

THE MACHINERY OF SIMULATION

A MANIFESTO



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The Machinery of Simulation: A Manifesto...

“They let us in the room, but they locked the door behind us. They don’t create jobs; they reassign scarcity. They don’t silence us; they file us.”

This is our present, this is the performance staged as progress... That promise - once a hinge for reconciliation and shared prosperity - has calcified into choreography: quotas, dashboards, scorecards, staged appointments and ritual consultations... The show runs smoothly and the applause is manufactured... Us the people who most need change are transformed into numbers, case files and icons - celebrated in annual reports and erased in daily life...

This exposé is not an academic audit, neither a policy primer... It is a manifesto: a naming, a stripping away, a call to arms for those who refuse to be absorbed... We do not ask kindly for reform, we demand rupture!...

Below are the mapping of the machinery: how symbolic inclusion is staged, how scarcity is redistributed, how dissent is managed and neutralised through the quietest instruments of governance... We document the human cost, the logic that sustains it and the architecture of a resistance that does not beg to be counted - it tears the ledger apart...

I. The Illusion of Progress...

Transformation became a thing of spreadsheets... It took the shape of matrices, targets, tick boxes... On paper, the numbers change and in practice, the relationships of power remain... The language of progress - equity, redress, empowerment - was co-opted into a bureaucratic lexicon that measures optics and absolves responsibility...

Imagine a town hall where a municipal display glows with a “transformation scorecard.” The screen shows a pleasing distribution of colours, genders and categories. Citizens in the back row clutch petitions; the audio from their testimony is trimmed in the recording to two succinct quotes... The municipality posts the footage, adds a smiling photo of an appointed community liaison and the narrative of progress circulates on social feeds... Meanwhile, the clinic roof leaks, the school supplies run out and there has been no investment in local enterprise... The scorecard has done its work: it insulated reputation, neutralised scrutiny and made the real question - who holds the means of production? unaskable...

This is the genius of the illusion: it translates structural failure into a handful of celebratory metrics... Broad initiatives - frequently named in noble terms - become instruments of image management... B-BBEE, employment equity protocols, tender scorecards: all can be executed in a way that makes institutions look compliant without altering the relationships that distribute wealth, capital and access...

Metrics are seductive because they are audible proof: you can show them at conferences, plaster them on websites and use them to answer probing questions in the press... But metrics are not outcomes... They do not feed a child, fix a clinic, hire a teacher where none exist, create an industrial ecosystem or unlock capital for small-scale manufacturing... Metrics can be curated, they can be gamed... They can be used to manufacture legitimacy...

Worse: when a façade of diversity appears, critics fall silent... The presence of a few visible figures - a Black CEO in a photograph, the token rural scholarship holder at a graduation, the appointed Black board member - becomes a shield against deeper interrogation... The system points: look, transformation... The pointing absolves and closes debate... The guarded room remains guarded...

This is not progress but progress theatre that supplies a narrative of moral fulfilment - a moral alibi - that delays and deflects the work of substantive change...

II. The Grant State: Care as Containment...

“The grant is not a lifeline. It is a leash.”

A social grant can be a bridge to dignity or a cord that tethers... In our economy, the grant system has become the central mechanism for managing mass survival - not for enabling liberation... Millions receive the Child Support Grant and millions more depend on pensions and disability allowances... These systems stabilise daily life but stabilising life is not the same as creating life... Grants are necessary for survival, yes...

But the design and political use of the grant system in our context accomplishes three things simultaneously:

1. It holds millions in a state of dependency while the structural economy fails to create routes of independent livelihoods...
2. It produces a tracked, governable population that can be monitored and managed by bureaucratic processes...
3. It becomes a political instrument used for patronage and control...

Consider the caregiver: a grandmother teaching grandchildren to cook over a hotplate because parents are absent; a mother juggling casual work and long queues; a guardian who has spent years navigating forms to maintain a modest stipend... That stipend is insufficient, precarious and conditional... It requires verification cycles, re-registration and compliance rituals that discipline time and mobility... Miss one appointment or one form and the stipend is interrupted... The state thus converts care into a compliance relationship, making civic dignity contingent on bureaucracy...

There is also a statistical function to this containment... Millions of caregivers and carers are classified as “economically inactive” for the simple reason that they’re not actively seeking formal employment... But they are not economically inactive by choice... They are immobilised by structural barriers: lack of affordable childcare, collapsed transport networks, mismatch between qualifications and available work and the design of labour markets that privilege certain geographies and social networks...

So, the grant system becomes a kind of statistical camouflage... Unemployment rates look lower than the lived reality because millions of caregivers fall outside the narrow technical definition of unemployment... The benchmark reads better and the story told by the data reassures stakeholders... The crisis recedes on paper, even as it deepens in front yards and kitchens across the country...

That containment is political and electoral cycles that shape grants... Promises of increases convert into votes, with delays that can be framed as sabotage by political rivals... The grant becomes the currency of political leverage: increase it to secure loyalty; threaten to remove or suspend to discipline...

A humane welfare system should be a foundation - not a final stage... It should scaffold people into autonomy, not tether them into inactivity... Our system currently does the latter... It masks the crisis it purports to remedy... It asks for gratitude while refusing investment... It dresses subsistence in dignity but strips the architecture that would create independence.

III. Unemployment by Design..

“The system does not create jobs; it succeeds in keeping the majority in poverty.”

Unemployment is talked about as if it were a force of nature and it is not... In every economy, some sectors grow and others decline... Policy choices determine where investment flows, what infrastructures are built, which regions receive access and how the labour pipeline is designed... In our country, the institutional setup - education, industrial policy, procurement, zoning and finance - not only fails to absorb the excluded; it makes exclusion predictable... Consider the pipeline from primary school to paid work... In the townships, schools are under-resourced and overcrowded...

Class sizes are large, libraries are absent, electricity and water can be unreliable... Just because did not over the years invested in the schooling system... Not building more schools, trained teachers and supply the necessary aid for learners and teachers... a Child emerges into adolescence where opportunities to intern, apprentice, or upskill are scarce... University entry is gated not merely by ability but by fees, residence policies and a system that funnels some students into underfunded, low-growth programs...

When those graduates emerge, they find an economy whose demand favours established networks, capital-intensive industries and credential floods that privilege those already in... The formal sector, where stable wage employment exists, does not have to be exclusionary... But it is, access to those 4 million skilled and managerial jobs is mediated by social networks, inherited wealth, geographic proximity to economic centres and the soft infrastructure of mentorship and exposure... The result is a labour market that reproduces itself...

When jobs do not materialise, the state's answer is rarely to invest in new economic platforms at scale... Instead, we see incremental programs, pilot projects and constrained incentives that create illusions of activity but no large-scale job creation... The logic becomes: manage the excluded rather than change the economy... That is unemployment by design: not accidental, but structural, purposeful and politically comfortable...

Unemployment functions as a control mechanism when combined with the grant state and data practices... If survival is guaranteed at a subsistence level and political patronage fills the gaps when convenient, there is less pressure on elites to release the means of production... The economy is not restructured; the excluded are managed... This design is reinforced by what passes for labour policy... We set targets for representation, quotas for boards and management and compliance paperwork for companies - then are surprised when unemployment among the majority remains high... The policy instruments are not aligned with industrial creation or broad-based ownership... They are aligned with optics and juridical compliance...

Real job creation requires courage: money for infrastructure, incentives for manufacturing, strategic public procurement to build capacity, long-term investment in technical education and apprenticeships, a redistribution of ownership... That redistribution must move beyond token shareholders and into cooperative models, worker-ownership programs, community investment trusts, and developmental procurement that privileges local employment creation over lowest-cost bidding... Without that, the country will continue to have low-visibility, low-paid informal survival economies alongside a narrow formal sector where the privileged remain insulated - and unemployment will remain a strategy of governance...

IV. Demographic Coding as Erasure

“They don’t count us wrong. They count us in ways that make us disappear.”

Bureaucratic coding is never neutral... When race, gender, disability and nationality are collapsed into boxes on a form, an invisible logic takes hold: the logic of manageability... The state turns complex human narratives into discrete categories so systems can function... But that simplification is not benign; it restructures access and erases nuance... The decision to aggregate African, Coloured and Indian into one broad “Black” category - while politically expedient for a certain historic redress narrative - obscures internal hierarchies and lived differences...

Communities that have distinct histories, marginalisations and needs are flattened... Coloured and Indian South Africans, who have been historically marginalised in differing ways, can be statistically absorbed and then deprioritised... Poor Whites in isolated pockets become an abstract “legacy” problem rather than targets of inclusion... Foreign nationals become statistical noise - present when the economy needs them, invisible when it chooses to deny them access to rights.

Coding shapes outcomes in predictable ways... It determines who qualifies for a tender, who receives a bursary, who is counted for a quota, who is invited to a consultation, who is prioritised for housing allocation... When codes substitute for contextual judgement on competence, vulnerability, or need, you get distribution that is technocratic and dehumanising...

This is worse in institutions that use coding for compliance rather than for justice... a Firm can tick boxes to show it meets racial composition targets without interrogating whether the power, decision-making and ownership structures have changed... A university can admit a small cohort of rural students and still leave graduation rates, mental-health support, funding for student accommodation and curricular relevance untouched... Coding should have been a tool of inclusion but instead it became a tool of erasure...

V. The Tyranny of Targets

“They don’t transform the system. They transform the spreadsheet.”

Targets are seductive in governance because they promise control: set a target, measure compliance, enforce consequences... But when targets become the point, the system loses sight of the purpose... The Employment Equity Amendment Act, with sectoral targets and public scorecards, was intended as a corrective to historic inequality... It had the potential to be disruptive in a healthy way - to open black-owned capital channels, to demand apprenticeship

pipelines, to force procurement to privilege local industry... But in many implementations, targets collapsed into quotas: boxes to be filled and presentations to be staged...

Quotas are useful when they are minimums, not ceilings... But too often they morph into ceilings: a firm will do the least necessary to comply and then stop... Further, the incentives of institutional compliance create perverse outcomes: institutions hire for representation but not for integration... New hires get placed in roles that are visible but powerless... Individuals become the measure, not the means... The result: tokenism plus institutional inertia...

Targets also create resentment when they are aggregated without nuance... We see the conflation of diverse communities into broad categories that do not reflect difference in opportunity, geography or class... This fuels backlash and fractures solidarity among marginalised groups - precisely the opposite of what transformation should do...

Finally, the tyranny of targets incentivises gaming... When funding, procurement and reputational capital hinge on scorecards, institutions hire consultants whose job is to optimise reporting rather than outcomes... They create “diversity plans” that read well in audits but do nothing to change who controls capital, who sits on boards, who owns land or who accesses credit...

Real transformation requires targets that are structural: measures of ownership transfer, of sustained local hiring through supply-chain reforms, of increases in productive capacity in marginalised regions and of sustained public investment in education linked to labour market demand... Without structural targets, target-driven governance is a theatre of numbers...

VI. Caregivers as Captives...

“They don’t pay us because they don’t see us. They see the grant, not the labour.”

Care work is the invisible cement that holds society together... Yet the economy largely treats caregiving as an unpaid externality... Mothers, grandmothers and guardians provide education, emotional labour, childcare and survival planning - while the state frames them as beneficiaries rather than producers...

This invisibility takes many forms... a Grandmother may be the primary economic actor in a household, providing food, school uniforms, transport and health management for multiple children... But policy conversations rarely start from the reality of her labour...

Training programs may ignore her skills and employment strategies rarely account for flexible childcare that could enable her to engage in income-generating work... Thus, the economy excuses her predicament as cultural, familial or personal, rather than structural... The conditionality of grants further compounds this... Benefit systems often require caregivers to attend check-ins, to produce documentation, to maintain strict registration processes - processes that consume time and energy that could be spent in entrepreneurial or community-building pursuits... The grant thus becomes a job in itself: the job of maintaining eligibility for the grant...

Caregivers resist and create parallel economies: community creches, rotating credit societies, informal tutoring, food-sharing networks and small-scale entrepreneurship... These are acts of creative survival and social solidarity... They are also evidence of the capacity that could be unleashed by policies that recognise care as work and support it through resourced infrastructure: universal childcare, caregiver stipends that recognise hours and responsibilities, pensions linked to contributions for caregiving and opportunities for caregivers to join skills training adapted to their schedules... Until care is treated as labour - visible, valued and remunerated - the economy will continue to extract this work while pretending not to notice... The caregivers are indispensable... They are not recipients but workers deserving of dignity, pay and pathways to autonomy...

VII. Symbolic Inclusion, Real Exclusion...

“They let us into the room, but they lock the door behind us.”

Symbolic inclusion is the slow theatre of modern transformation... Institutions will appoint a figure from a disadvantaged community, place them into an isolated role and then celebrate... The appointee is showcased in

reports, featured in speeches and used to answer probing questions in committee... But the underlying architecture - procurement rules, salary scales, governance hierarchies and recruitment pipelines - remains unchanged...

A Black executive can sit at a board table and simultaneously have no access to meaningful decision-making or ownership... a Rural student can be admitted into a university and be expected to survive on meagre resources without mentorship... a Disabled employee can be hired and then excluded from board meetings, from accessible facilities or from career development tracks...

Symbolic inclusion is particularly dangerous because it is convincing... It allows institutions to claim moral progress, to deflect critique and to protect reputation... It also criminalises dissent: when there is visible “representation” the charge that exclusion persists seems cynical, sentimental or impatient... But representation without power is decoration, it is window-dressing for an economy that keeps its real levers of control intact...

To dismantle symbolic inclusion, we must insist on redistribution - not of headlines but of power... This means demands for ownership transfer, for mandatory pipelines that connect procurement to local ownership, for board seats that come with governance power and equity and for sponsorships that lead to long-term partnership rather than ephemeral publicity...

Representation must come with authority... The presence of a few cannot be allowed to substitute for structural change...

VIII. Collapse by Redistribution...

“They don’t create jobs. They reassign scarcity.”

A particularly corrosive idea has emerged: if jobs are scarce, then redistribution of existing jobs - shifting roles from members of certain communities to others - can equalise employment figures... This is a zero-sum logic, it assumes the economy is a pie of fixed slices that can only be reallocated... That logic treats people as fungible and turns livelihoods into seats to be taken... It creates a policy environment where inclusion becomes synonymous with displacement...

It prioritises short-term optics over generational capacity building... It pits groups against each other: minorities are seen as obstacles to be removed rather than as citizens whose livelihoods must be defended and whose vistas of opportunity must be expanded... Redistribution by removal deepens the crisis. It produces resentment... It fractures social solidarity... It fails to address the structural constraints that cause unemployment in the first place - lack of investment, poor infrastructure, automation, undercapitalised small enterprise and concentrated ownership...

There is a just way to redistribute: redistribute opportunity, capital and ownership... Instead of subtracting jobs from one group, we must build mechanisms that generate more work: localisation of procurement to favour community-based suppliers, public works that create permanent local assets, co-operative development funds and targeted investment in industries with potential for scalable labour absorption...

Justice through subtraction is not justice but justice through expansion is...

IX. The Architecture of Containment...

“They don’t silence us. They file us.”

The most effective forms of domination are not spectacular; they are mundane... When the state can neutralise dissent by turning it into paperwork, ritual and consultation, it has solved a political problem... The activist becomes a stakeholder... The complaint becomes a case file, demand becomes a checkbox in a planning document...

This architecture functions through several mechanisms:

- Procedural delay: Consultations, hearings, impact statements and audits stretch timelines... While the process is underway, needs intensify...
- Data governance: Mapping, metrics and dashboards define what counts... If a crisis doesn’t register on a dashboard it is not urgent...

- Spatial design: Zoning and transport policy push disadvantaged communities to the periphery; distance erodes political visibility and economic access...
- Compliance culture: Performance indicators, scorecards and compliance gates encourage the appearance of action rather than action...

Take the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), it promises participatory planning... In practice many IDP engagements are ritual: inputs are documented and archived, workshops convened, recommendations filed away and budgets allocated to ceremonial projects - not to substantive community-driven infrastructure... The paperwork is undeniable proof of engagement... The result: communities are pacified and branded as consulted, even when outcomes fail them...

Similarly, the use of data to manage dissent is subtle and effective... Social media sentiment analysis, service delivery protest tracking and grant uptake analytics are used not to address grievances but to anticipate and pacify them... If a protest can be mapped, predicted and partially satisfied through a token payment or a match-funded project, then the systems kick into stabilisation mode rather than justice mode...

This architecture is designed to contain, not to correct... It is designed to maintain equilibrium...

X. Toward a New Resistance...

“They built the machine to absorb our anger. We are building one to amplify it.”

If the architecture of modern transformation is a machine of simulation, our project must be a machine of rupture... We do not seek permission to be included in the system that excludes us... We will build alternatives, this resistance is not a rally or a slogan... It is an architecture: a set of practices, institutions and cultural forms that replicate the best of civic life without reproducing the machinery of containment...

Principles of the resistance:

1. Memory as infrastructure, the archive of experience - oral testimonies, community registers, lived histories - becomes a resource, not a dossier for external researchers... We will build community archives that are accessible, distributed and used to assert claims...
2. Design as discipline... Layout, typography, language and narrative are not cosmetic; they are strategic... Communiqués, manifestos and public forms should be legible, distributed and unapologetically direct... Public-facing documents will be constructed as instruments of mobilisation, not negotiation...
3. Economic re-architecting... Build co-operatives, community trusts and local procurement networks that shift ownership away from extractive centres... Use municipal procurement to seed regional value-chains... Create training pipelines tied to demand rather than abstract educational outputs...
4. Care as work... Recognise caregiving with remuneration, training and social recognition that enables caregivers to participate in other forms of economic life... Fund community-run creches and elder-care networks so caregivers can work without sacrificing care...
5. Tactical refusal... Refuse paper-based consultations that have no teeth... Refuse to be tokenised, communities must stop supplying fuel to the machine by participating in meaningless engagements...
6. Distributed organising... Build modular, local nodes of resistance that can coordinate but do not centralise... Use informal networks, cooperative platforms and pragmatic mutual aid to survive and to build power...
7. Unignorable visibility... Use culture, art, and local media to create narratives that are impossible to reduce to a line item on a dashboard... A viral story of everyday failure - a teacher walking miles to an under-resourced school, a grandmother writing down family memories - can shift moral attention in ways bureaucrats cannot dock...

Tactics:

- Create community-run procurement coalitions to win local contracts and build capacity...

- Launch neighbourhood trusts that own local assets and distribute returns across members...
- Establish legal clinics that hold state institutions accountable for the substance, not merely the form of transformation commitments...
- Build apprenticeship pipelines directly linked to local industries with guaranteed placement clauses...
- Use public design to make the invisible visible: murals, public testimonies and cultural events that narrate the reality of exclusion beyond scores...

XI. The Reckoning Ahead...

They will tell you the system is evolving... They will show new frameworks, new scorecards, new dashboards... They will ask for patience... They will demand trust... They will ask you to believe that, over time, the numbers will line up with justice... Do not be hoodwinked, the machinery is learning and is getting better at absorbing dissent... Our task is to make absorption impossible, but rupture will not be sudden... It will be a withdrawal: withdrawal of consent, withdrawal of participation in hollow processes, withdrawal of labour from systems that exist to manage rather than to liberate...

It will be the building of parallel institutions that redistribute power materially rather than symbolically... This is not merely an act of resistance but an act of creation... We will build schools that feed the curious, not the metrics; industries that hire from their communities, not from networks; cultures that preserve memory and use it as leverage...

Our slogans are not angry improvisations, just blueprints... They are precise and uncompromising:

- “We are not symbols. We are systems.”
- “We are not proof of progress. We are proof of exclusion.”
- “We do not want to be included. We want to transform.”
- “We do not want your job. We want our future.”
- “We do not want subtraction. We want expansion.”
- “We do not want consultation. We want transformation.”

These are not soundbites, they are strategy!...

XII. A Final Blade: The Design of Freedom...

“This manifesto ends with a refusal and an invitation.”

The refusal: we refuse to be pacified by metrics, we refuse symbolic gestures that mask real power relations... We refuse to trade solidarity for short-term gain... We refuse to be categorised into boxes that make us disappear... The invitation: to craft, in our streets, homes and communities, an architecture of life that cannot be filed away... To build institutions that do not need the permission of those who have benefitted from containment... To make the presence of the marginalised a political force not because it looks good on a scorecard but because it unlocks human possibility...

Freedom is not an administrative project but it is an act of design... It is built by making choices about layout, access, ownership and narrative... It is manufactured in cooperatives and community trusts, in childcare spaces that free caregivers to participate, in apprenticeships that lead to real careers and in collective archives that make our stories undeniable...

When these choices are implemented at scale, simulation loses its currency... Policies that try to domesticate us will face communities that simply refuse the invitation to be absorbed... The machinery will spin and the people will be elsewhere - building, teaching, feeding and owning...The reckoning has begun...

Please everyone that receive and read this... Doesn't matter if you agree or not with what I've written here, please don't keep it for yourself... Spread it far and wide, let more people see and read, what's going on in South Africa...

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Date: 20 September 2025...