

Vision 2030 requires leadership and courage

 By [Chris Whelan](#)

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Cape Town's socio-economic challenges - reflected in a massively divided, low-growth economy that reminds of pre-1994 apartheid development despite two decades of a democratic dispensation - cannot be overcome through narrow, sectarian politicking.

The city will not progress, nor will it give evidence to a 'better life for all' whilst short-term, political interests are placed ahead of a broad, apolitical and people-centred development strategy. Such a strategy, stressing inclusive growth of the economy and focused on actionable outcomes, requires leadership and courage across the board, including from all political parties, business and civil society.

In 2009 Accelerate Cape Town led a group of over 450 government, business, academia and civil society leaders in developing Vision 2030 to be Africa's global city of innovation and inspiration. This has since been repeated by the City of Cape Town (and is reflected in the city's development strategy) and by the Economic Development Partnership's OneCape2040.

Lofty ideals

All agree broadly that we should be safe, well-educated, prosperous, etc. As is often the case in South Africa, there is no shortage of lofty ideals, but we have been found sorely wanting for quality execution. Twenty years of democracy has, for far too many Capetonians, been twenty years of hope deferred.

Business recognises that the socio-economic transformation of a city can take twenty to twenty five years. This is why Vision 2030 was built on the foundations of education, skills development and training, and safety and security - absolute fundamentals in building a just, equitable and prosperous society. Long-term planning around the key issues of connectedness, talent, distinctiveness and innovation, as well as sustainability, agreed by politicians across the spectrum as priorities that must supersede electoral cycles, is needed.

Effective execution of such far-reaching plans will require leaders of major political parties, business, government, and civil society to come together and jointly commit to lead the region to eradicate the scourge of poverty, drugs and hopelessness so evident beyond the leafy suburbs. While such leadership can be lonely at times and certainly requires enduring courage and a healthy dose of humility, a lot can be achieved if people are prepared to forego some of the short-term glory in favour of meaningful outcomes in the medium and long terms.

Game changers

Frankly, the alternative - rising poverty, gangsterism, economic turmoil, uncertainty and strife - compels us to act decisively. Now. Candidly, focusing on three or four 'game changers' such as expediting the excellent myCiti rollout; enabling broadband connectivity to give all Capetonians low-cost internet access; granting title deeds to long-term tenants on state-owned land; and energy security, holds the potential to unlock Cape Town's future prosperity. Agreeing on the priorities, and then rising above vested interests in favour of collaborative execution, would demonstrate the sort of leadership we need.

The influence of countries is diminishing and their ability to govern in a globalised world is under par when compared to the complexities facing us. Collectively, city governments and business, and in particular multinational companies, is emerging as one of the most influential social institutions of our time. What this does is to raise the bar on society's expectations of civil and business, as well as responsible, global leadership.

If Cape Town is to realise its 2030 vision, myopic politicking must be overcome in favour of a growth approach. Sacrificing turf battles now for the sake of long-term, inclusive growth will benefit all parties in the long run. We have the vision. What we need now is the political will, and courageous leadership by all stakeholders, to act on it decisively, relentlessly and collaboratively.

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