

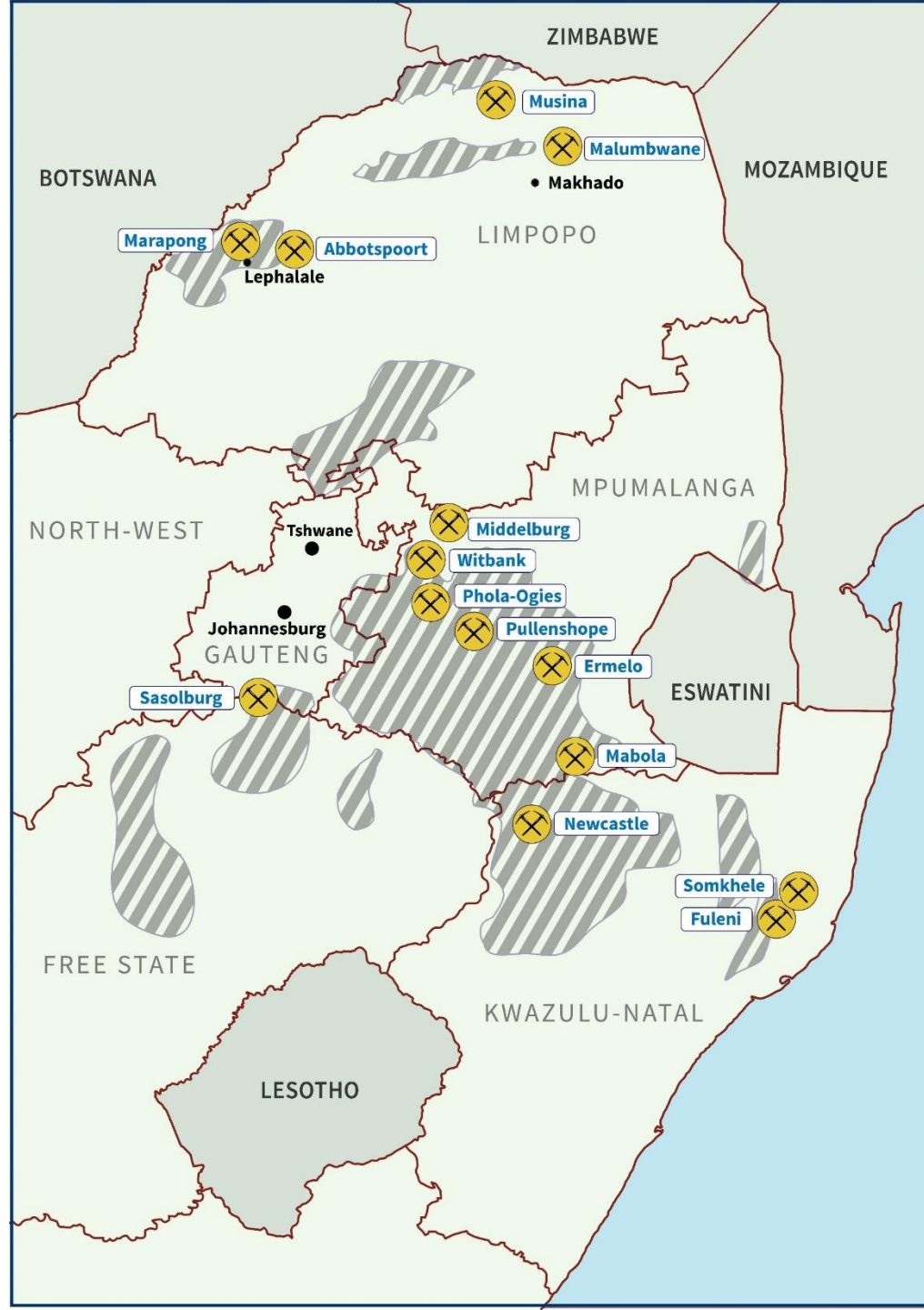
Principles and approach: Coal communities' participation in governance of the Just Transition

An approach developed by coal communities with support of the Life After Coal campaign

Thomas Mnguni
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Overview

- Community voice is important in Just Transition
- We have been disappointed before
- Local government, democracy and coal affected communities
- Understandings of governance
- Principles for participation
- Expectations of PCC commissioner visits
- Consultations with communities



Broad agreement that community voice in governance is important

- In debates on the Just Transition inside and outside of the Presidential Climate Commission, participants across the spectrum of government, business, trade unions and civil society have declared that the community voice should be heard in JT debates, should drive those debates, that everybody, especially the most vulnerable, should be better off, or at least not worst off as a result of the Just Transition, and that nobody should be left behind in the Just Transition.
- We agree and therefore are looking for ways to make this principle a reality.

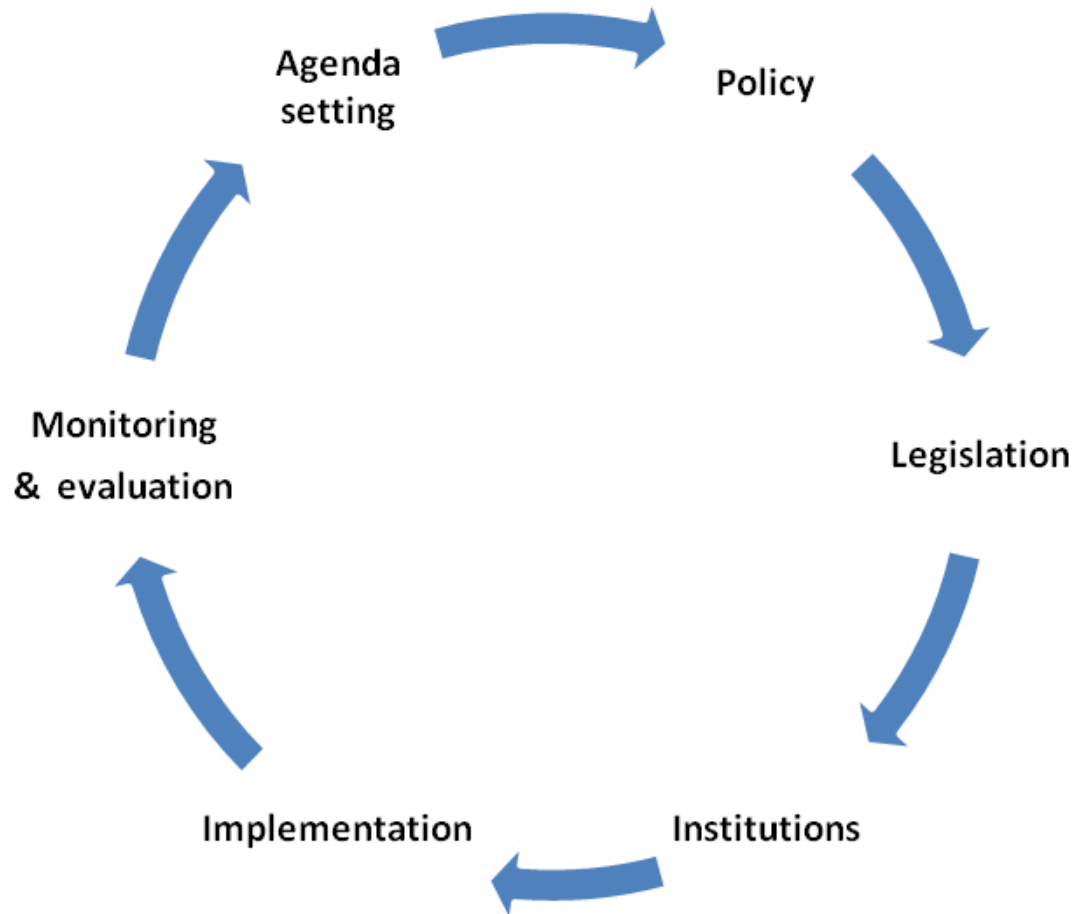
We have been disappointed before

- Up to now, the community experience with participation and consultation has not been a good one. We have experienced EIAs, water use licence applications, municipal planning processes like IDPs, and relationships with ward councils as manipulative, deeply flawed and alienating. We need participation approaches that are credible, meaningful – meaning that they lead to outcomes that serve our interests as well, long lasting – meaning that they don't stop with harvesting ideas but go right through to applying them, reporting back on them, and changing them when we feel we have not been heard correctly.
- The process should build confidence that the transition is really meant to include us.

What is meant by governance?

- Note that governance is understood broadly in 2 ways. First, is means decision making, implementation, monitoring and setting of agendas (the full policy cycle, see next slide). It is no use just having ideas or harvesting ideas but not having real influence, and seeing that things happen as agreed. Its worse than no use because it is frustrating and treats us with contempt.
- Secondly, governance includes the decision making and implementation by government, business, civil society, investors etc – all the players involved in the just transition. The just transition process is a multistakeholder, consensus seeking and driven process, so the actions of all stakeholders are relevant, and need to be overseen, in the governance process.
- However a capable state would play a central role, but in the absence of a competent state, other actors have to step forward.

The full policy cycle



Background 1:

local government and democracy

- Communities have direct experience of non-responsive local government (and in cases such as health, uncaring and inadequate health services). But local govt is also responsible to carry the voice, the interest and agendas of people, which it does not do – in fact the direct opposite as their cries for services (water, waste removal, roads) are not heard, and their voices don't find expression in local govt structures such as ward committees and IDP processes. Therefore it is necessary to (1) rebuild the capacity and political will in local govt to be a true representative government and (2) strengthen participatory and direct democracy – with the first attention on the coal affected communities that LAC and its members organisations have been working with for the last 30 years.

Background 2:

Coal affected communities

- Coal affected communities should be at the heart of the debates about a Just Transition. It is these communities who have been impacted by coal and have given a subsidy to all who enjoy electricity in South Africa. Coal has impacted on our health, livelihoods, we are carrying the externalised costs of coal economy). But these communities are also coal dependent – directly as mine and power station workers, truck drivers, and the households they contribute to (not all on Highveld, some are “back home”) and indirectly as small businesses: food, accommodation, taverns, tailors. So there is need for (1) restorative justice, for example health problems that will persist, not only respiratory but also longer term cancers, as well as ongoing dangers in the environment: acid mine drainage, low level smouldering discard coal dumps, power station ash heaps that are not adequately covered and (2) replacing the direct coal jobs and the indirect economic dependence on coal.

Principles for participation (1)

- **Open dialogue**, which means that “What you say can change my mind” “It is safe to say what you think” and the principle that these discussions are taken seriously. They are not just a tickbox exercise as we have experienced previously.
- There are different types of knowledges, such as local knowledge which comes from experience and a deep understanding of the places where people live and the systems with which they live. Other knowledges such as science, planning and administration, **need to respect people’s knowledges and learn from them** through open dialogue, much as these outside knowledges can also enrich communities’ understandings. We need a “parliament of knowledges”.
- Organisers and facilitators need to consciously create spaces in which community members and community activists are made comfortable to participate and share their opinions, including on the ideas of other participants.

Principles for participation 2

- Participation requires a **levelling of the playing fields**, to ensure that community members have understanding of what is at stake, as well as of the agendas and arguments of other stakeholders. This involves both capacity building and support. It is clear that other stakeholders – such as business and government – present their perspectives with the support of research teams including lawyers – so the expectation that community members should participate without assistance is a form of discrimination. This also includes that the PCC, and other bodies wishing to consult coal communities, should make arrangements which provide maximum space and comfort for community participants.

Principles for participation 3

- Communities need to **understand what is facing them**, for example the impacts of climate change, the dynamics that influence it, such as local government service delivery, health services, food security and other crucial aspects. These issues needed to be seen from a community perspective as an integrated whole in daily experience. This includes understanding the intentions and agendas of other stakeholders.
- In a situation **where there are challenges to representative democracy at local level, direct and open democracy methods are needed**. While coal community activists, like the rest of the EJ movement, remain committed to building the capacity of and working with and through local government, at the moment local government is unresponsive and incapable of representing the interests of local coal communities.
- One cannot think of only specific interactions as participation, but also of **all the processes and network resources that inform such participation**. In this case, coal communities are part of a broader EJ movement for which they help set the agenda, and from which they draw support. Activities that support participation also include community engagement and empowerment.

Our expectations of commissioners' visits to coal communities

- For commissioners visits: communities should be well prepared, that is have an understanding of what is at stake, and commissioners should first explain what questions they want to ask, what their own positions are about Just Transition and then ask the community opinion.
- Commissioners should make sure that their meetings with communities take place in a safe and comfortable space, in through respectful interaction in whichever languages communities are most comfortable in.
- The principle of feedback should apply. Commissioners should feed back how community inputs were used and, if they community ideas and agendas were not included, what the reasons are.
- The whole 5 year period should be one in which communities, especially coal affected communities, can participate easily.

Consultations with communities

- A very important part of this long term consultation is the fair formation and facilitation of ongoing regional, district and local government forums, that include all community voices, along with government, chambers of business and small business. Small, survival and hustle businesses should all be included so that their futures are taken care of as well.
- There are many instruments that can be used to include communities in Just Transition debates (from community activist research undertaken in the FES project). They include:
 - Door-to-door discussions
 - Workshops
 - Mass meetings
 - Gaining a platform at mass meetings called for other purposes
 - Radio, including community radio, is seen as a very important channel for building knowledge and awareness
 - Social media (including podcasts of past events and debates)
 - Newspapers and television