

Dinokeng Scenarios

Collectively constructing a sustainable future for South Africa



Reos

THE PROJECT AT A GLANCE:

Issue: Democracy

Geography: South Africa

Duration: 2008-2012

Co-Convenors: Dr. Mamphela Ramphele, Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane, Mr. Bob Head, Ms. Graça Machel, Dr. Vincent Maphai, and Mr. Rick Menell.

Scenarios: "Walk Apart", "Walk Behind", "Walk Together".



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The Context

In 2008, South Africa was experiencing the tumble of seismic political shifts. The previous year at the national conference of the African National Congress (ANC), President Thabo Mbeki had lost the party's leadership to Jacob Zuma. In 2008, Mbeki and a number of senior cabinet ministers resigned, with Jacob Zuma assuming the country's presidency after the national elections in 2009. The time was marked by uncertainty. Political leaders were consumed by the struggle for power and ensuing reshuffling within the ANC.


Meanwhile the world was in the midst of the worst

economic crisis since the Great Depression. While South Africa has been buttressed by strong financial regulations and prudent fiscal and monetary policies, the global economic downturn sent tremors through the local economy in the form of job losses, shrinking capital financing, and decreases in direct foreign investment. The South African GDP growth rate sunk from 6% in early 2008 to a low of 2,9% in late 2009. Employment fell by 500,000 jobs across the same period.

South Africa was also experiencing large-scale migration from the neighbouring state of Zimbabwe and other countries in the region. Xenophobic attacks persisted across the stressed area. In addition, the effects of climate change and economic crisis placed increasing pressure on agricultural production, rural sustainability, and food security. People remained exposed to unacceptably high levels of crime.

In the 15 years of South Africa's democracy, the realities of constructing a new nation had revealed themselves as an entirely grittier and more complex task than its people had anticipated.

In response to these predicaments, a group of 35 South Africans from a wide spectrum of society came together to think deeply about South Africa's context and to



collectively construct and consider possible scenarios of the country's future.

The Convenors

The scenario team comprised leaders from civil society and government, political parties, business, public administration, trade unions, religious groups, academia, and the media. Members were brought together by six convenors, all of whom were actively engaged in national issues. They were Dr. Mamphela Ramphele, who chaired the convenor group, Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane, Mr. Bob Head, Ms. Graça Machel, Dr. Vincent Maphai, and Mr. Rick Menell.

The team was a diverse group of individuals with widely differing perspectives and experiences. Members debated robustly and did not agree on everything. What they shared was a common commitment to the principles of South Africa's Constitution, an appreciation of the country's heritage, and a very real concern about how they, as citizen-leaders, could contribute to the construction of a sustainable future for South Africa.

The Process

The team implemented two distinct, though overlapping, phases. In the first, members focused on sensing the South African context and constructing and capturing the scenarios; in the second, they sought the most effective means of sharing this work with others.

Phase I (2008-2009): Sensing and Building

The first phase of the Dinokeng exercise involved an intensive process spanning 10 months, from August 2008 to April 2009. It included in-depth interviews by scenario team members with a wide array of leaders from all sectors of society. This part of the process was followed by three separate three-day workshops in 2008 and a fourth workshop in 2009.

Facilitators prepared a synthesis report on the interviews, which they shared with the team. Several themes emerged, including the character of South Africa's democracy; the government's capacity to deliver in core areas such as education and health care; and a model of development and growth. Scenario team members reviewed the questions raised in the interviews and, through structured conversations, deepened their understanding of South Africa's key challenges.



The team also heard from a panel of experts on various issues including the state of education and health in South Africa, poverty and unemployment, race and identity, and the role of leadership in trade unions, business, political parties, and government.

As part of the process, team members went on learning journeys. These included visits to a prison, an orphanage, a farmers' fair, a local government official, and a woman who trains people in organic farming. Meeting the people who volunteer in these projects gave team members insight into South Africa's reservoir of social capital.

Phase II: Building the Scenarios

By the end of the second workshop, the scenario team had identified some of the central challenges facing the country and organised these around key drivers. Within this framework, they placed specific focus on values and accountability, unemployment, poverty and inequality, educational performance and the national skills deficit, and nation-building. The team also pinpointed other critical challenges, including the state of public health, the threat of crime, and the situation of the country's youth.

Through the course of the process, team members refined their analysis of the primary underlying trends

and the most urgent and critical challenges facing the country. In the third and fourth workshops, they built on their diagnosis of the context to construct the scenarios.

The Scenarios:

Walk Apart: The state becomes increasingly weak and ineffective. A disengaged and self-protective citizenry eventually loses patience and erupts into protest and unrest. The state, driven by its inability to meet citizens' demands and expectations, responds brutally and unleashes a spiral of resistance and repression.

Walk Behind: The state gains strength and becomes increasingly directive, both enabled by and enabling a civil society that is more and more dependent and compliant. The state grows in its confidence to lead and direct development. However, it does not by itself have the capacity to address critical challenges effectively. The demands of socio-economic development and redistributive justice amid a global and domestic economic crisis place strain on the state's capacity to deliver to all and to be all. These strains are most evident in the declining ratio between revenue and expenditure. In the worst case, the state overreaches and is forced to borrow from multi-lateral financial institutions. As a result, South Africa loses the



ability to determine its own social spending agenda.

Walk Together: The state is increasingly catalytic and collaborative; it listens to its citizens and leaders from different sectors; engages and consults with critical voices; and shares authority in the interest of long-term sustainability. This is also a story of an engaged citizenry that takes leadership, holds government accountable, and shares responsibility for policy outcomes and development. This is not an easy path: the outcomes are vulnerable to manipulation by stronger actors, and the alliances, pacts, and partnerships required to address challenges could be too slow and weak to be effective.

Reaching the Natural Limit

The differences between these scenarios crystallized a core debate among South African leaders about the role that the state should play in national development. Team members also disagreed about the need to choose one of the scenarios as the one they wanted as their vision or proposal. In their own organizations and spheres of influence, they therefore pursued some courses of action that were aligned and some that were divergent.

The members of the Dinokeng team had expanded their shared understanding of their situation and of their

roles in it. The remaining misalignment among them was neither unusual nor problematic. This ideologically and politically heterogeneous group had simply reached the limit of what they thought they needed and were willing to agree on. Every group has such a limit; complete alignment is not necessary or even desirable. What is important is that team members are able, to some extent, to help their system get unstuck and move forward. The Dinokeng team accomplished this goal.

Moving to Action

Having developed the scenarios, the team moved into an action phase, focusing on getting the Dinokeng message out to audiences across South Africa.

In the months before the team launched the scenarios report, members held private briefings with national leaders, including the president. The launch of the report in May 2009 got pages of coverage in all the major newspapers. Since Dinokeng's launch, tens of thousands of copies of the report and video have been distributed. More than 100 workshops have been held for political, business, non-governmental, and community organisations in every province and every major city in South Africa. Weekly inserts have been included in a national chain of newspapers, and televised debates on the scenarios were broadcast.



Since Dinokeng

Dinokeng succeeded in placing the simple, crucial “Walk Together” insight about citizen re-engagement into the center of South African discourse.

One important example is the plan for the country prepared by the National Planning Commission. This new body was set up in 2010 by the government and is composed of some of the country’s most respected leaders from different sectors, including people who were members of the Dinokeng team. The essence of the plan focuses on engaging an active citizenry, promoting leadership through every aspect of society, and building a capable state. These are the core messages of the “Walk Together” scenario.

The large-scale dissemination of the Dinokeng scenarios was intended to (and has begun to) regenerate active participation by South Africans in their new democracy. In this way, Dinokeng is contributing to opening up and strengthening the country’s politics and its capacity to deal with its challenges.

Note: Parts of this text are adapted from Transformative Scenario Planning: Working Together to Change the Future (Berrett-Koehler, 2012).

For more information, please see these related materials:

- Dinokeng full report, scenarios, and presentation www.dinokengscenarios.co.za
- Transformative Scenario Planning: Working Together to Change the Future by Adam Kahane (Berrett-Koehler, 2012). Available from Amazon.
- www.reospartners.com