

**From Resistance to Reconstruction:
Reconfiguring the political culture in South Africa with a special focus on the Eastern Cape**

Abstract:

The “Durban Strikes” in the early 1970’s, like the Soweto Uprisings in the late 1970’s, epitomises the type of political culture that existed within South Africa at the time. Civil society and labour, in particular, led a resistance campaign against the Apartheid state but, no doubt too, the Homelands. These were often in the form of demonstrations, strikes, the use of violence, then through the arm struggle, and ideology whether through Black nationalism, Black consciousness or African socialism.

Yet even after 20 years of democracy, these hallmarks of the struggle against Apartheid and the Homelands remain. Democracy and a culture of human rights have had little effect on the political culture of our country and particularly on our provincial and municipal administrations where the state seems to be failing our people the most.

In defining ‘political culture’ it would be useful to employ the four pillars of the political scientist Lucien Pyeⁱ. He notes that the hallmarks of a country’s political culture would be: i) hierarchy and equality; ii) liberty and coercion; iii) loyalty and commitment; and, iv) trust or distrust. In examining each of these, the paper suggests that there has been no change in the elements within each of these categories, from before and after 1994. It uses the Eastern Cape as a case study to illustrate this non-change and suggests that generally the trademarks of Apartheid, the homelands and hence the type of state engagement by citizens, i.e. resistance, remains even though structurally they no longer exist. Specifically, the paper will touch on the understanding of the use of violence by citizens and the preservation of (poorly-performed public sector) jobs as particular challenges in this metamorphosis of political culture.

The overall hypothesis suggests that change in the political culture (and societal culture) of a country has a direct effect on the change (or lack thereof) that occurs in the institutional culture of the public sector, especially in provinces such as the Eastern Cape. It is therefore important to slowly effect change in the political culture, a challenge for the entire society, in order to effect change in the institutional culture of the state.

About the author:

Wesley Seale is currently a Research Associate and PhD (Political Science) student at the University of Antwerp, Belgium, where he forms part of the public management and administration research group. His research concentrates on the institutional culture of the public service before and after 1994, especially in the Eastern Cape (before and after the

Homelands). He wishes to understand the role that political and social culture play in affecting the institutional culture of the public administration of that province. He holds a Masters in Governance and Development (with Merit) from the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex in the United Kingdom and completed his undergraduate at the University of the Western Cape. Wesley has done a stint with the Congress of South African Trade Unions in the Western Cape and hails from Bonteheuwel on the Cape Flats.

ⁱ Pye, L. 1965. "Introduction: Political Culture and Political Development". *Political Culture and Political Development*. Pye, L. and Verba, S. (eds). Princeton: Princeton University Press