
By Tshwane Executive Mayor Councillor K. Ramokgopa

Programme Director

Fellow Members of the Panel

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Introduction

I wish to express my deep gratitude for the privilege of addressing this plenary session as part of this eminent panel this morning.

For that, sincere thanks to the broader fraternity of the Metropolis and the organisers of the Metropolis 2013 conference.

We are particularly energised and animated by the theme that has been adopted as an organising framework for debates and engagements in this conference: Caring Cities.

We have been specifically requested to make contextual reflections on the life of a Caring City from the point of view of policy and practical experiences.

In their conceptual framework document, the organisers of the conference correctly point out that the notion of Caring Cities emanate from the African philosophical precept of Ubuntu.

Accordingly, it only appears appropriate to turn to formal and substantive terrain of Ubuntu to search for the contextual meaning, nature, character and obligations of a Caring City.

Programme Director,

With your indulgence, we elect to bypass the linguistic and semantic twists and turns surrounding the notion of Ubuntu and plunge straight into the substantive terrain itself.

Even here, we wish to restrict our presentation to only those conceptual reflections that are germane and useful to what we aim to convey to this gathering this morning.

With that in mind, let us begin at the beginning!
The notion of Ubuntu is not as just a general idea, but a denotation of the form and content of organising a specific a way of life.

**Ubuntu as a way of life**

Using one of its central aphorisms [motho ke motho ka batho], the African philosopher Magobe Ben Ramose writes that Ubuntu ‘may be construed to mean that to be a human being is to affirm one’s humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish humane relations with them’.

Viewed in this way, he goes on to observe … Ubuntu also becomes a metaphor for ethical, social and legal judgement of human worth and human conduct and hence one of African aphorisms that expresses the nature of governance in society: ‘Kgosiki ke Kgosi ka batho’.

In this context, it is clear that Ubuntu is not just one among several ideas but an essential precept that defines our very existence as human beings and our awareness of the nature of our species being.

By insisting that [motho ke motho ka batho], the notion and practice of Ubuntu prioritises the wholeness and completeness of human beings as opposed to fragmentary ways of understanding human existence.

Unlike other forms of organising human existence anchored in the principles of individual freedom for its own sake and as an end in itself; Ubuntu is premised on individual freedom as a condition for collective freedom.

Western philosophical precepts are premised on abstract individuality that has no social and historical roots; whereas individuality within Ubuntu is shaped and in turn shapes the collective.

Individuality is an inseparably part of the whole and there should not, of necessity be any contradiction between the two.

In other words, without individual freedom no collective freedom and vice versa and hence the maxim: I am because we are!

It is a call for awareness of the reality of existence in terms of which the development of a member of society is the condition for the development of society as whole.

For us Ubuntu is not just a matter of charity or compliance with formal strictures of democratic governance; it goes to the heart of who we are as human beings and our consciousness of our needs as a species being.

It is this basic truism that is encapsulated in the preamble of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa where it commits us to establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights ... and further
enjoins us to improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person.

In the Fundamental Bill of Rights – the Constitution affirms the promotion of the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom.

The values of Ubuntu are without a shadow of doubt firmly entrenched in the governance psychology of the South African political system as cemented by the underlining principles of our supreme vision statement.

It is a political system based on Ubuntu both in terms of the content of its goals as well as the form and process of governance itself.

The Constitution, as the supreme framing document, and taking its cue from the traditions handed down by the Freedom Charter, puts the people at the centre of our collective endeavours.

It is grounded on the recognition that active social citizenry is the indispensible key if sustainable development is the ultimate goal.

The unleashing of the potential and talents of each and every member of society is the collective and individual responsibility of all members of society.

It is this recognition that inspired President Thabo Mbeki, in his opening address to Parliament on 25 June 1999, to declare that:

“Steadily, the dark clouds of despair are lifting, giving way to our season of hope … continuing … an evolving act of self-definition. At the dawn of a new life, our practical actions must ensure … we are a nation at work to build a better life... To the masses we owe the obligation to recommit the government … to the construction of a people-centred society… to build a caring society... [that] guarantee[s] the dignity of every citizen on the basis of a good quality of life for every woman, man and child, without regard to race, or colour or disability… “

Subsequently, all levels of government – national, provincial and local, have been hard at work to define and redefine strategic paths towards the realisation of that cherished ideal of society grounded on the foundations of Ubuntu.

All the various efforts and initiatives formulated and implemented by government at different levels have been subject to the vagaries of the opening decades of the 21st century.

Developments within our cities have also been, to a very large extent, shaped by the obtaining material and social conditions in the past two decades.
The role of Cities in the 21st Century

As predominant forms of human settlements, cities are increasingly playing a central role in addressing developmental challenges, from social exclusion to infrastructure, health, and security deficiencies.

These challenges have been accentuated by the prevalence of economic volatility, social uncertainty and political instability as constant features defining the early days of the 21st century to date.

As we gather here today, the world is only just beginning to take tentative, albeit sluggish steps towards recovery from the devastating effects of the global economic meltdown also referred to as The Great Recession.

Although the epicentre of this crisis was located elsewhere in the highly industrialised countries, the effects reverberated and came to be felt the most in those areas located in the margins of global economic activity.

The results have mostly seen the aggravation of an already precarious situation, with imploding levels of unemployment, inequalities and poverty the order of existence for the majority of the poor in the developing world.

The need to meet these challenges head on, without losing sight of the imperative to transform our cities to bring about equitable and egalitarian order, saw a number of initiatives, central amongst these being the new turn towards long term strategic planning.

In the South African context, the adoption of the National Development Plan (NDP) by national government gave impetus to all cities to review their long term strategic thinking.

In the case of the City of Tshwane, the process began with the review of our Development Strategy, leading to the release of the Tshwane Vision 2055 Discussion Document in July 2012 for wider consultation and participation, culminating in the launch of the Tshwane 2055 Vision in June 2013.

Key Elements of the Tshwane 2055 Vision

In its broad strategic outlook, ours is a vision of a City in 2055 that is liveable, resilient and inclusive whose citizens enjoy a high quality of life, have access to social, economic and enhanced political freedoms and where citizens are partners in the development of the African Capital City of excellence.

In its essential form and substance, it is a vision that is grounded in and takes forward the principal features of Ubuntu as a way of life.
Its founding process involved the affirmation of their status as the citizens of the City of Tshwane through direct participation in determining the broad contours of its strategic substance.

In this way, not only was their humanity recognised, but most importantly their agency as masters of their own destiny was fully restituted.

The process gave practical meaning to that rallying call of the Freedom Charter that said: The People Shall Govern!

In terms of the substance and specific content of Tshwane 2055 vision statement, we aim to provide, facilitate and co-ordinate as and when necessary to guide and be guided by our people towards an ideal social order.

Accordingly, the concepts of liveable, resilient and inclusive constitute anchor principles that will guide how the City sets policy and investment priorities as well as balance competing needs of social, spatial, and environmental issues brought about by the City’s ever-changing population dynamics.

By **liveability** we mean a City whose recreational infrastructure caters for such amenities as neighbourhood parks with standard features like ablution facilities, walking trails, playground equipment and requisite park furniture thereby providing a liveable recreational space with the requisite levels of safety.

We also want to promote a city model that gives priority to children and public spaces and restricting private car use, building hundreds of kilometers of sidewalks, bicycle paths, pedestrian streets, greenways, and parks.

In this context, our vision is animated by the tremendous need to transform the ambience in the City from one of negative hopelessness to one of pride and hope, developing a model for urban improvement based on the equal rights of all people to transportation, education, and public spaces.

By **resilience** we denote, as derived and adapted from the conception outlined by the South African Cities Network which incorporates amongst others the following elements:

- The “capacity of a place to anticipate, respond and adapt successfully to challenging conditions.”

- Both a city’s capacity to withstand and recover from an external shock and its ability to adapt and transform to changing circumstances.”

Additionally, resilience as cardinal anchor principle is disaggregated into the four dimensions:
“economic resilience - how a city adjusts to difficult economic circumstances;

environmental resilience - how the physical systems of a city withstand environmental changes and hazards;

social resilience - the level of inclusivity or exclusivity of the urban system; and

resilience in governance - the capabilities of city-level institutions to adapt to shifting conditions and the quality of leadership and governance structures.”

By *inclusivity* we connote a City organised around the following key economic, social and political elements:

- **Economic inclusivity** – creating an enabling environment that fosters equitable access to economic opportunities for the citizens through a range capital formation projects like economic infrastructure, provision of quality public transport etc.

- **Social inclusivity** - The creation of a clean, healthy and safe environment is inseparable from the dignity and integrity of our communities. The spatial reconfiguration of the City remains not only central to undermining the historical legacy of apartheid, but most importantly for creating sustainable livelihoods and human settlements. Spatial justice and transformation is central to ensuring social inclusivity.

- **Governance inclusivity** – this is about the City promoting active citizenry based on the sound belief that citizens are the ultimate guarantors of their lives and interests and are thus partners in the current and future development of the City. This is about ward-based planning and budgeting, participation in other Council processes etc.

Our long term goal is to promote integrated economic, social and environment development.

This people centred developmental paradigm will ensure that we move closer to the attainment of a *Caring Capital City* premised on the principles of spatial justice, spatial sustainability, spatial resilience, spatial quality and spatial efficiency for all our residents, particularly the poor and vulnerable.

As a Caring City and consistent with our unfolding plans, we aim to transform our residential mindset from one of hopelessness to that of pride and hope, developing a model for urban improvement based on the equal rights of all people to transportation, education, and public spaces.
Decade One Game Changing Interventions: 2011-2016

The City of Tshwane is currently implementing the following programmes as part of the first decade of game changing:

- Deliberate efforts to improve infrastructure services in the previously disadvantaged communities, road tarring, formalisation for informal settlements, tenure upgrading etc.

- Development of parks / public spaces across various regions – two parks per ward

- Social assistance to vulnerable groups within our city – including indigent registry to facilitate access to city services

- The roll out of Academic Bursary support to the needy and deserving students

- Dedicated focus to support elderly people and senior citizens with health care and other necessities

- Ward deployment programmes to deal with issues of safety and security

- Improving accessibility and creation of walkways sensitive to the needs of people with disability, women and elderly.

- Creation of employment opportunities and skills development programmes targeting youth

A successful implementation of these game changers in the first ten years of our journey will go a long way in cementing the necessary and sufficient minimum foundational pillars for the successful evolution of the Vision Statement in the subsequent decades.

If successfully implemented, the foundational elements of the first decade of our plan will firmly entrench the City as a sound regulator, facilitator, initiator, enabler and a strategic partner in supporting the socio-economic transformation, spatial reconfiguration and aspirations of our people.

Closing Remarks

The opening decade of the new millennium threw up innumerable challenges that raised serious questions about the validity of old ways of organising societies and human settlements.
Ever since the world economy entered a protracted period of crisis dating back to the late 1960s and early 1970s, volatility, uncertainty and instability have become permanent defining features of life in the global economy.

Give or take a few regional and national variations, the main characteristic features of social and economic life on a global scale have included sustained low rates of growth; low levels of employment; growing levels of poverty; rising levels of inequality; and increasing frequency and intensity of crisis.

The dawn of the new century did nothing to change patterns of economic performance that have characterised the world economy since the closing decades of the past century.

With volatility, uncertainty and instability almost permanently institutionalised, cities have born most of the responsibility of caring for those trickling down into the ranks of destitution; whilst at the same time carrying the responsibility of engineering new solutions for the new uptake in economic activity.

A closer examination of how societies in parts of Asia, especially China, managed to sustain high levels of growth rates in spite of sustained downward turn in global economic activity became necessary.

Proximate scrutiny revealed that amongst others long term planning buttressed by the necessary capacities for designing and executing appropriate policies was central to those successes.

With the attendant social and economic problems being the most acute on the African continent, it became crucial that we draw appropriate lessons to inform our approaches to a sustainable development path.

The NDP marked a culmination in a series of developments based on comparative lessons of developmental experiences.

Taking the Asian experiences as a critical point of departure, the NDP and several City level Development Plans had to take the heritage of our people as a framing anchor for it to be organic and relevant.

It is in this vein that the principal precepts of Ubuntu became of cardinal importance both in terms of the process as well as the goals of our Development Plans.

As Caring Cities, we remain vigilant and very much alert to our responsibilities as ultimate providers of livelihoods in cases where our people are impecunious and bereft of means.
In so doing, we retain critical detachment to avoid becoming nanny entities whose long term effect of to stunt the organic growth of creative energies within our citizenry and thus result in the institutionalisation if long term dependency.

We reiterate, Ubuntu is not an act of charity, but an affirmation of our inter-subjective conditioning as human beings.

In this context, in all our endeavours we need to jealously guard against any tendency that will result in permanent damage that negatively affects a member’s ability to fully and responsibly participate in societal affairs.

Tshwane 2055 Vision Statement is a living testament of the local consensus moulded through a protracted process of intensive interaction with the people of Tshwane to best determine their long term goals and aspirations.

All the collective property of the citizens of Tshwane, the implementation and eventual success of the 2055 Vision rests on their shoulders, both collectively and severally.

This is the spirit we are trying to cultivate within the City so that our citizens graduate from passive recipients of handouts and orders, to joint custodians of their common affairs.

Without the cultivation of a critical civic culture all the sound plans we have will remain the province of a few people, with the majority remaining marginal to crucial issues impacting on their lives.

It is our wish as the City of Tshwane that the levels of participation in the formulation of Vision 2055 can remain a mobilising tool to weld our people to active interests in the implementation and monitoring of the processes and goals of our plan.

Vision 2055 is our answer to the imperatives economic growth and social development informed by our own unique local conditions.

It is our chosen path to moulding the Metropolitan City of Tshwane into an attractive destination for investments that maximises the potential of all its citizens.

Thank You for Listening!