

Do Capetonians still live apartheid?

Yesterday I read the full text of the [SOPA](#) delivered last week Friday by premier of the Western Cape, Helen Zille, as posted by Alec Hogg. This is really impressive and sterling stuff. There is no doubt that the DA is getting many things right in many areas. If you haven't yet read it, do so. This shows all South Africans what can be achieved through proper government rather than the gibberish and corruption we (in the rest of the country) have been dished up by the ANC. Premier Zille talked (amongst others) about the growth in building plan approvals as reflecting confidence and movement in the economy. She quoted hard figures to prove her point. She talked about initiatives to eliminate red tape to expedite new development. A laudable objective if one is looking to create jobs and promote social upliftment. But, in spite of all the successes of her government extolled by premier Zille, I experienced some level of disconnect. This is because my own experiences and perceptions are that the Western Cape (and specifically Cape Town) is hostile to new developments and is steeped in bureaucracy and red tape. Then, I read the article on News24: [De Lille denies claims Cape Town is an 'inconsiderate city'](#) and suddenly the lights went on for me. I think the problem is not with the Western Cape Government. I think the problem is with a group of the province's residents. In fact, I think they still live 'apartheid'.

It is fair to say that I have not always agreed with the DA on policy matters in the Western Cape or in Cape Town.

My discontent around the inadequate and improper planning of water supply, the wastage of water and ill-considered new resources has been expressed in numerous articles on this blog site. The most recent article: [Patricia please call me](#), was published barely a week ago. Given the current drought, development of new resources did feature in premier Zille's address. Suffice it to say that there are promising signs but it is also clear that old (bad) habits die slowly.

I also disagree with the DA around their view on tolling, especially open road tolling in urban environments. Again my views on the traffic mess on the N2 and other key routes ([The DA and their Roads Mess](#)) is well documented on this blog site. Just yesterday, I noted that Cape Town is now rated the city with the [worst traffic congestion](#) in the country. Not surprisingly, the main reason why Cape Town has now overtaken Johannesburg for this dubious title is ascribed to: the Gauteng Freeway Improvement Project, Open Road Tolling (e-tolling) etc. I can see a number of Capetonians choking on their americanoes... Strangely enough, premier Zille's address was completely silent on this critical issue.

I have in the past criticised the Department of Energy, as I believe the Integrated Resource Plan for Electricity ("IRP") reflects the wrong paradigm when it comes to rooftop solar installations ([Our future electricity supply](#)). I still believe government needs a paradigm shift in this regard. With rooftop solar installations the paradigm must be off-grid systems rather than grid-tied systems. While I applaud the efforts of the Western Cape government to promote roof top PV installations, I think premier Zille's call for households to remain on-grid is misguided.

So, I do differ with the DA on a number of key policy areas but let me repeat: they are getting many things right which we in the rest of the country can only dream of. I have for some time harboured doubts whether the provincial governments in our country make any sense. For the first time, having read the SOPA of premier Zille, I believe that they do. Provided of course that they add value - as the Western Cape provincial government is clearly doing – rather than offering just more employment opportunities for bureaucrats and politicians.

Given all of this, I am mystified by the accusations levelled against Patricia de Lille, by Cape Town residents, that she is taking a "development at all costs" approach with little regard for public sentiment and the city's own policies, as reported this morning. Reading through this article, I was struck time and again by the common thread running through it. Community leaders oppose a planned development. These community leaders rouse up their community in opposition to the development. They collect signatures on a petition. They submit the petition to the City. They get very angry if the City still approves the development. They criticise the public participation process. And ultimately they criticise the City and its leader the mayor.

It is clear to me that these community leaders operate from the wrong paradigm. Their paradigm is this: the public participation process is a mini-referendum. Given this paradigm, the perception is clearly that as long as sufficient resistance against a development is drummed up, the City should reject the development. Given this paradigm, one can understand their anger if the development is not rejected. The problem is just that this paradigm is completely misplaced. There is nothing in our law that suggests that the prescribed public participation process is a voting process. Unfortunately this is a perception that permeates our society. One just has to look at statements that are still made around the Open Road Tolling issue in Gauteng for proof of this.

Apart from the wrong (legal) paradigm as described above, it seems to me that these community leaders (and their communities) are totally disconnected from the vision as expressed by premier Zille in her SOPA. They should read it (again). They will of course vehemently deny any disconnect. In fact, they will argue that they strongly support the vision of Premier Zille. It is just this one particular development that they oppose.... This type of argument reflects the all too familiar syndrome of: *Not In My Back Yard* or NIMBY as it is often labelled. NIMBY is a worldwide occurrence and is not unique to Cape Town. It is true however that in Cape Town we sometimes find this syndrome driven to the extreme. In fact, Capetonians often acknowledge this as an eccentricity that defines the archetypal Capetonian.

I believe this is not just an eccentricity. No, I believe the underlying cause runs much deeper than a mere eccentricity. I believe the underlying cause is: apartheid. Yes, I believe a large number of Capetonians are still living 'apartheid'. To be clear, this is not an apartheid forged on racial grounds as in the past. No, this is an apartheid built on 'keeping outsiders out'. As one cannot use racial grounds to keep people out, one has to use other measures. The favourite measures used for this purpose are: environmental protection, preservation of heritage and preservation of the community and its lifestyle. Just look in yesterday's article what Patricia De Lille is accused of by one community leader: *"Inconsiderate of heritage, inconsiderate of the environment, inconsiderate of people's opinions. It was a case of development at all*

*costs*". This signifies the new 'apartheid syndrome' and in this respect, I believe there is little difference between Kommetjie or Noordhoek and Orania.

Do I support development at all costs? No I do not. But, I certainly do support responsible development and taking measures to expedite such development. I believe there are sufficient examples of the City preventing irresponsible developments throughout Cape Town. People just have to look beyond the next street corner to realise this. I agree with premier Zille that "the building sector is a component of economic growth, and the downstream secondary jobs are significant". According to her, "the construction sector employs more than 160,000 people in the province and directly contributes R30bn to the provincial economy".

Let me also clarify this: protection of the environment is a key consideration in any development and a sound reason to reject a particular development – if its environmental risk is found to be too high. The problem is that it is so easy to overstate environmental risk – it is easy to hide the true motives for opposition to a particular development behind environmental concerns.

In my view, the new 'apartheid syndrome' spells trouble for both Helen Zille and Patricia de Lille – as we have already seen yesterday morning. In her SOPA, premier Zille refers to semi-gration as an indication of the success of her government. A vote of confidence in her government. Semi-gration refers to the movement of people from other provinces to the Western Cape in search of better economic opportunities, better services and a better life. According to premier Zille, 56% of all bonds registered by residents of Gauteng during the past year were for properties in the Western Cape! But, semi-gration adds to the development pressures and this in turn will increase the anxiety levels in communities throughout Cape Town and other areas in the province to maintain their communities and lifestyles. As these anxiety levels increase, both Zille and De Lille will come under pressure to change course. Yesterday's article was just the first shot. I expect many more.