ; and there was no social or institutional memory to draw upon” (Mohanty et al. 2010 : 112). It has not been easy for them to use the newly available political space without much political voice and economic empowerment. It has been another struggle for weakened associational life in the post-apartheid era to try and claim citizenship meaningfully (Thompson and Tapscott 2010).

To sum up, South Africa now appears to be at a critical crossroads. The way in which the Constitution is written is probably the most beautiful in the world. Legal framework is very elaborated and one of the most advanced in the world. (Oelofse et al. 2009 : 482 ; Scott and Oelofse 2005 : 446). However, as admitted by the national government, “there is often a significant gap between the aspirations set out in official policy and what happens on the ground” (National Planning Commission 2011 a : 22). One of the critical challenges for South Africa is how to make a transition from the political situation of the majority still being disfranchised, resource intensive economy, and unequal society towards a sustainable society whereby citizenship, low carbon economy and social cohesion can all be ensured. While, there is a broad consensus on the need for taking some actions to tackle sustainability related issues, yet, actual implementation is limited. This limitation derives from several factors including high level of inequality, uncoordinated policies and weak institutional capacity of local governments. The two main drivers of change—the state and associational life—ironically suffer from the success of the end of apartheid. Certainly, post-apartheid South Africa is democratic. However, the extent of democracy being internalized and the degree of state accountability to society is still very limited.

4 The City of Cape Town

Against this national background, it is now to examine how the local governments have been struggling to take measures against environmental degradation and climate change. Nowadays, there has been an increased recognition that while globally coordinated actions are necessary, it is too slow to wait for intergovernmental negotiations to be agreed. In the meantime, local governments around the world have started to take specific measures for sustainability.¹⁸⁾

4-1 Background and Evolving Policy Initiatives

Cape Town is the capital of the Western Cape Province. Its population is 3.8 million. Although Cape Town is larger than what is usually considered as a medium size city (population between 500,000 to one million), Cape Town is a good example of intermediate urban centers that will become a common pattern in this 21st century (Swilling 2010 b : 10). The GDP for Cape Town is R 200 million, which is quite significant, but the unemployment ratio is 21%. Carbon Footprint is also high at 7.8 tons per person per year

(City of Cape Town 2011 a). This city has an old history as the Dutch colonialists in the 17th century developed the area as a major port for ocean voyage. The city subsequently became a strategic hub. There were rise and fall of certain types of economic activities. Cape Town now is well known as one of the major destinations for international tourists. About half of the city areas have been built only in the last 25 years (Swilling 2010 b : 5).

What is probably outstanding in Cape Town is that Table Mountain is a gigantic iron for local residents. Anything that may threaten the integrity of the Mountain (including ecological dangers) usually invites strong reactions from Cape Town citizens. Thus, it might be stated that the Mountain has contributed to a certain kind of environmental awareness. In addition, the coastal area is one of the world's richest biodiversity kingdoms. It is registered in the UNESCO world heritage site, but a large number of plants are threatened there.

However, this unique ecological asset does not mean that all sorts of population share similar concerns. As Cape Town is still a hugely divided city according to settlement areas, race, as well as socio-economic status,¹⁹⁾ what environment and sustainability mean for people differs enormously. For the wealthy, sustainability might signify that the Mountain and beaches should be preserved for future generations. Yet, for the poor in deprived neighborhoods, environment may mean water and other services that they need critically for day-to-day survival.

With the passage of the Municipal Structures Act in 2000, a new system of metropolitan government was created, and a single-tiered Cape Town authority was established (Swilling and Annecke 2012 : 247).²⁰⁾ The recent expansion of the city is intricately linked to the ongoing efforts by the city authorities to clear the public service backlogs for those who live in deprived neighborhoods and former townships. Cape Town spends a large amount of budgets for service delivery. Approximately half of the entire city budget was spent, until around 2007, on energy, waste collection, water and sanitation provisions (Swilling and Annecke 2012 : 250). With this large-scale investment, it is often pointed out that the living conditions in the low-income areas are now considerably better in Cape Town than those comparable deprived urban suburbs in the neighboring East Cape Province. Thus, internal migration is continuously taking place, which contributes not only to urban expansion but also to delays in completing the clearing service backlog targets.²¹⁾ The situation poses a slightly strange circular ; the better the living conditions become, the more people migrate in, the more difficult it becomes for total solution of the backlog.

In the 1990s, coordination for economic development and environmental management was far from optimal. Yet, increasing severity of water-related disasters and unanticipated energy crisis in the 2000s attracted the attention for such coordination. Cape Town was fortunate to advance environmental agenda. The reasons for success included several factors. The city was participating in international collaborative arrangements including that organized by the ICLEI (association of local governments for promoting sustainability). The city authorities could hire relatively large number of staff, which was more than double the national average of staff per 1000 residents (SACN 2004 quoted in Holgate 2007 : 482).²²⁾

Some academics such as Swilling and Annecke, thus, argue that that there is now a emerging consensus among policy makers, intellectuals and environmentally-minded activists that Cape Town and the

Table 3 Major Evens and developments in Cape Town

2001	Integrated Metropolitan Environmental Policy (IMEP)
2003	State of the Energy report
2003	Environmental Education and Training Strategy
2005	Air Quality Management Plan
2006	Energy and Climate Change Strategy approved by the city council.
2007	City's five-year plan (IDP) pointed out eight key areas, including energy concerns.
2009	State of Environment Report
2010	Energy and Climate Change Strategy updated
2010	Energy and Climate Action Plan
2010	Smart Living Handbook and Smart Living Centre
2011	State of Energy and Energy Futures Report

Compiled by the author

4–2 Controversies over Water Management Device (WMD)

However, the increasing awareness of climate-induced threats and a series of efforts by the city authorities do not necessarily mean that the fundamental urbanization has altered. Indeed, the legacies of racial segregation still persist today, and “spatially segmented inclusive urbanism” (Swilling and Anecke 2012 : 253) is the expression well captures the current situation of Cape Town. A large proportion of the population is now, in one way or another, connected to the urban infrastructure that the city authorities have been expanding. But the neighborhoods are still divided by race and economic status, and ethno-cultural mix of heterogeneous residents living side-by-side still remains an exception rather than normality.

More importantly, there is a serious communication problem between the city authorities and residents. This issue is probably most acutely highlighted by the so-called water management device (WMD) issue.

Water use in South Africa in general and in Cape Town in particular is a controversial subject. The Constitution of South Africa guarantees that all citizens have adequate access to water. Two major laws, Water Services Act of 1997 and National Water Act of 1998 address water services and water resources respectively. Currently, the government policy states that everybody is entitled to have 25 liters of free basic water per person per day.

Yet, actual water usage reflects class structure of South Africa. About 27% of water is consumed domestically in the country, and it is 67% in Cape Town. Yet, while high income households with gardens and pools uses a large amount of water, low income houses use most of their small consumption for toilet flushing (Wilson 2011 : 17). It is estimated that on average 82 kiloliters of water is consumed by one person in one year, and this is higher than the average in Europe and considerably higher than the global average of 57 kiloliters per person per year (Swilling and Annecke 2012 : 255). This high consumption is believed to be caused by the wealthy consumers in Cape Town.

As Cape Town is located in dry Mediterranean type climate and water is a very scarce resource, the city authorities are now attempting to explore several long-term possibilities for building dams and groundwater usage. More immediately, the city has introduced water demand management to reduce water consumption.

This introduction has invited limited but heated controversy. While it would seem logical to ask



Figure 2 (a and b) Pictures of Water Management Devices

wealthy neighborhoods to reduce water consumption that they use for gardening, the city has installed new devices in poor residential areas. Even though the city justifies the installation of the water management devices (WMDs) as a means for securing sustainable water provisions throughout the city, the new WMDs raise an equity issue.

The WMDs are supposed to be set to any daily amount that is agreed between the city and a household. Yet, in practice, the standard amount of 350 liters per household in a day is usually imposed. This amount may or may not be enough depending on how many people use water and on other socio-economic conditions. Once the daily allocation is finished, the WMDs locks the flow of water, and the users have to wait until the following morning (Figure 2 a). In one area, people wake up before 3 am for re-opening of the water flow to secure two bucketful of water! This forceful cutoff of daily water supply is deeply controversial, as non-availability of water may have detrimental consequences for the sick and others who may need water in certain circumstances (Wilson 2011 : 35).²⁵⁾

Usually, there is very limited consultation and explanation prior to the installation of the WMDs. One man who was interviewed explained that he was instructed to sign the piece of paper, otherwise they would not get water. He said that “First, I wanted to consult with my neighbors. But then I thought that even if we say ‘NO’ to them, they will install it anyway, since they have already come up with their plans. So what is the point? I can only sign as they told us.”²⁶⁾ This is a good example to illustrate that the project implementers did not come to consult with them but they were just informing the residents about the new change.

What is also strange is that the household cannot read how much water they consume by looking at the WMDs. The only way to read this meter, as explained by the city, is to install a computer software,

but this software has not been made available to the public.

It is therefore very clear that the WMDs represent more than a technical aspect of water management. Wilson, an environmental NGO activist, concludes that WMDs “separates the state from its citizens by putting a piece of technology in between them, a piece of technology that cannot be talked to or reasoned with and which puts the burden on poor households to resolve service delivery problems, rather than on the state” (Wilson 2011 : 37).²⁷⁾ The WMD issue is about democracy and democratic communication in the post-1994 South Africa.

4–3 Different World Views and Deliberative Democracy

It becomes apparent from the WMD debate is that city authorities do not fully understand how people live in shacks and shanty towns and what sort of survival strategies that they adopt. Indeed there are multiple and possibly conflicting views in understanding their lives (Harrison et al. 2008 : chapter 13). Assumptions that city planners and officials often take do not hold in reality. Their understanding is heavily influenced by modernist thinking, but the kind of logic adopted by residents in shacks and former townships do not conform to modernity (Harrison et al. 2008 : chapter 14).²⁸⁾ These competing rationales and understandings results in miscommunication and mistrust between the city and residents. The poor and the marginalized are not stupid, but they have their own kinds of rationales for their survival, which are difficult for planners and decision makers to comprehend. Thus, unless the city authorities are open-minded and willing to accept multiple world-views, their well-intended policies and actions may not contribute to improve the livelihoods of those who live in deprived neighborhoods.²⁹⁾

This incongruence raises a much broader question about the relationship between officials and citizens. Apparently, the history of democracy in South Africa is short, and cultivating virtues associated with democracy has taken place in a relatively limited timeframe. What is of significance is that South Africa has succeeded in installing *liberal representative* democracy, but has still a long way to foster *deliberative* democracy, a type of democracy that is often deemed necessary to build truly sustainable society (Eckersley 2004). While the former emphasizes the procedural aspects such as the separation of powers and regular conduct of elections, the latter pays more attention to what extent the ordinary citizens, who are to be affected by environmentally-related risks, can partake in decision making process of relevant policies. The unaccountable relationship between the post-apartheid government and citizens certainly affects the cultivation of deliberative democracy negatively. The normative value of deliberation may be appreciated by the poor and the marginalized. Yet, their citizenship still tends to be empty without much political influences and economic advancement. The local government structure, especially the ward committee system – an institutional pillar that was once hoped to facilitate citizen engagement – has not been able to fulfill much expected functions (Mohanty et al. 2010 : 25–26 ; Piper and Deacon 2009).³⁰⁾ Accordingly, the frustrated populations have not choice but to take their voices to street to make public protests.

In order to cultivate new practices of deliberative democracy, both political leaders and ordinary citizens need to find more effective ways for mutual communication. How to devise workable communication much depends on historical past. As the apartheid era would not serve as effective reference point, more

exploration probably should be conducted in pre-colonial indigenous practices and institutions. While many of such past experiences in other parts of Africa are not necessarily democratic, and indeed quite tend to be oppressive for women and the youth, yet such past history can provide useful hints for South Africans to root their notions of political legitimacy.³¹⁾ The search for more meaningful communication has to follow such endogenous past ; careless import of some technical methods that worked elsewhere does not seem to result in easing communicative obstacles.

The extent of maturing in deliberative democracy, I would argue, is probably the most significant difference between cities in South Africa and the so-called “eco” cities in the industrialized North. In many of such well known places, there is indeed a very elaborated and lengthy procedure of public engagement to such an extent that political leaders often feel that they wish they can make decisions without such painfully long procedure. In contrast, in South Africa, the gulf between haves and have-nots still certainly remains wide, and it is wide enough to prevent mutual understanding. But unless and until, communication between officials and citizens, as well as between leaders and followers is improved, imagining a common future for both the wealthy and the deprived remains a distant dream. As the government candidly admits, “deep division impedes the formation of consensus to develop, change or even implement policy” (National Planning Commission 2011 a : 26).

It is thus crucial that some sort of two-way strategy is needed. On the one hand, the national and local governments need to engage more open and transparent communication with diverse categories of populations. Such communication should become more easily understood by those who are not well educated. Decision making and implementation by city authorities are not sufficiently accommodating public views. Procedurally such public hearing and consultation are usually done in very short timeframe and often tends to be a one-time event, and are often conducted by contracted consultants without adequate prior notice to those key stakeholders. This sort of very shallow “consultation” might be judged unconstitutional in some of these advanced eco cities in Europe and North America. Perhaps what is unfortunate is that even the well-known event of the FIFA World Cup in 2010 did not contribute much to ease the communication among different population groups within the nation.

On the other hand, concomitant efforts to empower the poor and the marginalized to exercise their relatively new citizenship in much more meaningful ways is also required. Because of the legacies of apartheid, some are still reluctant, unwilling, and even fearful to express their views about government policies in public. Although it is far from easy to overcome this kind of negative historical legacy, probably much coherent thinking for encouraging the engagement of the weak and the disfranchised in decision making is needed, taking into consideration of the South African context. Without this kind of improvement, people will continue to resort to public protest by occupying streets and elsewhere, because that would be almost the only option that they know that their voices can be heard.

Gradual improvement possibly via this sort of dual strategy appears to be the only way forward to bring different world views somewhat closer to each other. Without such shared understanding it would be virtually impossible to construct a shared vision, which is much needed for sustainable future.

5 Conclusions

2012 was the year that South Africans celebrate their 100-year anniversary of the ANC. It has been nearly two decades since the end of apartheid. Yet, South Africa is still in an important transition from racist to democratic and development-oriented state. It is, on the one hand, easy to criticize that there are still many important agendas that South Africa has not sufficiently addressed. Yet, on the other hand, it is far too early to make definitive judgment on how successful this transition has been. It would probably be a mistake to conclude that this post-1994 transition has been a “failure.”

As has been examined, transition to possibly more sustainable society in South Africa is affected by several factors, which are mutually influencing each other. The South African state today is certainly more democratic than pre-1994 period. However, the current democracy has not fully succeeded in ensuring accountability between leaders and citizens. This democratic deficit is a serious issue, and both political leaders and ordinary citizens need to learn how to exercise leadership and followership in more meaningfully and effectively for fostering mutual understanding.

As symbolized by the WMD, there is a serious miscommunication and mistrust between authorities and citizens. As long as such disjuncture persists, it would not help turning mutually distrustful relations into collaborative partnerships. As long as the world views held respectively by the wealthy and the powerful one the one hand and the poor and the disfranchised on the other remain separate and possibly competing, placing any technical solution would not yield the intended results. It would thus be much necessary for political leaders and authorities to devise workable communication strategies appreciating the divergent world views. Policy messages should become more understandable for the poor. The marginalized and the disadvantaged also need to find ways to claim their citizenship rights in much more meaningful ways. For closing the communication gap, the national government, local governments, civil society, academic community, and the business sector, all have important roles to play (Ziervogel et al. 2010 : 103).

Communication should be conducted in open and transparent, through which a more inclusive public domain might be encouraged. This path is a slow, gradual and tedious process. It certainly is the case that it takes time for stakeholders to learn these critical issues, and it surely is not the case that the effects of such learning would be felt overnight. Yet, it might be one of the few available options, as big event such as the FIFA World Cup has not fundamentally altered the leader-follower relations. As South Africa makes an important step forward in overcoming deep social divisions, then it may be the case that those who were oppressed in the former apartheid system can start the critical long journey to arrive at sustainability. By so doing, one can realize, as the opening proverb illustrates, “If you want to go fast, go alone ; If you want to go farther, go together.”

Note

- 1) Zietsman (2011) provides a beautifully illustrated account of the extent of impacts of climate change in South Africa.
- 2) It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss how the discourse of sustainability has evolved. For this see, for instance, Harris et al. (2001).

- 3) Another good example in South Africa is Durban as it hosted the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP 17) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in December 2011. But space limitation prevents this article from examining Durban. For more information, please see, for example, Aylett (2010 a and 2010 b).
- 4) Good examples include Portland, USA, Freiburg, Germany, and Växjö, Sweden.
- 5) Although EIU report, *African Green City Index: Assessing the Environmental Performance of Africa's Major Cities* is interesting, it turned out that information provided by the publication is not totally reliable as I cross-checked the content by interviews with stakeholders.
- 6) For more of this important historical background, see, for example, Thompson (2001).
- 7) In this article, local governments and municipalities are synonymous and used interchangeably.
- 8) While this mandate question may appear odd for some observers, it may be considered as one example of the gap between nicely written principles and practicality in implementation.
- 9) For more of the macroeconomic policies in the post-1994 South Africa, see, for instance, Edjgheji (2010).
- 10) Perhaps unsurprisingly, for the poor household, electricity is still expensive and many continued to use coal for room heating in winter (Mdluli and Vogel 2010).
- 11) For the subject of decentralization in South Africa, please see Reddy and Maharaj (2008).
- 12) The IDP Hearings of 2005 found that institutional capacity of 33 out of 56 metropolitan and district municipalities were of serious concern (Harrison et al. 2008 : 249).
- 13) Others also concur with this sort of view. Williams (2009) also stated that "the very concept of community participation has been largely reduced to a cumbersome ritual—a necessary appendix required by the various laws and policies operating at the local government level" (p.173). In addition, South African Cities Network (2011) in its review of a decade-long local governance reform says "[l]ocal government remains one of the least trusted public institutions, and municipalities are criticised for being remote and unresponsive" (p.8).
- 14) Sowman and Brown (2006) point out that "there has been a surprising degree of antipathy" between planners and environmental managers (p.698).
- 15) Interestingly enough, the report made by the South African Cities Network (2011) states that the high expectations placed on local governments were retrospectively "idealistic." Metropolitan governments struggled to meet the competing demands (p.13). This discourse itself may reflect the lack of efforts to integrate diverse operations in a holistic fashion.
- 16) This discussion is apparently related to the notion of endogenous development. See, for instance, Tödting (2011) for a good recent review.
- 17) Mohanty and his associates (2010 : 118) further commented : "The remaining NGO organisations came under pressure to 'professionalise' and withdraw from advocacy to a more limited role in service delivery."
- 18) For more about the discussion of the role of the localities for sustainability, see the excellent review of Bulkeley (2010).
- 19) Durrheim and Dixon (2010) provide a very interesting account of social contact across races in post-apartheid South Africa.
- 20) The official website of the city of Cape Town provides policy documents in a relatively accessible manner ([http : //www.capetown.gov.za/en/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.capetown.gov.za/en/Pages/default.aspx)).
- 21) This migration makes South African cities difficult to build more compact and denser cities, which are now considered desirable internationally.
- 22) My visit to the City office confirmed that there was about 60–80 staff in the department headquarters (interview 21 February 2012).
- 23) More detailed principles include, among others : open, transparent and effective environmental governance ; collective environmental responsibility ; the integration of environmental issues into local government decision-making at all levels ; protection of the constitutional rights to a healthy environment ; a commitment to a holistic approach to environmental issues ; a commitment to responsible stewardship of the resources within local government's charge ; a commitment to the involvement of, and partnerships with, civil society (Oelofse et al. 2009 : 493).
- 24) While Cape Town is the only municipality where non-ANC political leadership formed its local government, it

remains debatable whether this party difference affected its success.

- 25) There is another type of meter for so-called backyard dwellers, and for this type 250 liters are provided daily. This device operates with an electronic key (see Figure 2 b), but local residents explained that the key sometimes does not work properly (interview on 23 February 2012 in Samara Michel).
- 26) Interview on 23 February 2012, in Samara Michel.
- 27) In addition, many residents do not fully understand water bills as they are written in technical English terms. One woman, who was conversant in English, did not understand the bill (interview with residents, on 23 February 2012, Samara Michel).
- 28) Those in wealthy sections of the city do not usually know how people in poor sections of the community live. Or, put more bluntly, many may not wish to know. It is almost a joke that the more privileged think that they understand how people live in poor areas through stories they hear from their housemates who commute from deprived settlements (interview with NGO staff on 1 March 2012).
- 29) Thompson et al. (2011) provides a good picture about perception of public authorities and their services
- 30) Mohanty et al. also stated by reviewing how community participation is organized in one of the famous former townships in Cape Town, "Simply put, the community did not engage widely with either the new participatory institutions of ward committees and public consultation, or with ward councillors and the like, even though the Khayelitsha community is clearly very politically aware and keen to engage local government constructively and reasonably on important issues (2010 : 131).
- 31) Indeed, one of the reasons why Uganda, for instance, has succeeded in implementing its ambitious decentralization program is that a new community consultation resembled to the old practices of village meeting in the pre-colonial past (Saito, 2003).

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