

Remarks by Lwanda Maqwelane, Associate

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The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the deeply entrenched socio-economic and political systemic divides premised on geo-politics and economies of scales attributed to the global capitalist state, that have exacerbated the fundamental socio-economic challenges of emerging economies such as ours.

The adverse impacts of the pandemic, further compounded by competing and contrary solution driven nation state fundamentalism, have intensified the need for critical and analytical rigor in the quest for innovation – a step towards building a new. Aimed towards cultivating system(s) of governance that are socio-contemporary aware, sensitive and responsive, system(s) of governance that are timely, reflexive and display levels of agility in context of rapidly changing times.

The active pursuit of neo-liberalisms has collectively made us vulnerable to the challenge prevalent in a multifaceted and interlinked global and knowledge production economy. We clearly see this in the problematic thematic themes emergent in the privatization of health-care not limited to South Africa. The pandemic has and continues to challenge every aspect of state response ranging from socio-economic buffer strategies to more pertinent issues, clearly visible in the need to think innovatively and futuristically about the kind of South Africa we aim to create.

This is acutely captured in our motto: **IMAGINE. CREATE. EVOLVE.**

Pertinent to our context is the need to critically interrogate our status as an emerging economy within context. This will assist in the conceptual framing, development, reform and policy implementation, particularly in regards to industry and skills development in conversation with international bench-markers such as the with SDG, climate change and sustainability discourse(s) aimed at promoting multi-lateralisms in synergized system approaches.

The macro, meso and micro national and international impacts of the pandemic come at a time where South Africa is yet again faced with a political epoch. Research has shown that...Khen (2007) surmises this moment perfectly to say, when a crisis delegitimizes the power and authority existing, structural change is subsequently desired and is to be expected by many. Keeler (1993) continuing to note that disruptions to societal routines and expectations open up political space for actors inside and outside government to redefine issues, propose innovations and organizational reforms.

It is within that particular school of thought that the moment in time presented before us must be understood as an open invitation to think and do differently. As young people, we must actively participate in the contestation of ideas, underpinned by a commitment to critical and analytical rigor aimed, I believe most importantly, to the ethical and moral commitment to the collective good.

As a result, socio-economic cohesion will remain the pinnacle of our collective objective. The quest for socio-economic cohesion is in tandem with the building and

strengthening of institutional credibility, good governance and service delivery. Therefore, we need to engage and understand the symbiotic relations/hips between policy, state and implementation within context- influenced by variable(s) that are subject to change. The recognition that public policy is reiterative and dynamic in nature must translate in knowledge production that responds to socio-economic and political phenomena's such as service delivery protests - of which we are fully are multi-faceted in their representation and configuration.

Therefore, the work must be premised on understanding systematic continuities and discontinuities that act as inhibitors to said objectives - and strategically use those key indicators to inform where necessary structural change, reform and or transformation.

A keen interest and focus particularly within the context of SA would be rigorous engagement and debate with **monitoring and evaluation models and/or tools** used by the state that are intended to foreground implementation strategies:

- This will bring into question our bureaucratic, regulatory and systems governance praxis, their relevance and/or lack thereof and more importantly, the use of M&E tools as a catalyst for citizen engagement.
- We then need to think innovatively, in how to incorporate the knowledge production funded by state institutions such as NSFAS into state apparatus/programs/policy where skills capacity has proven to be weak particularly in regards of ensuring that **research lesson learned are locally adapted in ways that are transformative, just and sustainable.**
- This will really prove critical to responding to the challenges faced by local government. The Building Back Better theoretical and conceptual framing thus becomes crucial for the kind of work we aim to build, strengthen and take forward and help to locate the collective good, that is subject change and sustainability.

In conclusion, The Polisee Space will be predicated on addressing socio-economic development that prizes sustainable economic relations that are rooted in justice.

I thank you.