Chapter 4
Forging Civic and Democratic Governance From Below Through Virtual State and Communities: Case Studies of Communities of Practice

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ABSTRACT

The demand for accountable and transparent government in post-apartheid is apparent as citizens and social movements are up in arms exercising their democratic citizenship for democratic governance. By employing effective communication, sharing tasks, planning together, and monitoring performance, teams are able to achieve their goals. The advantage of adopting a virtual state and teams is that the usage of technology to mediate virtual teams allows organisations to reduce costs (human and non-human resources), especially for international virtual teams. This chapter argues that without a holistic understanding of how the government works, the existing participatory mechanisms such as the constituency offices and ward committees would not yield the desired outcomes and impact. The chapter made use of case studies of communities of practice to unpack the concept of a virtual state and communities.
INTRODUCTION

The political history of South Africa is protracted and complex and its complexity is further aggravated by various invasions and annexation from the Dutch and German to English. The periodization of this history can be traced through the arrival of the Europeans in 1652 which is underpinned by a hostile and brutal period of imperialism. Johnson and Jacobs (2012, p. 299) narrative version of South African history state that prior to 1910, the territory now known as South Africa was divided into British colonies (the Cape Colony and Natal) and the independent Afrikaner republics (the Transvaal and the Orange Free State). South Africa was given birth through the Union of South Africa (1910 -1948) which is argued to be the result of a political compromise between the victorious British and Afrikaners. The Afrikaners on one hand were granted political power and control over the new government and over the native population while the British on the other hand, guaranteed their continued economic dominance by maintaining control over the mineral resources such as gold and diamond mining (Johnson and Jacobs, 2012, p. 299). The political pact from 1652 – 1909; 1919 – 1948 to 1948 -1990 consolidated exclusion and marginalisation through colonial, imperial and finally, the Apartheid system of governance. The electoral victory of the National Party in 1948 saw the official inauguration of the Apartheid system of governance with notorious laws enacted to discriminate which resulted in intensified African resistance against these discriminatory laws.

The struggle for political liberation and emancipation waged against the oppressive and exploitative Apartheid regime culminated into the democratic dispensation in 1994. Despite the armed struggle, South Africa engaged in a political and peaceful negotiated settlement known as the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) between 1990 and 1994 (Johnson and Jacobs, 2012, p. 87). CODESA was preceded by the release of Nelson Mandela, including the unbanning of political liberation movements such as the ANC, PAC and other subsidiary organisations in 1990. Van Niekerk (2002, p. 61) argues that De Klerk’s actions were heroic and foresaw the coming of a free South Africa. CODESA was established as a negotiating forum at the end of 1991 aimed at facilitating the creation of a new constitutional dispensation for South Africa after Apartheid. The birth of a democratic governance saw the introduction of people-centred policies and programmes as the redress of the injustices of the past (ANC, 1994). Considering that the political economy of South Africa was on shaky ground, being weakened by imposed sanctions and internal pressure, GNU in particular, the ANC inherited an economically bankrupt government. Jeeves and Cuthbertson (2008, p. 3) add that despite the stagnated economy, Mandela’s administration saw rapid population growth, unemployment, poverty and inequality flourishing. Consequently, this inheritance became the fertile ground for the country’s staggering rate of violent crime, high unemployment and
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