Patricia De Lille

Patricia De Lille is Mayor of Cape Town. She is also Founder and Leader of the Independent Democrats Party.

1. A Pioneering Leader

Patricia De Lille was born in 1951 in Cape Town. Her first job was as a laboratory technician in a chemical factory, and whilst working in this role she became a member of the South African Chemical Workers’ Union. De Lille quickly moved up the ranks of the trade union, rising from shop steward to regional secretary, to a member of the National Executive in 1988. By 1988 De Lille had been elected Vice President of the National Trade Union Council, the highest position held by a woman in the trade union movement at the time.iii

In 1989 De Lille was elected to the National Executive of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), which had close ties to the trade union movement. The PAC pursued Africanist policies for black South Africans, and at the time was outlawed under the Apartheid regime. De Lille led the PAC’s delegation in the constitutional negotiations that preceded South Africa’s first democratic election in 1994, and was elected to Parliament as a member of the PAC in those first elections. She was also appointed Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on Transport in 1994 and was made the Chief Whip of the PAC.iv

In April 2003 De Lille broke away from the PAC and formed a new party, the Independent Democrats (ID) which attracted a strong following amongst liberal voters.v In doing so, she became the first woman in South African history to start a political party which contested and won parliamentary seats. In 2010, the ID merged with the Democratic Alliance, South Africa’s main opposition party, and De Lille was appointed Minister of Social Development for the Western Cape. The following year, De Lille was elected Mayor of Cape Town, winning almost two thirds of the vote. The Western Cape is currently the only South African province not under the control of the ruling African National Congress party.vi

Throughout De Lille’s remarkable career she has been driven by a desire to work for, and improve the lives of the people of South Africa. She explains:

“I really always wanted to serve my people... being an activist in the struggle against Apartheid, and having been part of political activism then, I always had this vision that you know one day when we are free, when we attain our freedom things will be better, and I wanted to serve my people.”vii

2. Leadership Style

Patricia De Lille has a distinctive leadership style which has won her many admirers. Nelson Mandela described De Lille as “a very strong, principled woman” and his “favourite opposition politician”.viii The key characteristics of that style are:

2.1. An Outspoken Leader

De Lille is known for her straight-talking style of leadership. Her motto is “Fear no-one. Speak up” and this was best displayed when she became the first politician to blow the whistle on
government corruption in the ‘Arms Deal’ surrounding South Africa’s purchase of weapons from British and European manufacturers in 1999. De Lille was not fazed by subsequent death threats, accusations of being unpatriotic, or suspected bugging of her home.xi

De Lille has continued to fight against corruption ever since - she is a member of the Global Organisation of Parliamentarians Against Corruption and the African Parliamentarians Network Against Corruption - and has never been afraid to publicly criticize those in power. She has been an outspoken opponent of President Thabo Mbeki’s relationship with Zimbabwe, and was suspended from Parliament for threatening to reveal the names of MPs alleged to have been Apartheid-era spies. De Lille has also not shied away from speaking her mind on sensitive issues including HIV/AIDS, women and child abuse, children in prison, and xenophobia. She remains just as outspoken as Mayor as she was in national politics – in March 2014 she wrote an open letter to the leader of the Council opposition describing him as incompetent and suggesting that the ANC replace him with immediate effect.

2.2. A Believer in Partnerships

Patricia De Lille firmly believes that cities need to be run through the combined and collaborative efforts of many players:

“There is absolutely no way, that any government can do it alone. [I have always made it clear] that we do need partnerships, that we do need the private sector, that we do need civil society.”xii

She analogises the situation in Cape Town in the post-Apartheid years to that of Germany after the Second World War, where the private sector, public sector and community organizations had to work together to rebuild the country. In Cape Town, De Lille has used partnership as the basis of the city’s own “Marshall Plan” (i.e. rescue plan) through support for organisations such as the Western Cape Economic Development Partnership and WESGRO, which both look to build partnerships between different stakeholders in order to attract investment to the city.

Since becoming Mayor of Cape Town, De Lille has also made significant efforts to improve relationships between the city administration and other city stakeholders. She has worked hard to engage with civil society and with the private sector. In particular, De Lille aimed to change the city’s approach towards business ‘from red tape to red carpet’, to create a more business-friendly city. She has created an ‘investment facilitator’ role within City Hall which acts as a ‘one stop shop’ for new investors, and has scrapped 200 superfluous by-laws in order to simplify businesses advertising.xiii

3. Fighting Poverty in Cape Town

In her role as Mayor of Cape Town, De Lille’s strategy for the city’s development has been based upon building the city on five ‘pillars’: an opportunity city; a safe city; a caring city; an inclusive city; and a well-run city. The securing of sustained poverty reduction underlies several of these pillars, and De Lille has both prioritised and made significant progress in this area during her time as Mayor. At present, two thirds of the city’s budget goes to the city’s poor, which is the most extensive cross-subsidisation of the
poor in South Africa. R10 million has been given to the city’s poorest wards over and above their ordinary ward allocations.\textsuperscript{xiv}

De Lille has been particularly instrumental in developing urban renewal projects in poor neighbourhoods, with the objective of uplifting areas which experienced under-investment during the Apartheid era.

Under her watch, The City of Cape Town established the Mayoral Urban Regeneration Programme (MURP) in early 2012. The programme focuses especially on improving safety, quality of life, and the socio-economic situation in deprived neighbourhoods, with an emphasis on the public/shared environment. Ten city areas were selected for inclusion in the project, on the basis of their strategic location and history of under-investment. Many of the chosen areas were mini-CBDs close to transport corridors, where it was thought that economic growth, development and inclusion could be stimulated most successfully.

The scheme sought to work in active partnership with local communities, developing Community Action Plans. Examples of successes include:

- In the Bellville Transport Interchange/Voortrekker Road Corridor, informal trading kiosks have been upgraded, with 90 structures handed to informal traders and CCTV cameras to the value of R3 million have been installed in the CBD.
- In Manenberg/Hanover Park two schools are being reconstructed to the value of R67 million. A further R22.2 million will be spent on upgrading walkways, squares and parks. A priority has been to stabilise the area to contain violence associated with gang activity. This is seen as a key prerequisite to unlocking the economic and social potential of the area.
- In the communities of Nyanga/Gugulethu, the Department of Community Safety helps to create “targeted crime prevention plans” in partnership with the Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading initiative and the South African Police Services.\textsuperscript{xv}

The MURP scheme is considered to have been so successful that it is now being used as a best-practice example by the national government to encourage other urban areas throughout the rest of South Africa to adopt similar schemes.\textsuperscript{xvi}

4. A Focus on Service Delivery and Citizen Satisfaction

One of the five pillars of De Lille’s vision for Cape Town is a ‘well run city’. Under her mayorship, the Cape Town administration has committed to consistent service delivery excellence. It has been rewarded for its efforts: the South African Customer Satisfaction Index found in May 2014 that citizen satisfaction in Cape Town is far higher than in other municipalities in South Africa. The City of Cape Town also has the best record of any metropolitan area in the country for providing basic services, and providing financial relief to the poor. Over the past two years the City has increased the rates rebates offered to its most vulnerable citizens, in particular the poor, the elderly and the disabled. The City also provides 10 500 litres of water and 60 kilowatts free to indigent households per month.

The focus on improving basic services provision for the poorest members of Cape Town society was an obvious priority for De Lille upon becoming Mayor for two key reasons. Firstly, an infrastructure backlog had developed in the poorest, peripheral areas due to disinvestment during the Apartheid era. These parts of the city required both new infrastructure and renewal of existing infrastructure. Secondly, the rapid growth of the city (Cape Town has grown by 50% over a 10 year period\textsuperscript{xvii}) meant that an increase in service
provision was needed both in central areas which were densifying, and in the poorest areas on the outskirts which were sprawling.

Internally, the city administration has developed strong processes and procedures, and efficient budgetary control. In 2013, Western Cape was rated by the ANC government as the best-performing province in terms of “quality of management practices”. The City has also enjoyed a record-breaking tenth unqualified audit, and is ranked by Moody’s as the local government with the highest credit rating in the country.

Patricia De Lille is currently presiding over a change of the city’s logo and tagline in order to improve service delivery through more effective communication with stakeholders. The previous logo featured Table Mountain with the tag-line, "The City Works for You". The new tag-line "Making progress possible. Together." moves away from imagery of a passive government-citizen relationship towards one of a more symbiotic relationship in which the city’s goal of empowering citizens to make the most of opportunities that the city helps to provide, is reinforced. De Lille has also encouraged the formation of constructive international city partnerships and the sharing of best practice, so as to benefit from the service delivery experience and knowledge of other local governments.

5. The De Lille Effect

Since Patricia De Lille became Mayor of Cape Town, the city’s progress has been recognised both nationally and internationally with numerous awards. These include prizes for the city’s efforts in climate change, disaster reduction, for its administrative practices, and for the city’s excellence in the tourism sector. Recent awards include:

- **2014**: The prestigious title of WWF Global Earth Hour City Capital.

  The City has engaged in a number of projects under De Lille’s mayorship which have contributed to the city’s status as a leading edge Green City. For example:

  i) Retrofitting of lighting on old buildings and ceilings in poorer households;

  ii) Creation of energy from waste facilities in the city – including an agreement with a Japanese consortium to build a centre for tyre disposal in Cape Town;

  iii) A scheme to incentivise green investment on a 60ha area of city owned land;

  iv) Establishment of an environmental committee and energy and climate change committee within the city administration;

  v) Membership of the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group of cities.

- **2014**: World Design Capital.

  Although the Cape Town Partnership was responsible for compiling the winning ‘bid-book’ before De Lille became Mayor, since becoming the leader of Cape Town in 2011 De Lille has been keen to ensure that the benefit of the Award is felt by all Capetonians. With this in mind, on New Years Eve 2013, the City hosted a huge street party to celebrate officially becoming Design Capital. The party was attended by more than 100,000 citizens. De Lille has also sought to secure a legacy from the title for the City, by embedding design within the local government. She has established a city department to deal specifically with design issues, and has also arranged workshops with other
departments in the city administration to try and embed design-lead thinking in their daily work and planning of the city.

- **2013**: 2nd Best City in the World - Conde Nast Traveller Awards; Best Use of Social Media in Travel and Tourism - SMITTY Awards.

- **2011**: #1 African City in Siemens EIU Green City Index 2011; awarded ‘Role Model Status’ by the UNISDR (one of only 17 cities globally)\textsuperscript{xx}; Housing Project of the Year (awarded by the South African Housing Foundation).

De Lille herself has also received numerous accolades, both as Mayor and in her previous leadership roles. Perhaps most significantly, in 2004, she was voted 22\textsuperscript{nd} in a nationwide poll of the 100 Greatest South Africans. In the same year, she was awarded the Old Mutual South African Leadership Award in the Women’s Leadership category. In 2006 she was named Rapport City Press Woman of the Year, and was the first woman to be recognised as an Honorary Colonel in the South African National Defence Force. In May 2013 De Lille was named World Mayor of the Month. \textsuperscript{xxi}

6. **Advice for Future City Leaders**

Patricia De Lille has been a leader of South Africans ever since democracy came to the country in 1994. She has the following advice for aspiring city leaders:

**6.1. Get Things Done**

De Lille has found that the most challenging task of a city leader is implementation of strategy and policy – getting things done. In Cape Town, the unwieldy size of city government (around 26,000 employees)\textsuperscript{xxii} adds to the challenge. The Mayoress’ own strategy for ensuring that goals are achieved has been to retain oversight of delegated tasks. Whilst it is undoubtedly necessary to delegate, she has found that tracking the progress of her team, and particularly their progress against specified deadlines, can help to ensure that things get done. She concedes that with this approach:

“Sometimes you can get accused of micromanagement. But I would rather be accused of micromanagement to get things done in the end than to find out, when you get to the end of the timeframe of implementation [that it has not been met].”\textsuperscript{xxiii}

De Lille warns that it is more imperative than ever that city leaders find a way of getting things done. The rapid pace of urbanisation in many cities around the world, means that issues will not ‘wait’ for city leaders. She explains:

“We don’t have time on our side anymore, we have got a projection that by 2030 or even sooner, more than 70% of the world’s population will live in cities. So city leadership needs to be alive and sensitive to this growth - we do not have time on our side, we need to get things done.”\textsuperscript{xxiv}
6.2. Plan Ahead

It is important to plan ahead and budget, but plans should be cognizant of the ‘bigger picture’ outside of the city’s own internal dynamics. For example, in Cape Town, the migration situation is very fluid – and as such it is difficult to define a set budget for each financial year. De Lille has therefore found that a better approach to budgeting in Cape Town’s case has been to adopt plans with a defined budget and targets for a three year period. In any city, forward looking and holistic thinking and planning are needed to ensure survival.

6.3. Lead by Example

City leaders must lead, not follow, and they should lead by example. In De Lille’s opinion:

“You have to lead from the front and you have to lead by example, so I don’t have sympathy for people in my office when they complain that they work 12 hours a day – that’s the norm for me – I work 16 hours a day so I believe that I am leading by example and setting a good example.”xxv

6.4. Reward Excellence

Although De Lille works hard, and expects her team to do the same, she believes that the best city leaders are able to find a balance between driving their team hard, and recognizing and rewarding the input that each individual makes to the city. In Cape Town she has set up a system which rewards managers and workers who ‘go the extra mile’.
References


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v [http://www.citymayors.com/mayors/cape-town-mayor-de-lille.html](http://www.citymayors.com/mayors/cape-town-mayor-de-lille.html)

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