



TIPS FORUM 2022

TOWARDS A JUST TRANSITION

THE ROLE OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY

PROMOTING PARTICIPATORY GREEN INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: LESSONS FROM THE ATLANTIS SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER NETWORK

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Abstract

While the Just Transition calls for green industrialization, the focus is typically on a shift from coal-based sectors. This leaves out a whole chunk of South Africa's population and economy. For example, there are many areas which have traditionally depended on non-mining manufacturing and industry. These areas are politically and morally significant given South Africa's particular history of Apartheid-era spatial engineering, which set up many rural and peri-urban 'homeland' areas as industrial nodes. These areas are also in need of revitalization and indeed a Just Transition.

This article focusses on the case study of the green technology Atlantis Special Economic Zone (ASEZ), 40kms from Cape Town. The focus of this paper is not so much on the SEZ policy tool itself, and whether it creates a more spatially just economy, but rather on how such a policy be pursued in a participatory style. This is significant because it is this participatory approach which goes over and above existing industrial policy and the SEZ Act for example. The 2014 SEZ Act stipulates that community have one representative on the board, but the ASEZ has gone above and beyond. It has engaged the community from its inception, runs community development programs, and has set up a formal representational body with its own mandate.

But, while this paper is geared towards policy-relevant debates, social inclusivity is not easily turned into a policy, legal or technocratic issue, with easily measurable criteria for success. While the ASEZ has by no means been a perfect example of how to include community in area-based development, it offers some useful lessons. Firstly, the history of the CSN shows the importance of having a team that genuinely prioritises community in a systematic way: dedicating ring-fenced time, resources, and expertise. The CEO of the ASEZCo spent time in Atlantis meeting with stakeholders and building interpersonal trust. The ASEZCo employs a full-time team geared to community integration, enterprise and skills development, from which they take much of their lead from CSN and wider community feedback. This capacity building is not only geared to building employable skills in the wider community but also teaching CSN members to chair meetings, draft agendas, and take minutes for example. Moreover, the ASEZCo employs an external expert facilitator who facilitates all community meetings and capacity building. Here, the facilitator has stressed the importance of building trust and close relationships with the community, while not collapsing the interests of all community members with that of the organisation – there must be space for diversity of interests, identities, ideologies, and space for conflict and negotiation.

Finally, this paper does not offer any conclusive answers on 'how to do participatory development'. Neither does it provide a comprehensive academic literature review. Instead it aims to attract attention to the moral and political salience of this kind of approach in the context of the Just Transition, and to shed some light on further questions about participatory approaches in practical terms.

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Abbreviations

ASEZ Company (ASEZCo), 6

ASEZ's Community Stakeholder Network (ASEZ-CSN), 6

Atlantis Special Economic Zone (ASEZ), 6

Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE), 6

City of Cape Town (CoCT), 8

Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDAT), 8

Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC), 7

Independent Power Procurement (IPP), 6

Renewable Energy Development Zones (REDZ), 6

Renewable Independent Power Procurement Program (REIPPP), 6

Terms of Reference (TOR), 8

1. Introduction

This paper foregrounds green industrialisation in peri-urban, marginalised areas as a critical part of South Africa's Just Transition. It argues that a Just Transition should not just be conceptualised intuitively as a *transition* from coal-based industry, but also as the development of new sustainable industry in areas which have been structurally marginalised. In particular, this article zooms in on the Atlantis Special Economic Zone (ASEZ) as a case study to explore how green industrialisation can be promoted through participatory approaches in ex apartheid-created industrial nodes, which may have ailed in the democratic era.

The ASEZ is a green technology manufacturing zone 40km from Cape Town. Atlantis at large was set up as a 'Coloured' industrial node by the Apartheid government in 1971, as part of its racist strategy of 'separate development'. While this program was successful in employing the many so-called 'Coloured' people who moved to Atlantis, since the mid-1980s when the incentives scheme to white business ended, the area has experienced deindustrialisation and high unemployment levels. It is therefore a useful case study to show that there are sections of South Africa's economy and population that require revitalisation. This should also be a focus on the Just Transition.

While SEZs have been critiqued in academia and public commentary since the 1970s for creating exploitative and enclave-type environments, international policy has begun to adapt to these criticisms. Today, best practice in spatial industrial development views local communities, labour, and the environment as meaningful stakeholders. This means that all stakeholders – in particular local people – should be included in participatory processes in planning for and managing an SEZ. In this regard, SEZs can offer lessons for other forms of area-based development, like Independent Power Procurement (IPP) projects and Renewable Energy Development Zones (REDZ), to name a few, where there are legal mandates to deliver benefits to local, often rural, communities.

But participation is not easily turned into a policy, legal or technocratic issue, with easily measurable criteria for success. Existing policies that govern SEZs and other area-based developments – such as the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Act, Just Transition, National Development Plan, Renewable Independent Power Procurement Program (REIPPP), and SEZ Act – offer useful guidelines. But case studies from existing industry can contribute further guidance on how to actually pursue a participatory approach to green industrialisation. Moreover, there is a wealth of critical academic commentary on sustainable and participatory development (Cohen and Uphoff, 1980, Salole, 1991, Knippenberg et al., 1997, Agrawal and Gibson, 1999, Cornwall, 2000, Cornwall and Gaventa, 2000, Mosse, 2003, Bridge, 2004). But this paper aims to make a pragmatic contribution, drawing on the lessons of the ASEZ's approach.

While the ASEZ has by no means been a perfect example of how to include community in area-based development, it offers some useful lessons. Going over and above the requirements of the SEZ Act, in 2018 the ASEZ Company (ASEZCo) set up dedicated team to promote local economic beneficiation and inclusion. This has included consistent enterprise and skills development programs and the establishment of a multisectoral, voluntary representative forum, the ASEZ's Community Stakeholder Network (ASEZ-CSN).

The rest of the article proceeds as follows. First, it makes a case to broaden the intuitive conceptualisation of the Just Transition to include a spatial focus on areas which are structurally marginalised, including from fossil fuel-based industries. Next, the case study of the ASEZ is used in use to highlight how this kind of green industrialisation can be achieved in a way that is participatory and therefore more socially inclusive and aligned to the Just Transition.

This paper does not offer any conclusive answers on 'how to do participatory development' in peri-urban, high unemployment ex homelands. Neither does it provide a comprehensive academic literature review. Instead it aims to attract attention to the moral and political salience of this kind of

approach in the context of the Just Transition ,and to shed some light on further questions about participatory approaches in practical terms. So, more than providing definitive answers, this paper hopes to raise further debate.

2. Reconceptualising the Just Transition in critical spatial terms

The concept of the Just Transition has two philosophical components – to become environmentally sustainable at the same time as being ‘just’, which means fair and socially equitable. More empirically the concept refers to a shift to sustainable industrialization. At one level this means creating a growth path which is labour intensive and provides affordable energy to all. In particular, the concept of the Just Transition speaks back to a political economy concept which explains that South Africa’s economy has been structurally centered on a ‘Minerals-Energy Complex’ (Fine and Rustomjee, 1995). This concept implies that South Africa’s economy, or regime of accumulation, has historically been based on the mining of abundant coal and natural resources, and the exploitation of cheap black labour, to produce cheap energy (see Baker et al., 2014, Burton et al., 2022). From a jobs perspective, the idea here is that the mining sector has traditionally been a top employer but is becoming increasingly environmentally unsustainable. As such, in the contemporary era there has been much literature on how to create fair outcomes for those who work in and are affected by fossil fuel-based industries (see for example Newell and Mulvaney, 2013, McCauley and Heffron, 2018). As such, in the shift away from coal, policy and industry needs to make sure to absorb those previously employed people into greener jobs.

However, the issue with this intuitive framing of the Just Transition – as a shift away from mining, hence the word ‘transition’– is that it ignores the people today who are unemployed and those who are structurally removed from centers of work. This foregrounds a spatial or critical geographic component to the Just Transition. This is particularly politically and morally significant in instances where people are living in old ‘homelands’ set up by the apartheid government. This approach is aligned with the the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition’s (DTIC) spatial development initiatives introduced in 1995 as part of a more interventionist, later called ‘developmental’, approach to managing the economy, picking regions and sectors expected to create jobs and growth. Critical scholars of the shift to renewable energy in South Africa have similarly pointed out that the Just Transition is not just a political or technical shift, but also a spatial shift, with land access and ownership playing a critical role in mediating potential accumulation from natural resources (McEwan, 2017).

The ASEZ is a good case study here. It falls under the broader spatial strategy of the DTIC, to create industry and jobs in marginalized areas. Atlantis is a consequence of apartheid state planning (Nel and Rogerson, 2009, 2013, 2014).

In an attempt to engineer the social, spatial, and economic domains of the country according to a racist scheme, the Apartheid government initiated its Regional Industrial Development Program which set up 80 so-called ‘growth points’ in black homelands, also known as Bantustans. As part of its ‘industrial decentralisation’ plan the apartheid government set up ‘industrial parks’, offering special incentives and concessions to white manufacturing firms (Tomlinson and Addleson, 1987, Jauch, 2002, Tang, 2008). Given the global sanctions placed on the South African economy at the time, mining firms and financial companies invested in these manufacturing hubs, but were ultimately never very successful in this arena, and were quick to withdraw in the post-apartheid era, choosing instead to expand regionally in mining and finance (Moritz, 1994, Kaplinsky and Mhlongo, 1997).

This industrial decentralisation strategy served to showcase the Apartheid state’s ‘separate development’ philosophy in action. But it also aimed to address more immediate and pragmatic goals, like managing urban sprawl in designated ‘white’ areas (Chinguno, 2009) and as a way to diffuse a

growing militancy among organised labour in major industrial hubs after World War II (Bezuidenhout and Moussouris, 2007).

As part of this plan, in 1971 the Apartheid government designed an industrial zone, 40km from the City of Cape Town (CoCT). Initially known only as a sandy area 'near Malmesbury' (Stafford, 2005), the apartheid government built a township here, and moved in many so-called Coloured people. Thus 'Atlantis' was born. It was declared a National Growth Point in 1976. The apartheid-era Atlantis underwent boom-and-bust cycles, before its incentives programs and defence manufacturing contracts were terminated in the mid-1980s. In 1984, 12788 jobs had been created, but, after the termination most factories moved out, the area began to deindustrialise, beginning a process of long term economic decline and disarticulation from Cape Town's urban core. Only about 10 firms remained, including Atlantis Foundries and KayTech Geosynthetics (Grant et al., 2020). A report to the Executive Mayoral Committee of the CoCT in 2011 pronounced, 'Atlantis is a distressed area that has catapulted into long-term economic decline given continued loss of business and jobs in the area' (City of Cape Town, 2011, p.1).

3. Case Study: Participatory approaches in the ASEZ

It is against this historical backdrop that the post-apartheid government has a moral and political mandate to reindustrialise Atlantis. In 2011, the post-apartheid, CoCT set up an intergovernmental technical task team to propose framework for revitalisation of Atlantis. The Atlantis Revitalization Framework was established in 2012. This team identified two sites in the existing Atlantis industrial cluster to set up a 'greentech' industrial park. The ASEZ was initiated by the DTIC, the Western Cape government's Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDAT), the CoCT, GreenCape and Wesgro, and later the ASEZCo

It is the contention of this paper that the mandate to turn Atlantis into a green technology SEZ falls part of the Just Transition, even though it has nothing to do with a transition from coal. It is a transition from an unequal spatial layout of the economy, to create jobs and economic opportunities in previously marginalised areas. Here, the focus is not so much on the SEZ policy tool itself, and whether it creates a more spatially just economy, but rather on how such a policy be pursued in a participatory style. This is significant because it is this participatory approach which goes over and above existing industrial policy and the SEZ Act for example. The 2014 SEZ Act stipulates that community have one representative on the board, but the ASEZ has gone above and beyond. It has engaged the community from its inception, runs community development programs, and has set up a formal representational body with its own mandate.

The CSN was set up as follows: an Interim Working Committee was set up in August 2018 in which local community members were recruited. For this committee, about 10 local people, met with project managers, the Western Cape government, and the DTIC to discuss the potential for a community representative body. Together, in October 2018, these stakeholders finished drafting a Terms of Reference (TOR) setting the mandate for the CSN. For example, the TOR stipulates, among other things, that the function of the CSN should be as follows:

To endeavour to become self-reliant as the "ASEZ-CSN" and to consider the registration of the organisation so that it can become an income generating body that develops into an independent entity.

To act as a primary channel of communication between the Atlantis SEZ and the community

To provide information shared with the "ASEZ-CSN" to community stakeholders, if and when necessary and upon request

To monitor and evaluate the ASEZ projects to ensure that there are economic opportunities for communities (ASEZ-CSN, 2018, p.1).

Having laid out the general principles of the CSN, Green Cape was mandated by this IWC to facilitate elections. Members were to be drawn from eight sectors: education; youth; women and persons with a disability; organised labour; faith-based organisations; business; civic organisations, Non-Profit Organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations; traditional councils, and cultural groups. Following a number of information sessions in early 2019, members of the community were able to nominate themselves to be elected in a vote provided they came from a registered organisation or one that was in the process of being registered from within the SEZ geographical area, Ward 29 and Ward 32. Following the election and counting of the votes in February 2019, two sectors were required to vote again, to make the elections as legitimate as possible. Green Cape also accepted written appeals of the election until 2019. Following these due processes, keeping the community informed at each stage, a publicly accepted CSN body was announced in a Town Hall meeting on 18 July 2019.

Because a democratic approach was taken to electing representatives to the CSN, there was no pre-set criteria regarding gender, age, or race for example. While this could have posed a risk to the equity of such community representation structures, in this case the CSN comprises an even mix at least by gender. Moreover, the decision to structure the CSN in terms of civil society sectors, as opposed to local businesses or other kinds of experts, has also provoked subsequent debate. The debate has been about whether community engagement requires specific expertise to enable the community to take economic opportunities, or whether its broader than that.

At the same time, the ASEZCo set up a dedicated work stream focussed on community integration, skills development, and enterprise development. This team facilitates monthly meetings with the CSN and runs programs. This includes enterprise development programs to train local community members in green technology like hydroponics to grow their own gardens on a commercial scale, or skills development programs to train people in solar panel installation and maintenance. This team is largely made up of skilled people from the wider Atlantis area itself, interns from the local West Coast College, and some experts from other parts of the country with diverse experience in community engagement and social work for example. This workstream is open to feedback: it hosts regular formal community meetings in local town halls, as well as informal engagements that result from their 'open door policy' which allows anyone from the community to drop in for an unplanned visit. The team draws on this feedback in setting its Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

But it is not just about procedure and administration. Community participation is neither a technical nor tick-box exercise. It involves multiple actors with different interests and ideologies. It necessarily involves debate and negotiation. There will always be difficulties and issues in aligning these. There is a debate about whether the CSN is or should be on a level of partnership with the ASEZCo. This has led to debates about the level of capacity training and remuneration CSN members should get. Some argue that they should be paid a full salary while others argue that this would lead to a collapse of interests between the zone company and the community. The ASEZCo's policy has been to provide a stipend to CSN members for data and transport costs, as well as providing them their own designated office space in the ASEZCo offices in Atlantis. The ASEZCo also facilitates capacity building workshops for the CSN – including for example information sessions on the green economy, relevant site visits to green-technology projects and other industrial zones, and for example lessons on how to draft minutes, agendas and formal letters.

Prior to the designation of the ASEZ, representatives of the DTIC held a community discussion in Atlantis, wherein they collectively endorsed the idea of a green technology SEZ and called for a community representative body. Some community members to this day also claim that the SEZ was their proposal in the first instance. Later, when President Ramaphosa came to designate the ASEZ in December 2018, he made a public announcement that the policy intention was for the zone to benefit the local community. While this was taken as an encouraging sign by many in the community, many now raise the issue that the announcement came too soon as they were expecting to see factories built and new jobs in the community soon after. This points to the crucial issue of making sure to align community expectations as far as possible with a realistic project timeline.

Perhaps as a result of the mismatch between community expectations and the slow project timeline, there was a period when the ASEZCo was first set up where it needed to build interpersonal trust with community members. During this period, the CSN and community expressed distrust to the project team, and only wanted to engage with the DTIC. To overcome this required sensitive interpersonal relating at frequent formal and informal meetings. A Community Integration specialist and a trained facilitator helped liase between the CSN and the DTIC. The CEO was also active in meeting individuals from Atlantis, even though it was not explicitly specified in his role. The CEO maintains that without the support of the community a project will fail, and he constantly feeds that message into ASEZ team meetings. Here, the CEO's involvement is often hailed by community members, highlighting the importance of personality in this process.

There was also the issue of the CSN remaining legitimate. At an Annual General Meeting in March 2022, the community aired grievances that some of the CSN sector representatives had not been fulfilling their obligation to communicate adequately with their sectors and the community. Here, it was not the aim of the ASEZCo to squash criticism or debate, but rather to hold space for it with a dedicated and trained facilitator. Aided by the professional facilitator, the community discussed the potential to 'realign' the CSN, coming up with a list of actionable items which were carefully minuted. One of these was the need for a more specialised Infrastructure Working Group (IWG) so that the community could be more systematically involved in the planning for the construction of Zone 1 (a greenfields part of the zone being planned for at the time of writing).

This IWG, coming out of the AGM as it did, provided an opportunity for the IES team and wider ASEZCo to further prove that they listen attentively to the community. Here, the ASEZ community integration team opened up nominations process to the community. This group has been meeting regularly, at the time of writing, with the CSN and ASEZCo. Their contract stipulates that they play an 'advisory role' – giving feedback on drafts of relevant Request for Quotations (RFQs) when the ASEZ goes out to tender, and on community related policies. In other words, they give their input but do not have veto power over tender documents and company policies and procedures.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this article positions its discussion of participatory approaches in the ASEZ in terms of a critical spatial view of the Just Transition. This view posits that the Just Transition should be understood both as a transition from coal and an transition into new sectors, unrelated to coal. This wider view of the Just Transition is crucial if we are to take into account the role of apartheid spatial engineering in setting up peri urban townships and homelands where people have been structurally marginalised from centres of work in the democratic era. The Just Transition is about overcoming racist apartheid spatial planning to include everyone in sustainable jobs and livelihoods.

To explore this possibility, this paper focussed on the ASEZ as a spatial intervention of the post apartheid era. However, instead of exploring whether and how this policy approach was successful overall, this paper zoomed into the participatory approach taken. This is because participation is a necessary dimension of promoting socially equitable green industrialisation for the Just Transition. Here, some lessons from the ASEZ's CSN were raised. It was highlighted that to 'do participation', the community needs to be involved from the outset. It helps if all levels of the project team, and even government, are engaging the community.

This paper also points to the fact that no community structure will be perfectly legitimate or beyond any critique. This is because, by nature, community structures comprise multiple actors and interests. What was useful from the ASEZ's approach, was that they made time and space – with the support of

an expert facilitator – to hold conflict and discussion, with the aim of turning it into productive and trust-building engagement.

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