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Interviewer: We are interviewing Dale McKinley and the date today is the 1st of March. So Dale, better than anyone, you know the drill. Let me just start with a little background about yourself. Firstly, where and when were you born?

McKinley: I was born on the 7th of January 1962, in at the time what was Gwelo, in Southern Rhodesia, a British Colony.

Interviewer: Right, and did you, how long did you stay in Zimbabwe?

McKinley: I lived in Zimbabwe till just before my eighteenth birthday and then from that point I got my draft papers for military and I left the country and I ended up in the United States in 1980, beginning of 1980, January.

Interviewer: Alright and when you arrived in the States, what were you doing?

McKinley: The very first months was to try to get into university so I spent several months trying to do all of those things and then I managed to get accepted and a scholarship, and then I spent the better part of the entire decade of the 1980s in the United States; I got a bachelors, honours, and masters and went through all the way to PhD, so I was in school for that whole time.

Interviewer: What year did you get your PhD?

McKinley: Sorry, what was that?

Interviewer: When did you get your PhD, what year?

McKinley: I finished my, the PhD course work in 1989, I actually took about three to four years to do the research and to write it up. I received my PhD in 1994.

Interviewer: Right, I mean it's worth asking about your PhD, but just before that, I wanted to ask, in terms of, you said you got your draft papers and then left ...?

McKinley: At the time Zimbabwe war of national liberation was going on in the 1970's and every white male on their 18th birthday was drafted into the Rhodesian army, so three months before my eighteenth birthday, was in October 1979, I received my draft call up papers and of course I was not about to go and fight with the Rhodesian military to fight the liberation movement, so I left the country.

Interviewer: At that time, was it a political decision to leave?

Mckinley: It was partly political, but my parents also at the time were adamant that there was no way I was going; it was probably, for them also, it was an issue of safety as well as one of education, continuing my education.

Interviewer: And how did you understand the war that was unfolding there?

Mckinley: It was very strange because it was probably one of most closed societies ever; I mean much more so than apartheid South Africa ever was, so growing up in that society was very contradictory. On the one hand I lived in two different worlds; I grew up in a rural mission station in which all my friends and everybody around me was black Zimbabweans and where there was no racial tension or exclusivity. I then had to go to an all white school in a very white dominated sort of educational and social kind of situation, so I was always torn as a teenager between these two worlds. And then the war started and it was clear to me it was wrong, although I was not highly politicised in relation to what the demands were and a whole range of other things, but I generally had sympathy for the liberation movement and the struggles even though I didn't understand it very well. And I got into trouble at school regularly for questioning, raising a range of critical questions but there was no space for political activism, the only space there was for political activism was to go and join the guerrillas otherwise everything was closed down. So it wasn't until after I left that I really began to understand that period.

Interviewer: You said that your parents were ... that you lived at a mission station? What were your parents doing there?

Mckinley: My parents were both born in the United States, and they came out in 1957 as missionary teachers. And after about two years of language study, they both spoke Shona very fluently by that time, after their language (studies). After that they were deployed to the main teaching mission seminary, they were Baptist missionaries and they were deployed to the main mission teaching Seminary that's where I grew up so they taught, and my father was the principal of the Seminary and my mother taught other classes.

Interviewer: And did they stay in Zimbabwe during the war?

Mckinley: They stayed during the war, the whole time they were there on and off with small trips to the United States to visit family and friends for forty years.

Interviewer: And when you were studying, did you still make trips back to Zim?

Mckinley: When I was in the United States? Yes, in fact after my first year at varsity I spent the entire United States summer three months, back at home in Zimbabwe in 1981 then I came back several times throughout the '80s back to Zimbabwe, yes.

Interviewer: And do you think, do you think that those kind, the changes that were happening in Zimbabwe as a result of the war and so forth, how did that affect your own intellectual and political development?

Mckinley: It affected it quite substantially. I mean I came back to Zimbabwe in 1981, where Robert Mugabe was president, ZANU PF had won the elections, things were, it was very heady days. And there was a feeling from those like myself, who had gone out and avoided fighting in the war and coming back that we were now accepted as Zimbabweans. So in a lot of ways it made me very supportive of national liberation movements and struggles, because it appeared that at the time that ZANU-PF and Mugabe were being very progressive and were embracing a whole range of things, doing very good things on the educational front and a whole range of social issues. So yes, I think it made me much more aware of, not just in Zimbabwe, but also it made me much more aware of what was going on in South Africa at the time and the liberation struggles also in Mozambique and other places like Angola, which I paid much more attention to from that point on and I was gravitating towards learning more about them and studying about them.

Interviewer: Alright, and just before moving off this - being the child of these missionaries from the US and being born in Africa, how did you kind of imagine your own place in terms of nationality and place?

Mckinley: It's always been a very confusing thing for me, not so much anymore, but I think in my early days, certainly I never felt that I belonged anywhere. Because when I was growing up in Zimbabwe, people thought of me as American because I had American parents and a bit of an American accent so I wasn't fully Zimbabwean in that case. And when I went to the United States it was the same case, I wasn't American, but I was from somewhere else ... and when I came to South Africa it was triply so. So what has developed over time is a distinct dislike both politically and philosophically for nationalism and national identities, yes.

Interviewer: Well look we'll come back to that.

Mckinley: Sure.

Interviewer: So your PhD now, I know a little bit about your PhD, but maybe just speak to what it was about and also how you came to the subject within your own kind of intellectual political development?

Mckinley: The PhD was a critical history of the African National Congress and its strategy and tactics in particular from 1912 when it was formed all the way through to 1994, until the April 1994 elections. I traced that entire history and it was from a critical predominantly Marxist analysis and perspective, theoretically I used. It was central for me, in terms, I had already by that stage just in terms of my education, become what I would probably call theoretically a Marxist having gone through quite a lot of education and studied under quite a number of other individuals in the United States; but what it allowed, what the PHD allowed me to do when I got on the ground in South Africa, I came here in late 1990 just after the unbannings and what that PhD allowed me to do was to insert myself almost directly into the liberation movements itself, into the ANC and the Communist party and to get to know some of the main players. But then a lot of the internal politics and other things that shaped fundamentally the way that I looked at South African politics both past and present was to come in the future and since that time. But I would probably say before I wrote the PhD, I had already formed opinions and perspectives philosophically in my own head, I had been an activist for many years previously on a range of different fronts, including Central America and CIA, anti-racist movements in the United States so it wasn't specifically, it didn't encompass my politics totally but what it did was, it put it into a practical component of struggle that allowed it to move from an intellectual phase into a practical struggle phase.

Interviewer: I want to get back to that, but just before that, how did you actually become politicised and become kind of involved in these various issues?

Mckinley: I arrived in the United States, I have to be totally honest and say I was a very un-politicised young man, I didn't really know much about the United States at all, I didn't know much about world politics, my only experience was growing up in Rhodesia, in Zimbabwe. It was very quick with the year that I arrived in the United States; it was the year Ronald Reagan was elected as President, so politically in the United States things started happening in terms of ideological opposition particularly the war in Central America and against Nicaragua which had overthrown a dictatorship and I quickly started - through both studying at university and including meeting a range of people - I quickly became quite aware of what was going on in terms of US imperialism and foreign policy and that is how my activism started. My very first joining of an organisation was with a Central America solidarity group that was in solidarity with the Nicaraguans, the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and defending their right to make a social and political revolution and opposing American political and military involvement. And it was through that that broadened out throughout the 1980's and a whole range of other areas including local anti-racist work against organisations like the Klu Klux Klan, with native Americans, working with native Americans and also then becoming seriously involved from the mid 1980s on in the anti apartheid struggle and so my activism started, in some way shaped by

a domestic US and sort of America's kind of agenda and then broadened out from there to a global and international one and then made its way back to Sub-Saharan Africa eventually.

Interviewer: And was the kind of choice of the kind of both political and intellectual focus on Sub-Saharan Africa, was it explicitly shaped by your own background?

Mckinley: I believe so. I think that over that time period I began to be much more aware of what it was about growing up in Zimbabwe, I began to interpret the kinds of issues that I hadn't really thought about a great deal and I felt a huge kind of belonging in some ways, given what was going on in Zimbabwe in the 1980's at least until the early 1990s which was generally perceived, and I did as well, as a very positive thing that was happening in Zimbabwe. There was a desire to become involved more directly in an area that you grew up in and knew a lot about and to change and to politicise that involvement much more so. And so yes I do think that was shaped by the fact that I grew up in that area because I had both a personal as well as a social connection.

Interviewer: Just getting back to your PhD. You initially came here of course completing your research, but maybe just speak to the actual process and form of this transition from a kind of purely intellectual project to one that is at least to some extent engaged directly in the kind of unfolding politics of that period?

Mckinley: Sure. When I first arrived in South Africa my idea was that I was just going to start conducting interviews and talk to people and get materials as one normally do in a research process. However, a very practical thing intervened, which was, I was going to be unable to stay in this country without some kind of more permanent legitimate document and the only way that I could do that was to get some work. So after scrounging around a little bit and realising that there wasn't really something available for someone like myself at the time, I hooked up with another guy, who had just opened up a bookshop, a political bookshop called Phambili Books and I started managing that bookshop. And even though it wasn't really much of a job in terms of payment, what that did was that allowed me to not only stay in the country but also Phambili quickly became from '91 onwards, a centre, a place where all the political activists and people came, and before 1994 it didn't matter whether it was Joe Slovo or Chris Hani or any other of the others including other activists that came to Phambili and we held public debates ... So, it was through that, it was through managing and running the bookshop that I began to insert myself into the day to day activities and struggles of some of the movements. And I had always been wanting to, as I had been as a student, doing practical work so I made a decision to join the ANC in a branch and get involved as well as later then the Communist Party. It was through getting involved organisationally in those structures that I then branched out into

turning the intellectual interest, and I continued to gather all the information and do those things for the PhD, into political activity and practice on the ground.

Interviewer: Alright, and given, this kind of what you called a theoretical Marxist approach, how did that figure in you joining the ANC and of course the Communist Party later, I mean, how did you politically make sense of a Marxist, although this might seem as an obvious question, but with the Marxist in the ANC at the time?.

Mckinley: Well one thing that I found out quite early on, about the ANC, was that it was a fairly heterogeneous house in terms of ideologically, that there were a whole range of different kinds of people in the ANC, ranging from those who would consider themselves to be hard line Marxist's or Communists all the way to petty capitalists and otherwise. And so I didn't feel at the time there was a major contradiction in joining an organisation like the ANC politically because the ANC's history, a large part of its history, was working with people who considered themselves as the left ideologically, including the Marxists and the Communist party and others. However, I have to say that from the very beginning of my joining I had an uncomfortable relationship in that regard in relation to the dominant ideological character of the ANC, the nationalist content of the ANC's politics and from fairly early on in my participation in branches, debates and other things I found myself fairly quickly on the minority side of things all the time in terms of being quite critical of some of the things that were happening as in the past. So, it was a very conflictual relationship from the very beginning, but my desire was to find an organisational home that I thought was relevant politically at the particular time in history, and in the early 1990's in South Africa the ANC seemed to me to be the place that one could practice your politics, even if a Marxist or leftist politics, and fight out the kind of battles that were on the table at the time when the negotiations started. Even though I was approached on a regular basis, by what you would call more tighter Marxist or Trotskyist or other groupings to join them, I always had a penchant to go for more mass organisations and be involved in mass struggles as opposed to very small organisations, so that is why I made that choice.

Interviewer: Sure, and within the ANC at the time, how did a Marxist politics figure within the kind of hegemonic battles that were unfolding?

Mckinley: Well I think initially right at the beginning in 1990-91, they were fairly upfront because the real ideological battles had not really happened yet and so the rhetoric was quite left and quite accommodating to Marxists and otherwise nationalisation was one of those things, a meaningful kind of redistribution of wealth was envisioned, all these other kinds of things. However, fairly quickly, once the negotiations started and once groups within the ANC started forming around putting positions in those negotiations, like the economic group and so

forth and the construction of the RDP, the Reconstruction Development Programme, it became quite clear to me and I think to many in the ANC that the more left, or Marxist or radical kind of component of the ANC was being gradually smashed or marginalised in that and that's why in 1993, I left the ANC, I did not renew my membership and I joined the Communist Party.

Interviewer: Alright, and I know we are taking some time on this history but I think it is important. One of the kinds of theses in your book emphasises the kind of historical commitment to the nationalist project and at least to a kind of petty bourgeois constituency kind of dominated the ANC. Would that be a fair assessment of it?

Mckinley: Yes, in a very crude way yes.

Interviewer: To what extent was that thesis shaped by your involvement within the ANC within that period 1991 to 1993?

Mckinley: Quite substantially I think, because what I was able to do in being practically involved was to be able to translate what I'd read and what I'd seen on paper and witness it essentially. I have always felt it is very important to make the bridge between the political-organisational, theoretical and rhetorical levels and personal and practical levels of what actually goes on. And once I was in there I and began to find out about what was happening, how people both leadership in the ANC, was beginning to pursue their own personal accumulation as well as to gradually but systematically abandon any of the more radical components of the national liberation struggle and trying to rationalise them in the sense that there was no alternative, that we are in a capitalist global world and that kind of petty bourgeois politics became quite clear to me in a very meaningful practical way as opposed to a purely theoretical and read way.

Interviewer: Sure, and at the time, how did you see the Communist party providing a possible, or did you see it providing a possible counterpoint to this trajectory within the nationalist movement?

Mckinley: It's a very interesting question because prior to the election of Chris Hani as the General Secretary of the Communist Party, my general sort of approach to the Communist Party was that it was an appendage of the ANC and had actually in many cases, even though there have been some very good activists and a lot of struggle and sacrifice by Communist Party members throughout the struggle, that politically and organisationally it had subsumed itself within the ANC. But the turning point for me and the reason why I joined the Communist Party fundamentally was the election of Chris Hani; Chris was much, much more open Ideologically and in fact when we moved the bookshop in 1993 from one section of town to the other he came and opened the bookshop and this was unprecedented because our bookshop held all

the Trotsky, all the other kinds of the left things that the SACP hacks would have ideologically always avoided. And he had made a call to younger people particularly to come join the SACP and he had specifically said at that time that the reason why he became the general secretary of the SACP as opposed to contesting the general secretary-ship of the ANC and going into government potentially once the elections had happened, was because he felt there was a real need for an outside force to keep things on track. And it was that kind of spirit that, even though I had my reservations ideologically about the SACP and I had no illusions even at the time - there was a hugely dominant Stalinist component in its politics to the SACP - the door that Chris Hani opened up for many from my generation and others, I think at that particular time was one which held out the promise that the SACP could potentially become a really serious radical political left force representing and fighting for poor people and working people and knowing full well that the ANC was going to effectively abandon that struggle. And so that is why I did join and became involved quite quickly.

Interviewer: Okay and in that respect, just in so far as you recognise a certain potential within the Communist party, in retrospect I am looking back on your activity within the party what do you count as your successes within that particular, you know, providing a counterpoint to the nationalist trajectory to the ANC and also how successful was it do you think in shaping the current shape of things?

McKinley: Well to the first point, the achievement of successes, I do think that during that particularly important period from '92 to '95 when it was clear to anyone who was paying attention at the time that the ANC was moving towards what I called in the book, its historic mission which was to deracialise capitalism and to essentially take a share of the pie as opposed to redistributing it and really radically transforming things, was that there were components in the SACP, particularly the ones - I can specifically speak to the ones I was involved in which was in central Johannesburg, the centre of I guess you could say the organised working class of this country - which pushed a more radical agenda within the alliance during those time the debates were happening internally. In other words, I do think that certain positions that would otherwise had been taken and even have been more to the right and even more potentially conservative were held back and at least that even though there wasn't victory, there was a relationship, there was some middle ground. And I think that the RDP was in some ways a classic example of the production of that kind of middle ground politics, social democratic politics. So in some ways one can argue and I think that there were degrees of success at least in holding back some of the more excessive or more opportunistic kinds of politics that was showing itself at the time. However, another one I would argue was that it is ironic that this would be seen as a success, but I think that the death of Chris Hani, or the assassination of Chris Hani was a huge blow and what that did is the leadership that took over after that in 1994 and

throughout that period was a very opportunistic and lazy, very ... I don't know there are many different words I can use to describe them ... but what they did, they exposed the SACP at its official levels for being the kind of organisation that many of us had previously thought it was. But it was because of that shift and that unwillingness to actually fight the ideological battles that needed to be fought within the alliance, that allowed for a degree of space for some within the SACP, like myself and many other of the younger generations to actually build branches and to engage in practical struggles on the ground around what was beginning to happen as a result of policies that were implemented by the ANC once it had achieved power. That in turn, those nascent struggles and engagements within the alliance, with students, with unions with others led eventually, I believe or at least contributed, it didn't lead to but contributed to, a new outside kind of politics that was potentially and still I think has potential to really contest a neo-liberal trajectory that was beginning to be adopted. So in that sense there is not a great deal that one can point to and say that was a major success in the involvement of the SACP, but I think that one has to look at it as a whole over time and look at where things were moving and that without that involvement in the SACP and the struggles and the engagement in the struggles, some of the things that came afterwards like the social movements and community organisations and other kinds of things would not have had some of the impetus that they did and organisational capacity that they had. So, in that sense ... the second part of your question was what?

Interviewer: You already answered it; just in terms of, do you think that the SACP more generally has managed to kind of perform the function that perhaps Chris Hani had seen it performing?

McKinley: I've answered that; the answer is no ... absolutely not. The SACP showed itself to in fact be, at the leadership level and again there were exceptions within some of the structures and branches and districts of people on the ground, the rank and file, but at the core level of the SACP as an organisation, it showed that it could never, and that it cannot and it will not and it was unwilling to shed that Stalinist politics and what I call *toenandering* or tailing of the nationalist agenda and the ANC's agenda as well as the very personally opportunistic politics of leadership to gain positions of power within the movement and the government and to pretend that they were leaders of a radical project while in fact covering for the neo-liberal turn.

Interviewer: This is going to be the last of my background questions. In 1996 the kind of GEAR document gets adopted by government; and for many who reflect upon this period within the kind of history of the transition they see it as something of a kind of turning point, within the kind of political trajectory of the ANC in government. One, do you see it as turning point? And

two, perhaps describe to me some of the kinds of contestations that were occurring within the movement, around the policy of GEAR, and also your involvement in that?

Mckinley: To answer the first part of the question, I don't think that was a turning point, I think in fact and I do believe that my core arguments that I made in the book on the ANC were, have been proven to be more or less correct in that historical regard; which is that this was almost the end result of an accumulation of politics and the accessing of state power and once the ANC had state power and the anti-apartheid struggle had ended effectively, and now that it could get on with the business of actually constructing a post apartheid society, that it went back to in some ways, went back to its core ideological roots and core class roots and I think that GEAR was the programmatic symbol of that. I mean it was couched within a global internationalist kind of rationalisation of there being no alternative to capitalism, there was no space for radical or any kind of national projects at that point but I think that those things were actually quite peripheral; that the core of what GEAR represented was the core of what the ANC had always wanted to represent itself as when it did get into power. In terms of my own involvement, yes there was much, there were many, many battles internally within the alliance at that point and time. I can speak to one in particular, which was - there was a project that began as a discussion document in 1994 within the alliance and it was entitled Igoli 2002, or it eventually became Igoli2002, I actually don't think that was the name of it, but given that Johannesburg and this area were sort of the key industrial capital and political centre of South Africa, the adoption of that kind neo-liberal agenda and policies and cost recovery and everything else that GEAR represented was going to be applied in Joburg and this was the first example of that. And when we saw these discussion documents that indicated this is what they wanted to do in Johannesburg, there were huge, there was massive opposition from sections of COSATU and sections of the SACP and we fought those things out within Provincial Executive Councils and all of the structures of the alliance. My experience in that context was one of; I had never before that, I had been through a huge amount of really rough kind of politics but I had never experienced a situation where I had been physically prevented from attending meetings and physically threatened because of the stance of opposition that we took. In other words the politics turned very nasty very quickly for those that had a dissenting voice to this kind of agenda and we lost that battle, as was clear a few years onwards when it was unveiled as the official policy of the ANC, became the spearhead, the wedge of the neo-liberal agenda starting in Joburg and then nationally and that was the turning point I think of another sort.

Interviewer: Just a follow up on that. Given the fact that GEAR is not in your kind of political timeline of the about-turn ANC , if you can call it an 'about turn' and if it's is not a turning point, why do you think that GEAR has taken on such symbolic importance within the left's critique of the African National Congress?

Mckinley: I think it is much more of a marker than anything else, it is a historical marker for people because there has to be something you can hang ... it's like a peg, you can hang the transition on and 1994 and the elections, you can't do it there because that was a democratic election, it was getting rid of apartheid, it's a very difficult thing to sort of say that was the point because everybody embraced, or more or less everybody embraced that point. So GEAR, the public unveiling of GEAR represented the symbol I think for a lot of the left, of the ANC's coming out party so to speak, post-1994 coming out. And it was from that point on, or at least two or three years after that, that the practical impacts and consequences of the kinds of very practical struggles of what was left of the left began to engage with; and the left needed a starting point in order to be able to ground those struggles. So if you were going to oppose water cut offs and electricity cut offs and a range of other things, well then why, what was giving rise to these – GEAR. GEAR gave rise to those things and so it became that symbolic coat hanger with which you could hang those kinds of things on and be able to explain to people, why it was politically and ideologically that you needed to do these kinds of things because GEAR represented everything that we didn't fight for and didn't struggle for.

Interviewer: Alright, I am going to shift now and I think you've already started to get into this detail a bit, but specifically on the issue of privatisation, how is it that you come to at least a politics around this question?

Mckinley: Well I think it was a gradual coming ... I don't think it started as a focus predominantly on privatisation. But again it was, the way I look at it and I've never talked about this in any meaningful kind of way, but now as I've thought about it in some ways that the honest answer to that would be that it was more of a tactical consideration much more than a strategic one at the time. I think by 1997/98 when the policies of the ANC began to be implemented and began to have social consequences and people began to somewhat resist around things and the space within the alliance was closing down for that kind of contestation and people were looking at other options, that it wasn't an opportune time, it certainly wasn't something that one could necessarily build organisation around to establish an anti-capitalist party at the time; supposedly the SACP represented that anyway, it still claimed that mandate or that thing. But for an organisation there needed to be something that spoke to people's immediate experiences and struggles and the effects of the cut offs, the privatisation was clearly a reality in terms of the legislation and the processed and what happened but politically I think it struck a chord at that time. And when we started struggling against Igoli 2002 and things started happening in Soweto and other areas around here it was a very useful tactical manoeuvre to label those struggles, anti privatisation struggles because it was very difficult for the ANC to defend privatisation, it was politically very untenable for a lot of people to sort of be coming out and saying; in other words, to expose them. So privatisation in some ways - which

the apartheid government had started - was seen I think with a large degree of scepticism and hostility not just among the new movements that were born out of those struggles but within the general sort of liberation struggle itself. So it was tactically an astute thing to do but it also spoke to a reality that was beginning to happen and it was a way of coalescing those struggles I think. But in retrospect one has to admit that it was a fairly narrow kind of way of going about fighting what in essence really; what we were fighting was a system, but what we chose to do in that sense or what a lot of people chose to do was take a particular section of the system that was having the most immediate impact and go to that one because it was the best way to mobilise and to organise.

Interviewer: You said that privatisation was being given some, at least beyond its kind of tactical import of focusing on privatisation it also had a kind of real resonance in what people were fighting and speaking about at the time. Maybe just tell me how you understand privatisation and give me some sense of how it feeds into the kind of political fabric of the city around the late 1990's?

Mckinley: At its core, for me at its core privatisation is the absolute opposite of what one could consider the public and in that sense it is not the state, I don't mean the state at all, I mean the public and other terms that have been used, the commons, the public; that which is, if one wants to put it in a very broad kind of philosophical/theory terms, the public - which is the good for all or at least the vast majority of those that are living in this country in this particular instance. And the privatisation of anything, whether it's the privatisation of a particular service, whether it is the privatisation of a particular space or thought - a whole range of aspects of privatisation is the, essentially the stealing of those things from a public sphere and putting them into a circuit of private capital and profit maximisation and commodity relations. That is how I understand privatisation in its broader sense. Sorry ... you have to mention the second part of the question again.

Interviewer: The second part is just, how does this process that you describe of privatising what would otherwise be collectively owned, how does that figure in the kind of history of the late 1990's in the city.

Mckinley: It started on a whole range of different fronts in Johannesburg here it wasn't just one aspect. So for example education became a target and it was initially experienced in the higher education sphere, where the corporatisation of the university and the privatisation of particular kinds of functions in the university in this case, in this particular case in Johannesburg, of the workers in the university and getting rid of them and outsourcing those jobs. But also, I think pretty much why that was even at the forefront of what was being opposed was the kind of agenda that was being pushed which was one which basically did not see education basically as

a collective endeavour, but as a private endeavour. That is a more sophisticated understanding of what was going on, but I think it was very fundamental to the way that some students and some faculty responded to what happened for example at Wits University. In the city itself it was very clear that the way in which this was going to be implemented, the privatisation, was taking away the most basic of services and saying these services are no longer free, they are no longer public, you don't have any right to access these things ... I don't mean individual rights, I mean collective rights to that as a collective; and the way in which we are going to implement that kind of neo-liberal kind of privatisation is we are going to start charging decent amounts of monies for the consumption of these things and if you cannot pay well then you are out of the system, therefore the cut-offs and other things. The same for housing, the same for a whole range of different things, but the coal face of that initially in the city, was services because that was the revenue generation for the city. When the ANC took over, I was sitting on the council at the time, in '92-'93 and '94, preparing for the new city council, the post apartheid one, and what was inherited at the Joburg city level was a situation in which almost the entire kind of revenue stream was dedicated towards 10-15/20 percent of the population, so instead of radically redistributing that in a collective kind of way to benefit people, what they did was they just took that and started squeezing the other eighty percent to get revenue generation to be able to fund all the kinds of development initiatives, that's how it happened in the city.

Interviewer: Sure and at this period around 2000, where was your immediate political base?

Mckinley: Right up until, I was still within the Communist Party up until September 2000. I was then formally expelled in November 2000, so up until that point I was in the Communist Party, but let me just say that probably from the last year, probably from about 1999 all the way to 2000 most of my political activities even though they came out of a particular part of the SACP, in this case the Johannesburg central branch and the district were involving a range of other forces that were not part SACP and struggles involved that more front kind of politics and a coalition politics as opposed to purely an SACP one .

Interviewer: I think before I carry on - we will come back both to your expulsion and the specific context of the formation of the APF - but maybe just speak to this, this period where you see at least your politics around the Johannesburg branch being one more focused on building coalitions and things and at least kind of joining in a wider range of forces?

Mckinley: First just to preface that by saying that up and until 1998, late 1998 I sat on the Provincial Executive Committee of the Communist party, which was the highest structure in Gauteng. And it was as a result of losing those battles that we talked about, that I then made both a political as well as a personal decision to return to a local level of politics as opposed to a more national and provincial level of politics because I thought at the time, and I think at the

time it was the correct perspective to have because that was where the struggles were going to be generated, was at the local level and that was the best possibility. So I went back to the branch. And it was in that period at branch level that it was clear to us at the time - it was very interesting because the SACP Joburg branch attracted to it during that period a range of people that I don't think would ever have gone into the SACP unless they had felt that the SACP was part of something that was real in terms of its struggles - so it was really about hooking up with students, unions, other left activists around very local struggles against these impacts of various forms of privatisation corporatisation that were beginning to happen; around water, around electricity, around evictions, around outsourcing and a range of other things. So those were the immediate contexts of the struggle, but I think what was brought to it, what I felt at the time, we, some of us in the party brought to that struggle more than just the immediacy of making the struggle on the ground, a practical struggle ... was a contextual history of why these kinds of struggles were absolutely necessary to move beyond what had come before. In other words our own experience within the alliance I think lent itself to an impetus towards the establishment of independent, extra-alliance politics, if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Yeah it does. So we were talking about this previously and one of the things is that the emergence of the APF looks very differently depending on which perspective from which you tell the story. Maybe, then the best way to do this would be for you just to tell me how you saw the formation of the APF, at least from the perspective of activism in the South African Communist Party and so on.

McKinley: You know it is interesting because I remember very distinctly, when the first coming together of these disparate groups that were fighting around the various impacts of forms of privatisation, I never thought that this and I don't think that anybody else at this particular point thought that this, was going to turn out to be a formal organisation that would then have a particular kind of start, inception, its own history and structures - that is was something that I think was important. The initial impetus from my perspective was one that it could open doors to a different kind of politics, but not necessarily in the form of an APF, not necessarily ... a pre-cast form that one approached that from. It was in the process of these struggles and the gathering of the activist forum, the Anti-Igoli forum, and all of these other kind of things, that it became clear at least to me and I think to several others that, and as the space become even further closed down, and we must admit that the fact that this was heavily influenced by a range of different activists' own experiences [linked] to where they had been previously located in their own organisations, whether that was SASCO, whether that was the ANC, whether that was COSATU, whether that was the Communist Party. So in many, many ways what led to the formation, at least the coming together of a lot of these activists and struggles was their experiences within their relative organisations, within the broad alliance, and I think that is

important to note. And then it drew in a range of others, some independent leftists, outside Trotskyists and others on the left that had, were looking for a political home. So yes it does depend on where you are coming from, because for some it was extension of the politics and struggles that had been going on for a long period of time and that it was going to take a new form; for others it represented the start of something new and the possibilities of a regeneration of a particular kind of oppositional politics that had been quite dead for some time in some cases. So I think it was only - as far as I can remember it - it was only at the point in time where the activist forum began in which real politics began to be discussed as opposed to just practical struggles and what are we going to do in a particular event or how are we going to respond to a particular kind of thing, whether that was the Urban Futures which has already been mentioned numerous times as a key element in the formation, or whether it was the cutting off of massive amounts of peoples' electricity in Soweto, or whatever that was. But the coming together of the activist's forum for me represented the politicisation of those struggles, if one can put it that way, where politics began to be discussed in the sense of okay, are we serious about starting a new organisational form that can represent and coalesce these struggles or are we simply interested in opposing what it is we think is the most immediate ... In that sense, that debate where there were many different perspectives on that debate and that was very healthy, but that debate itself was what catalysed things, with the majority of people deciding that yes, what we needed was a new organisational form to coalesce these struggles, not just the struggles but a yearning I think for a political home of sorts, an organisational form - I think that cannot be discounted. And it was through those debates and the activist forum that this then came to some kind of fruition. I don't know if I need to restate all this, the particular steps that happened in the formation ... formally of the APF, but that to me was the fundamentally important process in the formation.

Interviewer: Right, I mean look this history has been covered, we needn't go through all the different points of it. But what I am interested in is particularly, you know the from the kind of discussions that we've had in previous interviews that when the APF emerges, or the kind of initial grouping that will become the APF, it takes the form of something of a coalition and then shifts somewhat rapidly to, as you said a kind of political home, a movement with a distinct identity, that cannot be folded back onto its constituent members in that moment of formation. Why do you think there is this shift and what are the forces that pushed it from this initial coalition based politics to the distinct movement in that rapid period, and as a follow on question to that; how does that figure within your own kind of political work within the party where the party is certainly your political home and then you know here you have a transition where something moves from a coalition to a distinct political movement, and how does that,

you know figure in relation to how you see where your place is? I know it's a roundabout question, but I think you know it is important one?

Mckinley: Ja, I agree it is an important question ... and I think the coalition, the initial natural nature of the APF once it formed as it called itself the Anti Privatisation Forum and it was the coalition of this coming together of a very disparate group of forces, individuals as well as some community, a few community organisations, some activists groups and political groups and others. It was the very nature of what I called the ideological heterogeneity of the APF that demanded it's coalition status to begin with, right, otherwise it would have just torn itself apart immediately, because then it would have just degenerated into people taking particular kinds of stands according to what their own experience was. So I think there was this whole initial need both organisationally but also politically to be more open to the kind of form of coalition that allowed for varying degrees of ideological impetuses and histories to come together and it was the immediacy of the struggles that allowed, that provided the glue for the coalition. It wasn't necessarily the politics of the coalition per se, but it was the glue so everybody could come and agree that this needed to be opposed, that these actions needed to be taken, that we needed to struggle at this level because that in some way, super-ceded the ideological and other differences that people were coming from, that they thought they were going to be doing with the APF. But that was only temporary, and it could only be so. Precisely I would argue - and this was missed by a lot of people we are a part of the APF and were there in its initial formation - which is for me, the initial impetus and the largest impetus toward the formation of a movement did not come from political groups even though they were certainly those that argued most vehemently about what they wanted and they already had a pre cast agenda of a particular kind of party form or whatever and they did argue those things, but the weight, the biggest weight in the push of that came from the community organisations themselves. They wanted a forum, some kind of organisational forum beyond the coalition, this was clear from the very beginning and it has always been clear to me, for the majority, although there are exceptions to this. In fact, there's a large push, and I think it was people who themselves, I mean for various reasons, some of them have been part of the ANC, some of them have been part of the civic organisations, whatever it was, to have something more of a formal political organisational home right, as opposed to some loose coalition that was running around. And if one tracks the actual debates in the APF from that early point and the succeeding period when it became that, you look and see where that was coming from, a large portion, I think the voice of the individual activists is exaggerated, it's given too much input; it was actually the voice of ordinary rank and file members of community organisations, some of them leadership of course, who might have had other reasons for them personally, but I think that, that was the main impetus. But I can understand it, I could understand that, that impetus because the

history of politics in South Africa, for the most part ... lets even take from the late 1970's onwards is not a history of individual politics, is not a history of massive, big coalition politics, that's out of the alliance, right? It's a history of a particular kind of, and defending that politics, whether that's through extra alliance or civics who were in the youth or women's movements and others and then joining up in a broader kind of, with a larger, in this case, the ANC for the most part in the 1980's onwards as a sort of like political loyalty ... but not in a formal coalition of any sort. And I think that history of South African politics impacted fundamentally on why the APF eventually ... because by that stage there were enough at the early stage of the APF, there were enough community organisations and it was already debated within the APF that those community organisations should have the biggest say and I think that most people agreed with that and it shouldn't just be individuals who can argue the best and make the most sophisticated arguments that should win the day. And they themselves wanted to find a political home - I think many people found themselves, you know disillusioned with the ANC and its leadership and wanted to find something different. That's my take on it and I think the practical and empirical evidence will back that up. As to how it was integrated with my own coming from the SACP and how I related to that personally, I have to be completely upfront and say by that stage, I did believe fundamentally that what we needed as a new formation was a much tighter and much more serious political form than a loose coalition, I did at the time. And certainly I think my own experience within the SACP, and not from what people might think it was - like you're coming from this Stalinist organisation which wants to control things - there was a big difference to me at the time between a party form, right and a political organisation form and I did argue that out in the APF at the time. So my argument was not to establish a political party, that was then has a particular agenda and go out and convince people of a particular ideological line or program of action and then to enter into potential electoral politics which seemed to be what political parties do, otherwise why do you exist as a political party if you're not going to contest on the terrain of politics - and which hadn't been de-legitimised and it still hasn't been fundamentally de-legitimised in the minds of most people, even though there is a lot of apathy. So a political organisation form, I believe was necessary to translate the kind of energies and activities that were showing themselves on the ground into a more serious attempt to try to contest the ANC's neo-liberal trajectory, I felt very strongly that if we maintained at the time, a coalition force that what we would do, we might be for the short term period quite effective in preventing and putting up walls against some of the more immediate kinds of practical consequences of things, but we would hit up against a brick wall, we wouldn't be able to get anything beyond that, anything beyond defensive politics. That was saying; "join the APF, we will help you march and protest, we will help you gain some resources and educational skills in order to be able to prevent the cut off, of electricity" - that was a key

part of what the APF was about but I didn't ever believe that that was the end of, you know that was not the end goal.

Interviewer: I think that, just kind of following on from that, did you see ... as the APF gains more and this kind of happened more rapidly early on where it started to gain something of an identity of a movement around then, a broad coalition of forces within the alliance - did you at the time, while you were still in the Communist Party in the Johannesburg central branch, imagine that the APF, did you already see it as a possible point, a political point of competition to the SACP and possibly also an antagonistic pole?

Mckinley: I would have to say no, I did not. While I was in the SACP I saw what was going on at that point of the APF as a possibility, as a spark more than anything else, that might have impact. I still at that point and time in the SACP considered the fact that there might distinctly be a possibility of a gathering of left forces from a range of different fronts; workers, organised unions those who had come out of the party and had been disaffected by it, community organisations and others coming together to really create some kind of a mass-based organisation and opposition to the ANC. When I was in the party that is how I imagined it, right. When things started in the APF, and probably the first eighteen months to two years it became very clear to me that this was not going to happen, that in fact, the APF, as small as it was and as insignificant as it was at the time, in numerical terms, in political terms it still seemed to represent a serious threat to the established politics of COSATU and the ANC, and those that were in the leadership, they acted accordingly and they pulled from a struggle that initially they were part of and had supported, which was an anti privatisation struggle. So by the time that I think those debates really started coalescing in the APF, around organisational forms, it was at that time that I think, and personally that I began to sort of see the possibilities of the APF being the nascent kind of organisational forum of opposition, but I imagined much, much more than that, prior to that.

Interviewer: And just in terms of, I want to come back to the issues of organisational structure and so forth

Mckinley: Can we just pause for a second.

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Interviewer: We are back on after a short break. You used an interesting word that in describing the kind of initial phase of the APF a certain kind of ideological heterogeneity. As the kind of movement becomes one with more of a distinct identity, how does this ideological

heterogeneity, does it continue to exist? What is the status of that ideological heterogeneity and does it persist within the distinct identity of the APF?

McKinley: Yes, it continues to exist but it changes form, that's the way I'll respond to that question. In other words in the initial phases of the APF, the character of the ideological heterogeneity was one which was moulded by very specific experiences of where people were immediately coming from. I have gone back and looked at some of those early debates and some of those recorded things, you could see the contributions of people were coming out of their very own immediate organisational political experiences and so their ideological incarnations reflected that. That started to shift as the APF began to take on its own impetus, its own character I think, more so people moved gradually. In other words they broke those kinds of ties both personally and other wise, the moors started the shift, the ship started moving away from the dock so to speak. As that begins to happen, the ideological heterogeneity shifts, it doesn't disappear but it shifts into a different character and the character starts becoming, is not so much about whether I come from this tradition and this particular kind of politics formed in the 80s and 90s and those kind of periods, its whether in the main, if I remember very correctly and I think my memory is pretty good in these kind of things, is that the main ideological debates became around organisational form as opposed to the larger question. I think there was a kind of general acceptance of the politics of the APF, I don't think there were massive debates over the key demands of the APF and the key struggles that we should take up and the sort of tactical approach of the APF – yes there were some debates, some people wanted to be more militant and more direct and otherwise - but I don't think those were necessarily central. I think the ideological debate was, 'okay, we've got this APF, we've gotten this far, we are not going to go away anytime, we have gone past the first phase so we haven't disappeared, so what now in terms of the politics and the ideology?' Do we represent some kind of alternative ideological pole to the ANC and to the neo liberal agenda or do we represent an organisational form that takes up practical struggles and does not try to ideologise those struggles necessarily. And I think the ideological heterogeneity comes out there and you have very different perspectives in that regard.

Interviewer: In its kind of initial formation does the APF have a distinct strategic vision and if so how does it develop and shift within these kinds of movements and debates that you are talking about?

McKinley: I think the APF did have a very broad strategic vision and that strategic vision was one which basically was moulded by the immediacy of the struggles; which was essentially that we are against all forms of privatisation and what we are looking to achieve in being anti privatisation is pro-people, I think that was the strategic vision. When I say pro people I mean the collective, I mean reappropriating the public. That was the fundamental strategic vision of the APF and I don't think it went too far beyond that at that particular point in time. There were people who argued that we must have a deeper and more sophisticated strategic vision about the kind of society we want to see and how we are going to go about achieving that but I think for the vast majority of the APF membership and others it was simply, the strategic vision which

was captured in what the APF did which was simply about two steps, two things: 1). Defence - we are defending a particular history and trajectory of struggle and; 2) we want to expand in defending that space and reclaim and reappropriate what is being taken away - and that wasn't just reducible to only public services like water, electricity health and education - it was a retaking of a political kind of thinking and space. And that I think, informed the strategic - people were wanting more than what was on offer and the APF provided at least the incipient strategic vision for that, in that context.

Interviewer: In this initial phase of APF what was the kind of organisational form that attached itself to the strategic vision, the kind that allowed us to fight the struggles in this way?

McKinley: Well I think here there was a trade off in terms of the organisational form that APF eventually took and has more or less reflected since that time in various ways; which was that there was clearly an acceptance and an understanding that - both because predominately of the legacies of apartheid and also because of the fact that the ANC itself in the intervening society of the 1908s had done very little to overturn that legacy - there was a core group of individuals which brought with them serious organisational, political, theoretical as well as literary and media skills and those activists and others had to contribute. But the way in which they needed to contribute was not to dominate the organisation politically necessarily, but that the community organisations which had the numbers, which had the political legitimacy which were the ones who were actually engaged in the battles, which were the ones who were feeling the effects of the policies needed to have their own voice. I think the organisational form tried to reflect that which was a central organisation called the APF but in a forum, as we call ourselves the forum; which was that the community organisations will be central and would be autonomous, in other words we couldn't dictate to the affiliate what it is that they could do and could not do and what struggles that they could and could not take up but at the same time to join together with other community affiliates and this core of activists that was quite experienced and others to take forward the very struggles that they themselves had decided on. In other words though resources, through assistance, through the management of basic things that needed to be done. And the people themselves, not because of a lack of trying but because of a whole history of things at that particular point realised themselves - and I don't think there is any particular patronising aspect to this at all which some people have tried to argue - it was the community organisations themselves that wanted and demanded that forum form because in some ways it tried to create the best of those worlds; to be able to allow others who weren't experiencing these cut-offs, who weren't part of the working class or the poor necessarily but who had things to offer coming in, not dominating as a result of purely centralised structures but also being able to contribute in their own way while community organisations themselves were able to carry off the programmes and were able to continue the struggles on the ground.

Interviewer: That gives a very kind of political account of the emergence of organisational forms of the APF; outside of those political contestations of organisational form were there other kinds of contingencies that led to the political forms that the organisation took?

McKinley: I'm not quite sure what you're referring to when you say other contingencies?

Interviewer: I mean other circumstances that were less political, more specifically practical, functional those kinds of things?

McKinley: Ok. OK. Yes. You can get away from that, the one was and has always been a topic of constant debate is financial resources, cash, liquid capital. The initial two years of the APF all of these struggles were allowed to happen in some ways not because of financial resources but the resources that were actually available to do certain things or to assist in doing certain things came from those - and this was something that I didn't think was particularly healthy at the time - came from those that had the ability to do that; so that can potentially create fairly quickly a level of dependency at a both a personal and organisational level between those that have and those that don't have. And if the reliance is on those that have to get these things then those that don't have can make use of, then what you have to have in order to make that work is you have to have structures who make the decisions about how is that used. As the limitations of that kind of very practical resource allocation and finding resources came out, the organisational form became attached to that because once it became clear that there were possibilities of accessing resources outside a small group of individuals and sympathisers and other people who just give certain things, a more formal kind of accessing of financial resources, that I think catalysed in some ways the necessity of an organisational form that would be able to have some degree of control over how those kinds of things were first of all accessed, the conditions under which they were accessed as well as how they were used and managed and for what purposes.

Interviewer: I want to come back to this question and possibly pick up on some points you of tension around these questions. But just sticking on organisational form for now, to what extent do you think the ways in which the APF was initially structured was shaped by at least previous forms of politics of the liberation movement, the civic movement so forth?; and how does that experience come to be taken up, if at all within the APF? How does that experience of the liberation movement find its way into this new formation?

McKinley: The simple answer to the first part of the question is yes, there is no doubt for me that there is a, I wouldn't say necessarily a totally direct relationship but certainly a relationship that had an impact and effect. You cannot divorce your past and where you are coming from and peoples own organisational experiences. For example I think back to the time of the initial formation of the APF and the debates that took place around what eventually became the organisational form of the APF; the arguments that won out, the majoritarian arguments that won out were those that reflected predominately from those that came out from the liberation movement whether they were from civics, whether it was from the ANC whether it was COSATU. And there was a smaller minority voice which did not come out of that liberation movement experience in the sense of the Alliance but from a more autonomous perspective so to speak that wanted to recreate – not recreate ... but to actually do away with or move away from those kinds of forms and create new forms of ways of organising and ways of doing politics, that lost out or at least that got submerged quite substantially because the political and

social weight that they carried was much less in the constituency that the APF had gathered around itself. So in that sense it was very clear to me that there was that connection. How that manifested itself in practical terms; yes there is a long history and I think we are still with it and it's a very contradictory one, of the tension between leaders and followers or leaders and the mass in this sense. And the liberation movement despite the fact that the anti apartheid movement itself threw up all sorts of leaders at local level and all sorts of other things, the dominant form that that politics took and reflected itself in the way organisations were run was looking up to particular kinds of individuals and leaders to carry the day, to express the hopes and otherwise. Almost a hangover I would say, a borrowing of the earlier historical period of a politics of more traditional chieftaincies and that kind of thing; and that certainly played itself out in the APF, no doubt about it. That certain type of were people whether they were conscious of it or not necessarily almost defaulted in most cases to the leader, to those who were the most public voices and the most well known and those that had the most exposure. And I think in our interviews it was clear that in that early period of the APF the person who was predominately encapsulating that was Trevor Ngwane, for various reasons. So I think that sort of iconisation of a leadership borrowed itself from the liberation movement and effected and impacted on the early ways in which APF was run and which had very practical consequences for the APF, very, very practical. I won't go into whether I'm sure we will get to that whether they were negative or positive or the character of them but nevertheless I think they impacted quite tremendously on that. I think the other continuity so to speak between the liberation movement form of politics and organisational forms which eventually came into the APF was one which I think was predominantly coming from trade union movement because the trade unions in various ways or people that came from the trade union experience were quite instrumental in the APF in the early stages and certainly in its early history. That was, that there had to be meaningful democratic discussion and meaningful democratic structure within the organisation and I think that's what saved the APF personally, from totally tearing itself apart when the shit started hitting the fan - is that the demand, the necessity irrespective of how sometimes frustrating it might be to those that didn't want to have to sit for two or three days discussing things that they already figured they knew about and had made decisions on, was to allow the democratic space for people to argue these things out and to be able to at least come to some degree of consensual conclusion, I think that was fundamentally important. But that came from another aspect of the liberation movement, certainly not the ANC type but mostly from a union tradition, and I think that was certainly another continuity.

Interviewer: We will come back to some of these questions when we get into more of some of the tensions and so forth, but just getting back to the formation of the APF, how was its formation received within the alliance and the ANC?

McKinley: Very badly, Let me retract that and say initially there seemed to be at least some degree of support and solidarity with the APF, I mean the Municipal Workers Union, NEHAWU, in particular within the COSATU ranks, parts of the SACP- even though smaller parts by the time that the APF really got off the ground - and certainly within what was left of some of what would be considered the civic and political movements which had been part of the alliance.

People forget that we started out and we maintained ourselves within COSATU house for 3-4 years, we were at the heart of the biggest alliance partner in a sense ... I think where it turned was once the APF got beyond the immediate nature of resisting a cut off, an eviction - and which a lot of people within the alliance didn't have a problem with necessarily and they agreed that these were bad things that were happening and shouldn't happen - but once those became politicised; in other words once they had to take on some political message beyond the most immediate, let's take a cut off; who is responsible for this, what kind of politics lie behind this? And once the APF began to address those things and pointed the finger very clearly at the ANC and increasingly some of the alliance partners that were covering for it, that relationship turned fairly sour.

Interviewer: For yourself in the Communist party at least as a hardening of the kind of approach to the APF in those months before your expulsion; is that the sense that you are getting at the time of a particular hardening of the organisation and how does that figure in relation to your own position within the party and as a member of the APF?

McKinley: Yes there certainly was, it didn't happen overnight, but it was a gradual hardening of an attitude. And in specific relation to the SACP it was very clear to me and few others at that time I think that this came out of the fact that irrespective of what the APF was doing - which the SACP could not really say it was against, it couldn't come out publicly and say it was against anti privatisation struggles - but what it really was against and the hardening of the attitudes was because it saw it as political competition from the left, that there was something that the left was brewing over here which was in competition with the 'vanguard of the working class' and there's 'no way we are going to let that happen, we are not going to become part of that'; and that to me became very, very clear. And the way it manifested itself over that year, that last year or so, was the increasing marginalisation of people like myself and others who were publicly involved already in those processes leading to the APF and beginning to label us - as opposed to engaging in an ideological and political debate about what the sustainability of these struggles might be within this context - it was to dismiss those struggles and try to delegitimise the APF by labelling both individuals and those involved as 'ultra-left', as 'counter-revolutionary' because you weren't part of who they were and that is the way they tried to deal with the APF initially, in the party very clearly. And that - I think some people missed this - that then seeped into the ANC. It wasn't Mbeki and the ANC initially, he [Mbeki] was the one that got paid attention to because he used those words publicly because he was the president of the country and the ANC but that incubated itself within the SACP and it was given political and ideological weight by the SACP.

Interviewer: Just in terms of your own expulsion, what role do you think your presence within the APF milieu had in catalysing if at all ... your own expulsion?

McKinley: I think it played a role but I don't know if it played the major role in my expulsion. When charges were put to me in terms of what I was being charged with and eventually led to my expulsion, the biggest one was bringing the organisation into disrepute - that could cover pretty much anything - and undermining the leadership of the SACP was the other major

charge. Those I think - partly as a result of the activities of the APF - were very much considered but also when the actual expulsion process began what they trotted out to try to prove that this was the case was things that I had written mostly as the editor of *Umsebenzi* which was the party newsletter. So it wasn't specific to the APF but included the APF for sure.

Interviewer: In terms of the Independent left, how did they respond to the APF?

McKinley: The independent left was very, very small and at that point I think quite disaffected and disillusioned in many ways. Their response I think was one of first of all curiosity – ‘what’s this new formation that pretends or purports to speak on behalf of poor working people and is actually doing something about it?’; but besides curiosity then fairly quickly the response was one of, ‘it is competition’, as opposed to let’s find areas to work in solidarity with. And I think that was a direct result of what I call very vanguardist, precast notions of struggle - that you only have particular forms of struggle that fit into a schema and the APF wasn’t one of those, it was something that’s outside of a schema and there are all sorts of different kinds of people, people from the SACP and all these kinds of people ... ‘oh my God this hybrid, that’s coming out of these things, it’s not revolutionary, it’s not going do much’, even though I think some of the independent left supported the struggles, the practical struggles because they had to. They couldn’t be seen to be opposing communities there that were resisting cut-offs and evictions. I am convinced that from that point onwards, from the time the APF was formed, the majority with a few exceptions in the independent left has been incredibly opportunistic in its engagements with and response to organisations like the APF. It has at times tried to vilify them when it’s convenient to do so and at other times it has piggy-backed when it’s convenient to do so. So, I don’t hold much of a candle to what is considered to be the independent left in this country in terms of their serious engagement with the APF in any meaningful way.

Interviewer: What about working class community organisations?

McKinley: I think there was, at least in Gauteng where the APF is concentrated and engaged most of its struggles, I certainly think there was a great deal of interest that was shown, some of it stand-offish not quite sure what this thing was about. Very quickly the APF within a short period of time the APF achieved a notoriety lets put it that way, because it was one of the few organisations in Gauteng and probably the only organisation at a particular point that was actually doing anything, that was actually struggling, that was actually there in the public’s vision whether that be at large events or whether that be at the local community level and that sparked the interest of lots of working class people. But at the same time I think there was a weariness of the APF because precisely there was no history for people, the historical memory wasn’t there. There was an interest but weariness at the same time.

Interviewer: In terms of response of government and the certain kind of labelling that sets in and so forth, what kind of impact did this have on the character of the APF?

McKinley: I think it had several impacts. One of the impacts it had was that there was certainly one of anger from a particular section of the APF particularly from the activists themselves

who've been in the struggle for a very long period time ... one that was, 'how dare you' call us these kinds of names. So, there was an immediate guttural reaction ... which was to respond in a like-minded way, which was then to call the ANC and others' names and other things so you will get into a war of words and labels. I think that was not particularly healthy but it was there. I think the other impact was that in practical terms, it was not just the words and the labelling, what they did in a lot of people's minds was ... previously your question of how the working class community themselves are responding ... that had an impact within communities because when the ANC pronounced and began to propagate that the APF was this counter-revolutionary ultra-left – you're not to trust these people, you're not to work with these people - that had an impact within communities where people who might have otherwise been interested in the APF, once the ANC became quite clear in saying this was not an acceptable organisation, that this was trying to undermine government, undermine other things, I think quite a number of people pulled away in communities from that, although I don't think that prevented people but it certainly had an impact. I think that another impact that it had was to probably make the APF too defensive about its own identity, about its sense of self as opposed to sort of - not laughing it off because it couldn't be laughed off because it was a very serious charge and had to be responded to in ways - but instead of transcending those things and showing that actually the best response to that kind of labelling and opportunistic politicking was to intensify the struggles on the ground and to show that there was a force and it did represent a particular constituency and actually was a serious component of the political and organisational scene in South Africa, the APF tended to, over time, internalise these things and instead of the outward form it became inward where the debate and arguments almost reflected - it wasn't the labelling that caused all this - but lent itself to that kind of what I call navel gazing.

Interviewer: I think you have kind of spoken to this already so maybe you just add to this where necessary ... but in this initial phase of the APF what are the kind of key - apart from the things we've talked about, the organisational form and overall strategy - what are the key ideological challenges that are faced by the organisation and maybe just speak to the ways in which it confronts these challenges in one way or another, if at all ... let's say organisational, political and ideological challenges?

McKinley: So the whole array of challenges? I think the key, challenge, okay I'm not prioritising these necessarily but a key challenge in that regard of the APF was its own growth. From probably 18 months-2years into the formation of the APF ... for the next 3-4 years after its formation the APF grew quite extensively in relative terms. And the challenge in that regard organisationally but it was also an ideological challenge, was not only to welcome all these forces and community organisations that wanted to join but be true to its own claims; which were, we are capable of being of assistance, we are capable of being an alternative home - so the organisational capacity to actually carry out struggles, the actual expectation that came with that of certain resource allocations to community, of financial assistance to community organisations and struggles – so, fulfilling those kinds of expectations and demands that came with the growth of the organisation was a huge challenge for the APF, a massive challenge I must say. And it only met those things very partially. Because the irony was that at the same

time that the APF was actually growing in numbers what I call the core cadreship activists of the APF the activist base was getting thinner for various reasons. So the organisational capacity issues to sustain the kinds of intense struggles that had characterised the first 2-3 years of the APF - large scale mobilisations, a whole range of other things - became very, very difficult for the APF in many kinds of ways. That was a key challenge. The second challenge was predominately overtly an ideological and political challenge; which was to maintain a particular interest in its own tactical and strategic vision by its own constituency. In other words, to say – ‘we have mobilised cut offs, we’ve joined communities together to mobilise against this but now what?’ Moving beyond the more immediate response, the more defensive nature of trying to confront something; that was the ideological challenge that I would argue the APF still confronts in varying different kind of ways but certainly came about from those early years. To me it was fairly meaningless even though I understood the debate at the time ideologically to adopt socialism as the sort of flag of the APF so to speak. In other words, the content of what that meant on the ground, in the struggles became a huge ideological challenge because then you could be accused and rightfully so, of being no better than just throwing ... these things out there without having the political will or the capacity or the intent of actually trying to see that through beyond an immediate response to something on the ground. The third area which was key and always has been, but began to crystallise during that particular time, those early to mid years, was the issue of leadership, leadership from the base. In other words, creating what we called at the time the second and third layers of cadreship within the APF. The APF had engaged huge amounts of energy in those first 3-4 years in a whole range of workshops and education, political education to try and politicise struggles and create cadres beyond just saying let’s cut that thing, let’s reconnect electricity. To sustain that and to continue to have groups of leaders come out of or being thrown up out of the community organisations and struggles that could then move into the APF and take those positions of leadership and run with them became a huge, huge challenge.

Interviewer: In this kind of initial phase - peg it at around 2003 - what are the main kind of factors for the growth of the organisation?

McKinley: By 2003?

Interviewer: Between the periods from 2000-2003 but you can speak beyond that period.

McKinley: Well there is no doubt that in that first three year period the main kinds of events, two in particular - the World Conference against Racism and the World Summit on Sustainable Development - were very key in terms of the growth of the APF. It wasn’t about the events themselves and what happened at the event necessarily, it was about the profile and the exposure that that gave. Not purely in media terms and the popular kind of imagination which was important but also in relation to intra organisational relations, networks and solidarities and other things - people meeting others and gaining access to a range of knowledge and other things from outside Gauteng and realising that there was so much more for a lot of people than what they might have imagined in this seemingly quite localised kind of struggle to the APF. And the WCAR and WSSD were the vehicles in some ways to catalyse that kind of growth and

exposure. Also the initial militancy of some of the grass root struggles that took place, because they had not been seen in South Africa for a long period of time up until that point where apologetically and quite deftly in some cases, local community organisations were beginning to appropriate not just the rhetoric or propaganda of the liberation movement but some of the tactical means by which the liberation movements had fought the apartheid state and the reclamation of what they considered to be collective and that I think struck a chord amongst a lot of people on the ground where it wasn't just these people we might agree with and everything that they do, but in practical terms what they are doing resonates with our own experiences and struggles and makes a lot of sense. And I think the militancy of the grass roots struggles and to some degree the success of those struggles - they had success, they actually practically achieved certain things for people that made a difference in their lives - that combined with larger events that the APF was involved in that exposed them to a lot of things - those two things were probably the main catalysers of the growth of the APF during that time.

Interviewer: In the same period though, a number of formations, organisations which had come into the organisation at different points depart, what were the main nodes and factors for those kinds of points of departure?

McKinley: Well, it's interesting because I think what happened in organisations like SAMWU and NEHAWU is precisely the same thing that happened in an earlier period in COSATU and the SACP - which was that those certain individuals within those organisations and structures that had gravitated towards this new kind of politics began to be confronted within their own organisations; 'why are you associating with these kinds of people that are anti ANC?' and so forth. As a result of that internalised confrontation, I think the majority which were against aligning themselves with the APF and being part of the APF won the day. SAMWU would be classic example here even the fact that the Secretary General of SAMWU was very supportive, they lost the battle within SAMWU to organisationally be part of the APF ... As far as the other organisations outside the Alliance, I can think of a couple of the political groupings like the Democratic Socialist Movement and a few others. My sense was that the APF had disappointed them, the APF had not become what they wanted it to become or was not moving in the direction they wanted so they just pulled, because it wasn't going to become what they wanted it to be which was a precast revolutionary movement or mass workers party or whatever it was, so now it was why waste our time because we have lost that battle within the APF so let's do our own thing ... The third impact ... was individual activists and here I think very seasoned and skilled activists who had been in the struggle for quite some time and who had been part of the initial impetus of the APF, doing a lot of work and everything; and quite a number of them started to pull as well. I think predominately - and I have thought about this for a long time - that was a result of two things: 1) it was pure burn out; on a personal level, demands and might seem strange in an organisation as small as the APF but nevertheless because there was a great deal of expectation from people to do large amounts of things all the time and it was pure voluntary, that people just got very tired. The second and more important one ... was that people's politics and ideology changed. They come to a particular point in their lives just like a lot of people in the ANC earlier had and still do, they figured that politics is not about struggling

so much but is about making yourself comfortable and living a life that you had always wanted to live outside all of these demands of struggle and now it's time, we've done our bit and now its time to concentrate on me and my context. In some ways I can understand that much more so if that is a non-accumulative intent but there were components of that I think that made a huge impact.

Interviewer: In addition to a kind of response from the ANC, from the working class, from the independent left there is something of an international response and at least the APF gets some sort of profile internationally. Firstly how important was such a profile to the APF in terms of what it was hoping to achieve politically and two; how do you think that profile helped shaped the APF's own sense of self?

McKinley: First one, yes, I do think it was important probably for reasons that most people may not acknowledge; and that is that going back to the strategic and tactical vision that we talked about of the APF, part of what I understood that to have been was a reclamation of sorts, and that wasn't just about practical, physical kinds of reclamation but it was about a political space and a thinking. And up until that time and it had been changing but still, up until the APF was formed, internationally the vast majority of progressive forces and anti-apartheid forces that had been part of the movement and everything else were still very, very much uninformed and sometimes not as a result of their own faults but there wasn't anything to counter that information - that the ANC and the government were doing a wonderful job and that things were progressing quite nicely in South Africa and there wasn't a great deal of opposition to these policies. And the APF, for some, shattered that and that was positive. In other words, it contributed - you can't say it caused it because the APF wasn't big enough to cause it - but the APF's activities and profile and recognition of its struggles at an international level amongst some very influential progressive activists in Europe, in the United States some in Asia and Latin America combined with their own struggles, I think shattered a lot of the illusions that a lot of international activists and progressives had in the ANC and what was going on because they could not ignore the practical struggles that organisations like the APF engaged in. And I think when they began to reflect back on the commonalities of the anti-neo liberal kind of thrust that the APF represented - and began to locate within their own struggles - that made sense to them. The fact that yeah, 'this stuff is going on in South Africa, it is real, there is a lot of discontent, these things are happening' and I think that contributed a great deal at an important level to degrees certainly not what we might have desired but to degrees of solidarity and understanding of the situation of South Africa's own transitional political economy so to speak. How that impacted on the APF's sense of itself? positive and negative. The positive component first; I remember very specifically in several circumstances, particularly when the initial water struggles were happening and these became quite internationally well known, is that the rank and file individuals in a place like Orange Farm and in Soweto were incredibly not just individually pleased and happy that this had happened but I think felt very affirmed by the fact that people from other countries were paying attention and were actually having interest in these things; and people who had struggled themselves, not from a patronising 'oh we are here to recognise your struggles' but actually in a way that created a

certain degrees of solidarity. And I think that was important for an internationalist consciousness, to get outside of the local certain kind of parochial understanding of a certain politics and to be introduced to international activists, to be able to have access to some degree of other perspectives internationally and to realise that some of the struggles and the struggles that were happening here that they were engaged in, were going on internationally and I think that's important. It didn't go nearly far enough but it was there and I think that was a positive aspect to it. The negative aspect of it is that it went to people's heads and particularly certain individual's heads and made them think that all of a sudden or over a very short period of time that the APF was this major not just national but international force and in fact began to act as if we were some kind of international pop star movement that could go around to conferences and a whole range of events and be the new heroes of post apartheid South Africa and representatives and I think that was a very negative development; because it only fed this notion of iconisation of particular leaderships that I mentioned earlier; the capturing of particular space for reasons that had nothing to do with the struggles on the ground but everything to do with recognition, being recognised by others not in a positive but a negative and opportunistic way.

Interviewer: You've already spoken somewhat about the WSSD and the WCAR but I think because these have a kind of international dimension, it might be useful for you to reflect on why these choices of points of mobilisation? And two; what was the actual content of mobilisations in both cases or respectively?

McKinley: The first part - why the focus on those things - unless I'm mistaken, WCAR and then quickly followed by WSSD were the very first post apartheid major international political and developmental events in South Africa. I can't think of anything that happened in the 1990s that was equivalent, I mean the Rugby World Cup was the only thing that was previous to that and had a kind of international component to it. It was the first, so I think the newness and the fact that it was there drew a lot of attention from a lot of quarters, it wasn't just the APF. The fact that the government took it very seriously, the trade unions and all the other forces, everybody saw it as an opportunity or a space to be heard, to be heard and not just within the bubble of South African politics. From our side I think there were not as many illusions as they were from other sides as to what these things were actually going to do and I don't think that was really the point, you know that WCAR was really going to achieve something, that internationally it was going to be a really good event, I don't think that was actually the point. It provided a point where the voices could be expanded exponentially on an international stage because people will be simply paying attention to what went on around the event it was a pole of attraction and I think that was the main reason why there was this massive interest in doing things. Secondly and on the domestic front and rightfully so, these two events were seen, particularly the WSSD more than WCAR, the WSSD because it was a quite a bit larger and in terms of the APF it was situated in Johannesburg and so it made a difference in terms practically of what could be mobilised and how much attention could be paid to it; it was the fact that the government - as the tension started moving towards the WSSD which I can speak much more directly than WCAR - they essentially created a situation by their protectiveness, by their sort of

very narrow response - I remember the headline, Charles Ngakula at the time, the Minister of Safety and Security ... 'anybody who thinks they are going to disrupt this will be dealt with harshly' - and there was this challenge that was issued almost by government, to say this is our event, these are our issues and we are going to protect it and any of you troublemakers, organisations like the APF who think you are going to crash the party are sadly mistaken. And that became a challenge for a lot of people saying, 'screw you, we've have a right to do these thing and we are going to act and challenge you back'. So I think that upped the ante. I think those were the two main things, partly domestic and local but also the international and the pole of attraction. The second part of that was how it impacted?

Interviewer: What was the content of the actual mobilisation, the actual politics that drove it?

McKinley; I was out of the country at WCAR so I'm not going to even try to speak to that - I think other people can speak more directly to WCAR than I can, but to the WSSD certainly. It changed dramatically from the time it started to where it ended up. So I don't think one can just have an over-arching attitude. At the beginning, if one remembers correctly, the APF was not quite sure whether or not it should be involved as part of this whole civil society aspect which was this sort of officially this side thing to the WSSD and rightfully so. It was in the engagement with that forum and this wider range of forces including COSATU and others that it became apparent to organisations like the APF that this was just a stage show that was sort of meant to be perfunctory civic society consultation but having no meaning and no voice really. So, that led to the second stage of the politics which was revealed by the first. Which was no, we must do this independently and we must mobilise as many forces as possible from the communities and other movements which were around and gather as much social weight as we can and convince other people who might be in the civil society to come join us, to have a show of force essentially. And I think that was really the driving force from that point on was to say we are here, we are here and you are not going to crush us, you are not going to prevent us from doing these things. It was a challenge and I think the politics of the event, maybe in retrospect, maybe at the time I didn't think this but I think in retrospect the politics took a back seat to the challenge itself which was about getting as many people together as possible with an oppositional message. So certainly the politics was there, that this is an illegitimate gathering, it's not going to achieve anything it's just a show, yes all the those things were important to show that that was the case but I think the main driving force behind the APF's involvement in the formation of what became the SMI and pulling in the LPM and others and spending a huge amount of time and energy in trying to pull this thing together with its own resources, was to say that we are here, we are not going anywhere and you going to have to deal with us.

Interviewer: If I'm hearing you correctly one of the driving impetuses of WSSD is the making of a political subject on an international stage?

McKinley It's a good way of putting it ... and a domestic stage.

Interviewer: Just to add on to that and to place it within the kind of broader political context – post-1999 within what was then called the Global Justice Movement, the movement of movements; conferences of the elite became a target of popular mobilisation and this is certainly true of North America and Europe. To what kind of extent do those kinds of mobilisations, Genoa, Seattle and so forth feed into the politics of WSSD?

McKinley: Yes, I definitely think they were part and parcel of that, they might be exaggerated in terms of their influence but I think amongst a certain section of what constituted that movement of the APF and some of the movements that it was allied to and others that joined in WSSD mobilisations they were certainly effected and impacted on by Seattle and Genoa and saw their own activities as being the South African equivalent of the same thing. We got to join the international march towards exposing these guys and mobilising as many people and trying to be as militant as we can within the context and the circumstances without getting killed, at least without getting wiped out; not a head-on confrontation but a anti-mobilisation. But I'm not so convinced that Seattle and Genoa were really in the forefront of the minds of the vast majority of the people who turned out and were part of the WSSD mobilisation. I think they knew about them and were aware that there were these things there but I think it had much more impact on those seasoned activists and people who had been able to travel and had been much more exposed to these things; they were much more in touch internationally with networks that were driving them.

Interviewer: I want to now start moving to the middle-late period of the APF. I think a good place to start ... you know I got something of a sense of a tension between on one side the demagogic, iconic leader and on the other side the kind of open democratic process within the organisation. To what extent did that tension play itself out within the actual life of the organisation?

McKinley: It became a very serious, I would call it cancer if you want to use the physical metaphor, within the middle years of the APF, from 2004 onwards in particular. By that stage certain individuals within the APF, and in particular Trevor Ngwane, had achieved cult status I guess you could say beyond even beyond iconic status ... not simply within certain sections of South African populace, even amongst those that might have hated him he still had a cult status but also particularly within the arena that the APF operated in. If one remembers the very first community organisations and the sort of core of the communities that started the APF struggles came from Soweto and of course Trevor was central to that and that is understandable in some ways but also internationally as a result of these big international events. But the tension went beyond him as an individual for sure and I just start there because he is central to that. It became one in which the use of leadership positions and the influence that it brought and the accolades that it brought had two particular impacts organisationally on the APF. One was that it took away, I believe, to a large degree the possibility of organisations giving solidarity to actual struggles, to people. In other words solidarity not to conferences, invitations and these kinds of things but material and real political solidarity at the grass root level. I think it sucked a lot of that out and took away what could have been a much more beneficial and productive

kind of solidarity not just internationally but also domestically between organisations. Secondly it created degrees of competitions of egos between those that wanted those positions, it was almost like jealousies of various sorts and competitions between leaders within the APF, leaders within the LPM and Jubilee and so forth. This has never been really discussed because it has never been unravelled properly but a lot of the subsequent disintegration within movements like the LPM and Jubilee and splits and so forth I think is as a result of this kind of politics and this kind of approach. Thirdly and probably most importantly in terms of the tension, it created internal mobilisations within the APF around a particular pre-cast non democratically discussed agenda of where the APF should be going and how its resources should be used and who speaks on behalf of the APF. The tension was really an attempt to try to colonise the rank and file voices of the APF into a particularly pre-cast, pre-figured organisational form as well as a trajectory. In the APF's case it revolved predominately around - the cover that was used I don't think it was genuine in any real way - the cover that was used was that the APF has now gotten to this stage, we've done all these things and we need to move to form a mass workers' party, we need to adopt socialism as the agenda and we need to orient towards the organised working class and that's our natural ally. And so the community struggles themselves really start becoming manipulated to achieve this and resources get directed towards this way and done so not within the open contestation forms of the APF but within the back corridors and cliques that began to form around this.

Interviewer: This perhaps not a completely related question but still within the same vicinity. To what extent does there develop a tension within the organisation between your urban based intellectuals/activists and your township based community activists within the life of the organisation?

McKinley: I think there were tensions there from the beginning and somewhat understandably so. I mean despite the best intentions that the so called middle-class intellectual activists might have there can be no pretence to equivalency with regards to experience. I think where the trip up came and there is always going to be that tension in trying to forge a movement that tries to include both and which tries to do so in a way that is democratic, in which one does not dominate just because one has skills and resources and access to them. I think it's a healthy tension at a certain level but what that turned into in the APF was an opportunistic means of trying to delegitimise the contributions and the intentions of individual intellectuals and activists and trying to caricature them as being inherently oppressive or inherently controlling or inherently outside of the certain experiences and thus you cannot relate. And that took certain racial overtones at certain times though not always overtly but certainly underneath and that I think are quite destructive. I do not think, I still do not think and I have never believed and will never believe that in the history of the APF that this was the majoritarian view of the rank-and-file members. I think it was the preserve of a smaller group of individuals, some coming from the communities who saw in these intellectuals and activists a barrier to their own fairly centralised and undemocratic control of the movement.

Interviewer: Were these kinds of fights, did they translate into fights over the public voice of the organisation and just more generally who between these kinds of two groups could one say that one has dominated public representations of the organisation or has that been always something that is democratically mediated?

McKinley; No it hasn't been always democratically mediated; I don't think it would be honest to say that. I think there have been certain problems in this area and I can speak from personal experience where in the initial phases of the APF I was given the task, democratically elected so, to be a media and information officer of the APF - so in other words to try to get the voice out there and I did so gladly. But as a result of doing so I was then accused of trying to manipulate and control the public voice of the APF and my immediate response to that in the democratic structures of the APF is that I can understand that there might be a degree of tension ... but I was given a task and I was doing it. But I understood some of the potential criticisms that could come out as a result of that and in order to try and deal with those things - I'm using this as an example - the debate was taken in the APF that okay, what we need to do is to engage in a series of capacitation initiatives and workshops on media-related things to give people skills so that they could do these things, so that the affiliates themselves didn't have to rely on the APF and certain individuals to release press statements, to engage with the media and to have their voice ... and we did these things and we still have done it the whole way. Unfortunately what often times has been the case and not always - there have been some very successful things that must not be over-looked in this debate - is that there have been many community organisations within the APF that have produced their own voices and their own media and have done their own things as a result of some assistance from the outside often times and in a way I think it has been quite empowering for some of the individuals as well as the community organisations themselves. But in relation to this tension that you talk about and this fundamental problem I think it got out of hand not because of the involvement of certain intellectuals or middle class activists or people that came from middle class backgrounds in doing certain tasks for the APF but in the manipulation of the tension itself - and I say sometimes it's a healthy tension - the manipulation of that tension for personal and political ends within the APF. In other words instead of saying comrades we dedicate everything towards creating that second and third layer of cadre ship that then takes the reins and moves with it we are going to try and delegitimise those that are trying to do these kinds of things and therefore what happens when you delegitimise and push those people out then those individuals who've done so have control and they have it solely and they haven't built anything but they then have the voice. And that is a very unhealthy perspective and I make no apology whatsoever in fighting that tooth and nail throughout the middle and last years of the APF despite the fact that I do understand and I do appreciate the fact that my own positionality both class wise as well as where one is coming from creates certain tensions.

Interviewer: To what extent - and I'll get off this issue but I think it is an important one in terms of the representation of the organisation - but to what extent has the choice of figures who represent the APF been mediated externally; that is the ways in which the media weights voices

or the ways in which civil society or the kind of independent left milieu has mediated voices, how has that shaped who speaks on behalf of the organisation?

McKinley: It's a very relevant point and one which probably hasn't been taken as seriously as it should have been in the APF. And the point is correct which is to say that the media, NGOs, formal civil society and the way in which they operate tends to gravitate towards voices which are in the South African media milieu more able to communicate in: 1) a particular language which is English; and 2) able to express that in particular kinds of ways, in other words in more sophisticated ways or shall we say in a way that encompasses a range of different kinds of things as opposed to specific struggles or communities themselves. And that has impacted ... and again I don't want to run away from this on a personal level because this is a personal interview of my own and I played a part in that at a certain level, but I have done so with the best of intentions in the sense that there has been nobody else that wants to take that position. So it's easy to criticise ... I have supported that and tried on numerous occasions, I have been responsible for media exposure, for the words that come out of the APF and representing the APF at certain fora and other things. I've always tried to seek a democratic mandate to do that but nonetheless that doesn't take away from the fact that often times it's not the best way to have done things and one wishes and I still do, that there were a plethora of other voices and others that were able to take those reins, to do those kinds of things. I think that has gotten better in the APF in the middle to the late years ... one of the big complaints of a lot of the affiliates in those first 4-5 years was that, 'but the same people are doing the same things all the time and going to all those things, lets expand it'. And as a result, democratic contestation allowed that to happen so that over the last 4-5 years a whole range of different people have gone to represent the APF; I can't remember the last time that I have actually been to an international fora on behalf of the APF, personally it's been years and that's probably the way it should. But I think there is a space for both to coexist and I don't think that just simply because one comes from an intellectual or middle class background that should then delegitimise their role in playing a role in part of that voice but one has to always be cognisant of how that can go too far and subdue some other voices and I understand that

Interviewer: I think it will be interesting to discuss the limits of representational politics within the APF but I don't want to open that for right now. But let's get to some of the financial issues because I think they are also quite key. You have already indicated how you got involved in the media work of the APF, perhaps tell me how you got involved in the financial side of the organisation?

McKinley: Almost by default. There was no intention or desire by the way. What happened was that the previous financial administrator of the APF Florencia Belvedere resigned and she had been in that position for the previous 3-4 years as the APF treasurer and she had overseen access to certain funder resources and that kind of thing. So the skills levels to manage that relationship were already in place. The person who was elected as the successor treasurer I think initially tried to continue that and to be up to the task of what was required with regards to the treasurer position but within about 6-8 month period after that person - Mmiselo Bayi in

this case - took the reins of the treasurership. I don't think it was personally his fault necessarily at all but as a result of lax controls and not really paying attention to where money was being expended and the role of the organiser and the administrator - in this case which we have previously referred to as being part of our political organisation - in diverting certain resources for things, the APF became effectively bankrupt within eight months. It had expended all of its resources; it had no more resources to even continue to run the office or to pay its organiser and administrator. At that point I was called and actually previous to that I had been asked to do certain reports to funders, which I gladly helped with and assisted in writing those reports and other things. At that point Marcello left, he resigned and left I think half way into his term. So the organisation was in a massive bind. Not only was it technically bankrupt in terms of its financial resources but it had no effective treasurer in that position and nobody seemed to be willing at that point to step forward so I volunteered. I was asked essentially to do so first not as an elected treasurer but just to do the actual work that was required to get back a sense of financial or fiscal kind of sanity to the organisation as well as to repair the relationships with the funders because clearly it was massive damage that had been caused. I accepted that challenge and I did so and at the AGM that followed that temporary period, I was elected as the treasurer and have been re-elected ever since.

Interviewer: Just describe for me how the kind of strategies for sourcing funding for the organisation, have changed as it's developed?

McKinley: I think that in the first phase it was almost as if there was a collective sigh of relief in finding anybody or anything that wanted to support any of the struggles because at that time there was a degree - after that first year and a half - of the people who had been giving resources that it just wasn't sustainable and it was a recognition of that. Even though there was some debate and properly so, about approaching funders and the potential pitfalls of that and what that might do in terms of the organisation I think it was certainly the vast majority of people supported that. At the beginning phase it was almost a relief to get the funds - 'my goodness, we've gotten the funds and we can do certain things'. As that space opened up and as the APF become more profiled, more internationally known that began to shift quite substantially. It was no longer a situation where we were just chasing to find one source of resources but people were now approaching the APF, the funders, to say 'look we think your struggles are really legitimate and we want to have a relationship at least we want to talk with you about things'. So, from War on Want which was the initial one, within a two year period, from the first signing of the first contract which was in 2003 ... by 2005 the APF was being approached by South African Development Fund, Oxfam Canada, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation and I could name several others but the point being was that it fundamentally shifted from being one of seeking out things to being sought out. So, there was an excess of resources and the challenges therefore became completely different; it was a question of how do you decide what to take on? Do you take on more resources and money because people are making it available to you or do you politically try and manage that and say no we can't do those things and we make certain demands on funders and specific projects that fit into the programme as

opposed to the other way around; as opposed to the money then deciding what gets done. Those challenges started arising as a result of the changed nature of the funding relationship.

Interviewer: in terms of the kind of activities the APF was involved in, how did securing permanent funding for the organisation shape its activities and also the kind of activities that it prioritised?

McKinley: I think there is an effect but I have never been convinced - from being at the sort of coalface of this – that it is as much as some people make it out to be. Precisely because the way it actually worked is this: the APF comes up with its own programme and says this is what we want to do; but it's not a case of - it does [involve] the treasurer and the finance group and the eventually office bearers and other structures of the APF [that] discuss this at some point or another – but it's not as if the funders priorities have no impact at all. You look at those and say - for example War on Want which had been the core funder of the APF for most part - War on Want was a fairly flexible funder but it did have very specific things around education initiatives, what they called thematic workshops and education initiatives, that we have to do but what they did not do is that they did not dictate the content of them. They didn't say you have to do them on 1,2, 3 and 4 – that was up to the organisation. So, the challenge became in the APF, to say first of all do we accept the fact that these kinds of activities, that we want to do them and do we want to do them on this kind of scale? Once that was decided by the majority of the membership, and it wasn't decided by some individual or one or two people, then the challenge became how does that fit into the struggles, how do you create educational opportunities in workshops and these kinds of things that strengthen the base struggles of the organisation? And I'm not sure that has always been done in the best way and so one can't confuse the two things. The one thing is that yes it does impact; so you could say we might have done more of these things or if we hadn't signed that funding relationship then we wouldn't have had as many workshops - but that really doesn't get you very far. The question therefore is would you have done other workshops, what is the content of those workshops, what is the content of the educational initiatives? I have always believed that the APF has always held the upper hand in its relationship with the funders and not the other way round. And we have, on numerous occasions when I've been treasure, when we have gotten into negotiations of particular kinds of funding and there have been certain demands placed on the organisation and we have rejected those, where we have thought - and I say 'we' in the collective sense of the organisation - where the majority has thought those would fundamentally impinge upon the character of the APF. I think where the trickiest terrain is in this regard is on the legal terrain and I don't think it's because of the funding per se, I think it's the way things are followed after that more so ...

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Interviewer: Starting up again interviewing Dale. Speaking broadly between this middle to late period, the APF has been involved in a number of coalitions; perhaps speak to what you

consider the most important and significant coalitions that the APF are involved in currently and some of the politics that underpin its decision to participate in these coalitions?

McKinley; The very first coalition at the time, not anymore but at the time, the very first coalition was the Social Movements Indaba [SMI] which was really a coalition of social movements from around the country which came out of the WSSD. I think for a period of several years, for three years at least, that coalition whose impetus came out of the WSSD but at least for the APF it was trying to overcome the regionalism and parochialism of our struggles and to start hooking up with a range of things that were happening in the Eastern Cape, Kwazulu Natal and other areas and to try to create solidarities and linkages - I think it was a very positive thing. Unfortunately the SMI over the last two or three years in particular has foundered on exactly the same thing that it was meant to overcome- regionalism and parochialism - as well as the fact that several of the initial movements that gave it impetus themselves fractured and disintegrated, which the APF has no control over per se. But I think at that time, in that phase 2004-2005-2006 in particular, I think the SMI was quite crucial in keeping a sense of collective struggle moving forward and a lot of people involved in it I think saw it that way and felt it did give an impetus and was bringing certain struggles together and I think it was very beneficial for a while in doing so. The character of it - as far as I understood the SMI - was to create a space for solidarity and networking; it wasn't to create some supra-national organisation of any sort but was to link struggles, to create spaces and solidarities as well as potentially joint campaigns and joint actions and to a certain degree it achieved that for awhile. But as I say it foundered on a range of unfortunate realities but that certainly was a central one. The other one that I think for the APF - since 2003, it's amazing to think that it has been seven years now - was the Coalition against Water Privatisation that was formed around the struggle against pre-paid meters initially in Orange Farm and then in Phiri in Soweto. The initial purpose of the Coalition, I think rightfully so from the APF side that was the initiator, was to build forces that were broader than the APF and its own constituency and forces that were not always ideologically in line with what the APF was about and had to agree with what the APF did and everything but on this particular project/campaign on water, was to try to popularise and to take space - social and societal space - to put water on the national agenda and to try to convince those that might not join such a campaign that water was one of the most essential things . The water coalition specifically went beyond itself initially which was not just about being against the pre-pays and the practical things that were happening on the ground and getting people to start a court case ... but was to actually make water a symbol of what was wrong with the commodification and privatisation of basic services because it's the most basic need of all. And in that case I think it succeeded quite substantially in doing that over a period of a number of years helped a lot by international support and assistance and similar water struggles happening all over the world but also a victim of its own successes in a lot of instances and over-reliance in a particular case; which while I think was absolutely necessary in the context of what the coalition was always about, unfortunately as the coalition moved in that regard some of the practical struggles on the ground took the back seat and that shouldn't have happened. I'm not sure if one can lay a particular blame on one particular thing or another I think it's just something that in coalition building politics was not thought through

in the ways in which that, when you move into a coalition phase and you bring in all sorts of other different elements that are not part necessarily of your regular struggles, how that impacts on how things actually happen on the ground and how people gravitate towards that as opposed to something else might continue to be the case. I still think that the coalition was the right tactical manoeuvre to make at that particular point and time. It still exists although it's not so much a coalition anymore - it started out with some academics and NGOs, supporters - but the APF is still and even more so, the core of the coalition. To be honest right now, seven years later, instead of saying the Coalition against Water Privatisation you should probably say, the APF's campaign against water privatisation now.

Interviewer: You've pointed to two important coalitions that the APF has been involved in but whose current status has been somewhat questionable. What are the main kinds of points of affinity, points for support that the APF participates in, or the kind of collective communities the APF participates in, within what is called civil society or the left or whatever it might be at present?

McKinley: At present there is not too many actually, in organised form. The APF does participate and sends delegates to a range of different things that happen - maybe an NGO calls and has a workshop or has a conference. Examples would be ILRIG in Cape Town, AIDC - not so much anymore but that was the case previously - CALS on legal issues. In the last few years the dominate form of that specifically within the borders of South Africa has been particular events and projects but not in an organised coalition of forces that has a campaigning context to it. Right now I'd say the closest thing outside the Coalition against Water Privatisation - which still has some degree of support from outside the APF - over the last three years has been around energy, electricity and the environment - those three things. The APF has hooked up with GroundWork and a range of other NGOs which has led to the formation of the Vaal Environmental Justice Forum and a whole range of other things which are much broader than the APF and in some cases including the SACP around particularly environment issues and taking on Arcelor Mittal and pollution ... Same with energy and electricity, Earth Life Africa and other organisations. And Earth Life has almost taken on itself much more of a movement character in the last two or three years in building and using the APF's structures themselves to bring in people - which is not just an NGO thing. I would say that's the closest thing now to real coalition campaigning that's going on.

Interviewer: In terms of the SMI, firstly why it was able to play an important role in the period that it did and why did it cease to play that role?

McKinley: I think it was able to play that role again because it was the first of its kind. It was the first attempt and successfully so it's very first coming out was the WSSD which impressed a lot of people not just outside the country and the fact that there were 25-30 000 people on the street but I think gave a real energy boost to a lot of the members of the constituent organisations that came around the SMI. And the good thing about the SMI that gave it that impetus was that it was a combination of mass movements, small in relative terms but quite mass based movements, and progressive NGOs and other individuals and academics. So it was

a good mixture of all those different things and who all more or less agreed on the need to bring these struggles together. So from the beginning of the SMI, those first two or three years, there were never any major contestations within the SMI over control and ownership and naming and all these other kinds of things at a macro level. There were some things going on at the lower levels, I think predominately with the LPM, the Landless People's Movement, that was a little bit problematic and contentious; but overall I think everybody more or less agreed for the need for a space to be created and to have some kind of organisational form to take hold, to take organisational struggles together and link things. And that's why it existed because the people who were actually struggling felt the need for this and they embraced this and participated quite vigorously and energetically in its activities, whether those were national meetings ... there were several SMI, not purely SMI, marches and activities. Also at the same time there was a fairly energetic Anti-War movement that came about as a result of a range of things going on internationally and it hooked up with that too and that gave it even more impetus. And that included other groups even outside the SMI. It was a particular time which lent itself to a decent coming together, networking and solidarity. When the more immediate struggles sort of waned a bit – the Anti-War movement being one of them, some of the struggles against evictions, water and cut-offs and everything else - I think the SMI begun to sort of look around for things that were not there. The debate became a false one, I would argue which was - okay, now we've done this so we need to take this onto the next level which is we need to formalise it and we need to have a supra-national organisation. And that tension then brought out a whole range of arguments and divisions in particular movements as well as between particular movements about control and ownership ... and that has just virtually destroyed the coalition.

Interviewer: We've talked a bit about in terms of what the kinds of the allies of the APF are. How would you define who the immediate adversaries of the APF are from the middle to present period?

McKinley: In the last few years the most accurate answer to that would be the local councillors. Other people in the APF might disagree with this but I think it's the most truthful answer to that question. The local councillors, whether individually or not, at the end of the day they are the symbolic enemy because that's where most of the struggles happen and where most of the people who belong to the APF are ... they look at the local councillor and what the local councillor represents; i.e. the local state because the local councillor is the most immediate manifestation of that for people. So if you want to have an enemy target it's the local councillor and what he/she represents around the state. So maybe it's the council, the ward committee, the kind of things that people immediately feel they've been excluded from, are manipulating them, are taking things away from them, are screwing things up in the neighbourhood, are driving an agenda they don't like and they want to resist. So, at the real rank, at the grassroots level, I think that's the most immediately identifiable enemy. That doesn't mean personally I think that represents the real enemy but that's really what it's been in the last few years. Beyond that – it's not the only one clearly – but beyond on a more macro level - it's clear after the first early years that by the middle-late stages of the APF's development, that the ANC as a

political party became the enemy and that was a result of a whole range of things. It wasn't just the critique of the ANC from an intellectual viewpoint, the party of monopoly capital, the fact that it was implementing GEAR and the fact that Thabo Mbeki was such a centraliser of power and called us ultra-leftists and counter revolutionary. It was the fact that the ANC where it counted – i.e. in communities at local level - was seen rightfully so as the driver of the kinds of policies and programmes that were being resisted by the community and as the political manager of those things - so it became the target as the ANC itself, as a political party and what it represents politically. And thirdly, I think less so but certainly another enemy of the APF, would be capital. And that could take the form - in many of the APF struggles over the years - of local capital; it could be an employer, a corporation that is powerful at a local level. But on the broader level I think we have managed, at least over a period, where most of the cadres and activists at the APF see capital - in the big 'P' of private capital - and capitalists as the over arching kind of enemy that the APF fights against even though it might not be immediate in the local sense but that impacts on the policies that the state implements which are seen as a direct result of implementing the interests of capital or their particular agenda.

Interviewer: One of the things that has emerged in social movements since they came up on the political scene - you've identified the ANC as the antagonist of the APF - but at the same time within social movement ranks there is this kind of persistence of voting for the ANC and so forth. How has that kind of question been figured within the APF? i.e., both one of the stated enemies of the organisation is also a point of support for many members but also supporters of APF campaigns?

McKinley: I think the APF has tried to make a distinction in that regard; 1) between the leaderships of the ANC and the rank and file of the ANC, I think that's the first distinction that we've tried to make. We haven't grouped everybody in the same basket; when we say ANC most of our members and when they say it, when people say the ANC they are talking about the political party, its leadership and how it's represented in the state and how they feel it. They do not necessarily translate that into all people that are members of the ANC, including sometimes, as you say, themselves. So I think that distinction between the two has been useful in regards to not just trying to willy-nilly alienate every single person that might be an ANC member and that might agree with some other struggles and might even want to participate in some of the struggles against the state that their own party controls, because they themselves see the distinction. Because there is still quite a lot of people, less so than there used to be, but who still believe that the struggle taking place around basic services, local governance and other things is partly a struggle to reclaim the ANC itself. And I think the APF has understood that to a certain extent and has tactically adjusted at certain levels so as not to completely group everyone and say fuck everybody who belongs to the ANC and everybody who identifies with the ANC. So I think that's one of the ways of approaching it, but it doesn't solve the problem. I think the other way internally, particularly with members that have continued to vote for the ANC - although we don't know what the numbers are in that case, but clearly there are some and sections of the community that do so - is to try to go through a range of politicisation of those kinds of questions and for people to begin ... whether that's educational

initiatives, workshops and certain things about having debates in local communities ... what does it mean to vote for example? Because the majority of the APF has decided not to participate in national elections - even though certain affiliates have participated in ward based elections - we are not offering ourselves as some electoral alternative to vote for the ANC, but asking ourselves does the way we approach those national elections ... what does your vote achieve? Is it better to vote and wait for the ANC to deliver or is it actually better to strengthen your organisation and struggles and even if you are an ANC member force your party and your government to accede to the demands because that is more sustainable than casting a vote.

Interviewer: Given what we've spoken about is basically about adversaries and antagonists, do you think within the kind of post-Polokwane era where there has certainly been renewed contestation around both the policy perspective as well as the kind of leadership figures within the alliance that new spaces have opened up for possible alliances, coalitions and broadly working with sections of the alliance in a more formal sense?

McKinley: Not yet; I think what has been opened up are cracks. To extend the metaphor there is a monolith, there is a rock and what Polokwane has done, it has cracked ... there are several cracks that have appeared in that monolith, that rock; I do not see that the spaces that the cracks potentially might have opened up sufficiently yet for an organisation like the APF to say, 'well, we can actually now, there is a section of the ANC over here that we can actually work with'. I don't think it's gotten to that point yet but it might, who knows, it might get to that point. Where I think there is a little bit more space that has opened up, because of what Polokwane has done in terms of the factional battles that led first of all to Polokwane and then now came together and re-fractured the ANC and the alliance, is that the component parts of the alliance - i.e., within COSATU and everything else - is that there are sections within SACP and COSATU that are more open, not only to just appreciating but potentially also in the future beginning to gravitate towards a more common kind of campaigning politics within an organisation like the APF. Again, I don't think it's there yet but we are seeing some of those spaces open up.

Interviewer: It might be a question that precedes the one you've just answered but it might be important to get on the record ... There have been a number of criticisms over the years that the APF has been unwilling to work with sections of the alliance because of political orientation that is simply dismissive of anything to the right of its position. I think there is even a term, somewhat disingenuously, that has called the APF the sectarian left. How have you kind of experienced this question of working with the alliance within the APF and what have been the obstacles to practical forms of collaboration between the APF and members of the alliance?

McKinley: To answer the first part of that, I think it needs to be put on record, you're correct, that the APF from the beginning - we talked about the initial formation and component parts of the APF that included members of the alliance - the APF always tried, maybe at times not as hard as it should have, but always tried even after SAMWU and NEHAWU left and even after COSATU expelled the APF from its own building - all these kinds of very clear indications that, 'we don't like you, we don't want to work with you' - the APF still has attempted on every

major occasion that I know of tried to create those links. So every time COSATU went on strike or the SACCAWU strike, the Shoprite Checkers strikes, the SAMWU strikes – is to create solidarities, pickets things like this. Our orientation - we learnt very quickly and personally in terms of the attempts - it was the leaderships most often times of the structures and the alliance that were vehemently opposed to any kind of working relationship. Often times the members appreciated the fact that the APF came out in support - even if our numbers might not have been that large - but certainly the political solidarity. And I think that the division there needs to be made between the leadership and the rank and file. So the barriers to that have predominately been three or four things; the leadership of those structure which has a preset, almost automatic - you just put it into automatic drive - nothing to do with the APF. I still remember I was flabbergasted, absolutely flabbergasted even with all my experiences in the SACP and sectarianism and right-wing politics ... when I saw the COSATU Gauteng region had issued a statement and a directive to its constituent organisations not to work with the Anti Privatisation Forum and it was direct from the top down; some people ignored it but some people took it very seriously. So that has been a huge barrier, that leadership trying to prevent these things from happening. The other barrier has sometimes been our own members - I can understand this perspective and not necessarily agree with it - in our meetings where we have discussed this and said now we must attend this, we must support this even though we know what the SACP leadership is like we must go and engage - a lot of people from the ground are saying 'why should we go and engage or go and support the SACP/COSATU when they don't do anything for us?' And that has been a barrier because it's hard to argue against that, it's hard to tell people well, maybe you should look beyond this and look at the strategic sense of building bridges and maybe something in the future that comes of this. But in the immediate sense people get out in the streets, they burn tyres, they barricade roads, they get put in jail, they do things and they don't see any support and solidarity from these organisations whatsoever so their attitude is why should we do the same thing? Now that is a little bit short-sighted in a particular sense but I can understand it.

Interviewer: A couple of years ago within the social movement a paper was released by Oupa Luhulere which basically claimed that the current COSATU cadre has very much changed from what the face of organised labour was in the 1980s and so forth; and there is a suggestion there that the kind of interest of the core member of COSATU is at odds with that of the core cadre of the social movement. Do you agree with this and if so why, either way?

McKinley: I agree with it at a conceptual level. I totally agree that the face of the cadre particularly in Oupa's paper where he was particularly talking about like shop stewards and the more political components of unions, the ones that in the 80s were the drivers of a lot of the grass root organisation and struggles. And I agree that they fundamentally changed and shifted to an extent. Where I will part ways with that analysis ... is tactically. I do not translate that conceptual understanding that COSATU has changed and in many cases some of the COSATU shop stewards and leaders do not have any material interest anymore and political interest anymore in supporting grass root organisations that are fighting against cut offs because they themselves have never experienced them and do not have to worry about them anymore. But

there are two things and this is where I will depart on a tactical level; that it doesn't really consider the mass rank and file of some of the unions - the average street sweeper in Johannesburg gets paid R2000.00 a month and one cannot call that a labour aristocracy, they are often times women and people who live in those communities - so we must make the attempt tactically to connect with them and to try to make the connections between the kinds of struggles that are being engaged and their everyday kind of struggles irrespective of the fact that they are organisation and a lot of character has shifted and in fact militates against that kind of thing. On the second level is the organisational as opposed to purely the individual level. I have never adopted the attitude that things are static in terms of history. Things can shift quite dramatically and the crisis of capitalism - the latest crisis that we are going through - I think will overtime also begin to fundamentally shift the face of the working class itself. And so that opens up other opportunities and if you've done nothing and if you've turned your back towards that on a tactical basis, then you have lost opportunities to make use of that potential space.

Interviewer: In terms of the key strategies and tactics of the organisation, how have these changed over the history of the APF and what do you think has been - if you can put a finger on any one - the kind of factors that have shaped the changing rhythms of if not its strategy, at least tactics?

McKinley: Let's start with the strategic considerations. The APF has more or less strategically remained fairly consistent. I initially talked about the strategic vision and approach of the APF and I think that has remained there. I think almost by necessity, by circumstance, the APF very early on was forced to become a predominately tactical organisation if that makes sense. In other words it's good to speak of the strategic vision to have the strategy and to keep to that because it's about principles, it's about vision and if you lose then it doesn't matter what kind of tactics you adopt. And I think that in a sense that's what has kept the APF going because throughout all the potential problems and arguments and other kinds of things what has held is the strategic centre in the APF ... What has changed dramatically is the tactical nature of the APF, I would argue. How has that changed and what has led to those changes? Let's start with one which would probably give a window into that, which is repression. The initial militancy ... the things that drew a lot of people to the APF was its militancy and new forms of things and that didn't remain static; the state responded in very specific kind of ways to that and in many cases did succeed in smashing certain resistances and having very physical and material impacts on people who were engaging in that as being part of the APF; Phiri being one classic example of a hugely militant struggle that could not simply be sustained on a material and physical level. It wasn't about the intent, it wasn't about the politics of it as far as I'm concerned, it was about the fact that if you organise people and you want to, for example, sabotage pipes as a means of preventing the rolling out of these things and the reconnections, you have to have a continuous recreation of that capacity to do so. And as a result of repression that capacity waned as a result of personal reasons at times and also some organisational resource reasons as well. And what it did, it forced the APF to shift tactically from a much more direct, militant confrontation to more of what I call sideways confrontation. In other words the legal component comes in. I

don't think before that real repression that happened in Phiri the legal component was seriously considered as a serious central tactical option at the time; it wasn't, we were going to go in there and are going to stop this thing and we did, comrades tried. Other exigencies, the full weight of the state is brought to bear and it shifts those things; and that in turn - one can follow the logic of this - has particular impacts on the way that people organise and how they struggle. So the tactical character of the APF shifts to try to access the institutional means of redress as opposed to the extra-institutional means of redress in some ways. It shifts into a combination but maybe increasingly into a more intra-institutional means of doing so because that institutional means does not attract such repression and such cost to people. And that is not simply the result of a few intellectuals writing about these things and strategising about them and saying this is what we should do - that did happen - but also people on the ground themselves acting in a particular kind of way and also pushing that themselves and saying ... I remember going into Thembalihle after the battle of Thembalihle, that victory of preventing the mass evictions of Thembalihle was seen at least as a real tactical victory for the APF in combination with the community, of confronting the state and defeating its coercive capacity to do certain things. But what happened in Thembalihle after that? What happened is not simply that the APF abandoned Thembalihle and said, 'okay, well that's it, the struggle has been won ...'; the people themselves and those that made up the struggles in the communities, their intensities and their struggles waned and they moved in different kind of tactical directions themselves and started engaging because they had won a particular space. And that inevitably shifts a tactical framework, whether it's at the local level or APF level, repression being one of those things. The other thing is what has happened inside the ANC. Clearly, over the last five or six years that has had an impact on the APF and the way it tactically shifts. I don't say easy, but it was much more direct to have a President like Mbeki and a particular policy, GEAR ... it is clear, that's the ANC, that's what it is doing, there's Mbeki he's the bad guy. Once that starts shifting and breaking up and Zuma comes in making claims and the SACP gets involved, COSATU starts ... it shifts people's ideas about what is possible, who's going to do what, maybe there are spaces here; that therefore that tactically has impact on the ground in terms of how people engage that state, they maybe give it some more space, maybe we'll engage and go to the council meetings now when three years previously we didn't, we wanted to march on the council meeting, maybe now we go because we have got space or allies in there. So, all those kinds of things – I could go on for quite some time ...

Interviewer: Generally the kind of trajectory you lay out - although you point to two factors within this trajectory – but is one of a waning of militancy. Would that be a correct characterisation of what we talking of, of the kind of shifting of tactical orientation of the APF?

McKinley: Yes. I don't want to state that as the categorical, that that's the end of it and there's a waning of militancy therefore its something else ... but yes, in the ten years in case of the APF, in historical terms I think that would be an accurate assessment to say. I think the real debate comes in why that is the case as opposed to the fact that is has happened.

Interviewer: In terms of the level of consciousness, the ability to engage with the state of things and in answering the question of what is to be done, how would you characterise the APF cadre?

McKinley; The term that immediately comes to mind is that it's a 'mixed bag'. At certain levels the APF has been very successful in producing, over quite a long period of time, different kinds of cadres that have been able to engage politics, whether that's at the local, national or international level in a quite varied kind of way, in a knowledgeable and skilled way. And again in a sense, it is a victim of its own success. Social movements by their very nature, because they do not offer any career paths or any kind of permanent situation where people who are previously generally quite materially desperate and unemployed, is that once that cadreship reaches a particular level it often times moves into other arenas. And that's happened in the APF over the years, where you build a particular cadre and that cadre disappears from the APF because they have moved on to get a job which they are now capable of getting as a result of what the APF has given them or what they have learned and gathered within the APF. So the answer to that - when I say mixed bag - is that the challenge for the APF at its failure at a certain level has been to sustain the levels of consciousness, to keep those within the organisation. So it's not that it hasn't created and the levels of consciousness have not risen in a large number of cadres over a number of years or that that has not improved; but that has been temporal, it's moved and therefore the organisation loses that cadre. It's almost like when one looks at student politics, it's always temporal; as a student learns gains knowledge and engages, that student becomes much more capable of engaging their own politics and what they do and yet it usually shifts quite quickly at the point when they get to the apex of that. I'm not sure whether it's something as the APF we could have necessarily prevented because it involves personal choices and other kinds of things but in more general terms outside of that point, I would like to think that the APF ... I still think that we could do a lot more to raise the consciousness of a range of community organisations and members. Again, I do not say that in a patronising way, I say that in a sense of building an organisation and a movement - that there could have been a lot more energy and effort put into sustaining that. At the same time I'm pretty convinced that it is somewhat in the organisational nature of a movement like the APF that that becomes a constant challenge and it's a battle that is never won per se, it's always going to be there. The third and last point that I want to make on that front is that in relative terms - and one has to look at this at some point - in the last ten years and particularly in the last few years, what is out there in relation to movements and others that have been doing similar kinds of things, I do think the APF has probably been one of the better organisations in producing a cadre that connects the dots and that moves outside of the local ... and begins to understand and act politically in their own ways, whether that's in their community or otherwise ... In a sense that is the first step in any political militancy - knowledge and the ability to do that.

Interviewer: Within this last ten years or thereabouts, a number of social movements have emerged and run their course, disappearing ... the APF has been one of the more stable organisations, what has been the key to its ability to reproduce itself?

McKinley: I think there are maybe three or four elements to that. I do think that one of the strongest reasons why the APF has been able to survive and, as you say, reproduce itself is maybe its own internal democracy and its ability to not break up ... as a result of very serious disagreements and battles that have happened; but to be able to absorb that within the democratic structures and come out of that alive, even if damaged, battered and bruised from those battles. And I think the democratic space and the ability to talk of these things and to debate them and to come to some collective agreement, sticking to that has served the APF fairly well as an organisation and has allowed it to continue. The other thing which we don't often think about but which I think is a real element to this is that the APF is located where it's located and in the context in which it's located. Having gone all around the country and having visited many different places where organisations were centred and located, I have come to the conclusion that Johannesburg and Gauteng just by its very physical, material and geographical nature is probably one of the areas which lends itself to more stable organisation because of the nature of the communities and the continuous expansion of people coming in all the time with new problems and new struggles ... it's not ever static, it's always moving. And that lends itself to the recreation and reproduction of an organisation like the APF which is trying in some ways to relate to those struggles and new challenges. So Joburg and Gauteng, as opposed to a rural area or a small town or these other areas which are very widespread, are more easily organisable and reachable and the character of the constituencies that one tends to orient towards tend to be quite conducive to the reproduction of that organisation.

Interviewer: In terms of the current period, you've got two major shifts happening both globally and locally. Locally you've got massive changes within the ANC leadership as well as possibly a changed ideological orientation taking root. You can say whether that's the case or not. And on the other, you've have a global economic crises that has re-started debates that seemingly ended in 1990 with the Wall coming down. How has the APF responded to this new context and to what extent has it successfully adapted itself if even necessary, to these new contexts and how successful has it been in responding to these challenges?

McKinley: We will start with the international one. I think the APF in some ways if we look at it historically - and we traced some of this earlier in the interview - is a by-product, a partial by-product of the very kinds of things that happened at the international level but then influenced the South African context. The collapse of what every wants to call the ex-Soviet states and communist countries ... which was not just about that, it was an ideological crisis that hit very clearly globally, where the notion that there was no alternative to capitalism and particularly the new forms of capitalism went quite deep all across the globe. The way that impacted in terms of South Africa and the ANC and the liberation movement and the decisions that it lead to, gave rise to the APF itself in response to what came afterwards and the kind of path that was chosen. In terms of what happened since then ... over the last 10-15 years internationally I think that in some ways the South African context has been both a part of ... what I call the period of global quiescence which was a lot of the '90s up until the late '90s, that 8-9 year period from 1990 onwards, was a triumphal march of capitalism. The forging of the APF was itself part of an international shift to sort of reclaim a particular political space; so in that sense

it was responding, as we talked about Seattle, it wasn't just South African specific even though it was clearly about what was going on in this country. And I think the kind of struggles that have happened locally in the last ten years, since the 1990s, the APF has been a partial reflection of those, particularly ... as opposed to what it used to be when there was an somewhat of a degree of ideological certainty and an opposing of systems, which was anti capitalism ... it shifted into projects and campaigns and specific issues like water, like housing like electricity and the APF has reflected in the most direct of ways, organisationally, tactically and sometimes strategically and reflects that international attempt at reclamation of what used to be - which was a much more anti capitalist, anti systemic struggle but has been broken down into some of its component parts. And the attempts to try and reclaim parts of that, follows those struggles and catalyses them. So I think in that sense the APF was very reflective of what was going on internationally. On the flipside of that, the APF has also been reflective of the crisis - ideologically as well as somewhat strategically - the crisis of being stuck in some ways within a particular kind of mode of operation; you find a particular kind of way of doing, it does respond immediately, it resonates with sections of the population, you are able to organise, you have degrees of relevance and importance and everything else; but there is not yet - and I see this in the last few years and I think this is the fundamental challenge both in terms of the APF and all the other social movements and new forms of organisation globally - is to move beyond this, is to reclaim the next step, the next space which is the systemic nature of going beyond ... because this can come into a cul-de-sac very quickly in terms of issue specific struggles. I do think the APF reflects some of the broader crises of the left, if you want to call it that internationally and that still face the left, which is getting beyond these very specific kinds of campaign, project oriented activities that are quite localised and that have yet to coalesce and gel both nationally as well as internationally around some renewed internationalist kind of left politics. Domestically the changed nature of what has happened over the last particular period - yes, I think I have already spoken to some of degrees to which that has been reflected in the confusion, not so much the ideological but tactical confusion of the APF, how to respond to what has been going on in the ANC and the changed rhetoric and the changed nature of what seems to be at least for some people - you said I could disagree with this which I do; I do not think that what has happened in the last while is yet, but there are seeds of it, but I don't think as yet we can talk about a major ideological shift that has taken place. I think what is happening is the skirmishes; skirmishes over the more immediate direction and control and positionality within the state and the alliance that reflect at a more deeper level some very real ideological divisions but I don't think those have come to the fore yet. So the APF in some ways has reflected that and has imbibed these things by its own sometimes confusion as to how to relate to what is going on not only in relation to the ANC and the state and the alliance but sometimes in relation to local levels; sometimes taking a very oppositional stance at one level and being very militant and willing to engage in direct confrontation and then very shortly thereafter doing the exact opposite; and sometimes these being the reflection of that kind of confusion and the shifts taking place. So I think that has happened predominately ... at a tactical level but I do think that it impinges upon the challenges that I mentioned earlier, which is that even though the APF has held to a particular strategic vision, that that strategic vision cannot

serve it in the context of a rapidly changing international and domestic context where these ideological and strategic questions are going to come to the fore fairly soon. If the APF does not respond and does not recreate itself to respond to those things then it will become meaningless.

Interviewer: Specifically in relation to the kind of post-Polokwane configuration of political forces, what should the APF be prioritising?

McKinley: It's a hard question. There's not just one thing it should be prioritising but if there is a basket of things it should prioritise at this particular stage, the one is that it should prioritise the most basic struggles that are being thrown up by the very communities that are responding to this milieu in this context. It must relate to them, it must prioritise the relationship to those in whatever ways that means; it doesn't always mean that the APF is going to be leading that process up at the front - it just means relating to it and being able to connect with it in whatever kinds of ways that it can. And I am beginning to see some of the seeds of that in the APF over the last year particularly in reclaiming some of that earlier success in beginning to relate to those kinds of struggles, I think that has to be prioritised. Irrespective of what I might individually think as to where this is going to end up, where the changes are going, the very fact of the matter is that if the APF does not prioritise relating to, connecting with and being part of these struggles that are being thrown up - even though they might not be ours, even though we might have serious problems with some of the people involved, even though it is very messy - if we don't do that then we become irrelevant. So I think that is probably the biggest priority in many ways but as part of a basket. The other thing that the APF has to do and I think this is a serious challenge to the APF and has the potential to make or break the APF, is its internal consolidation. And what I mean by that is ... that the second and third layer of cadreship is going to have to come to the fore and is going to have to take the struggle forward and I mean internally take up the positions, the responsibilities, the tasks and all those kinds of things. That has been happening to a certain extent but it has got to increase dramatically and intensively because we cannot continue with the situation in the APF - irrespective of what is going on outside the APF but just to exist as an organisation - without the will and desire to reproduce the internal strengths of the APF and its own leadership and its own capacity. And I certainly think that it's something that has to happen otherwise the APF folds irrespective of whether or not there is a whole range of struggles going on.

Interviewer: I think we are almost at the end. We have touched on the key weaknesses of the organisation and key strengths. I want to ask; what is its future looking at it from your perspective right now?

McKinley: I wish I had the crystal ball. I'm in two minds, personally. There is one part of what I see as the future in terms of the APF as a potentially a very positive future. And I don't ... I want to stress this, I don't see the future of the APF solely in terms of the organisational form that it's had up to now. If the APF morphs into something else and joins up with other organisations I consider that as part of the growth of the APF whether or not it retains the name 'APF' or whatever. There's a part of me that sees the real potential for that to happen in the next few

years; that the APF begins to move beyond itself essentially and its somewhat own narrow confines and lends itself - what it has accumulated, its experience, its weight, its politics - to something that is much bigger but also something which has much more impact societally. I'm not sure what form that might take but I think there is the real possibility that that can happen. But however, that is mitigated to a large extent by a very forthright and honest assessment of the present state of the APF and its challenges. I'm afraid that if the two things I mentioned ... if those two priorities are not enjoined very soon and that challenge is not taken vigorously - even with mistakes, yes there might be some pitfalls along the way - but if those things are not taken up then the APF will within a short period of time cease to exist. I do think however even if that does happen - which there is a possibility that it might happen - is that what the APF leaves behind will not disappear necessarily. I foresee in that scenario, I see a situation where the various communities that have capacitated themselves and are really serious about what they do will continue those struggles and there will be new forms that will arise in bringing those together, assisting and supporting. I think right now it's somewhat ironic that in the 10th anniversary year of the APF, the APF sits on a knife edge in a lot of ways - it can go one way or go the other and I'm not sure which way it's headed.

Interviewer: One last question. You've been involved in the APF since its inception; looking back over this period and reflecting back on it somewhat personally, what is it that you are most proud of in terms of your contribution to this movement?

McKinley: I'm most proud of the fact that I have been able to sustain my activism and my presence in the APF. There have been so many occasions where that has been virtually on the verge of non existence or abandoning that process and I'm proud that I have stuck with it. Irrespective of what happens from here on out, my own contribution I am convinced, irrespective of some of the mistakes that have been made, will contribute to growing whatever comes after this and will contribute to that. So, for me my involvement in the APF, in its growth and struggles and everything is part of a particular an important history and I'm proud to be part of that history.

Interviewer: Is there anything that I have omitted to ask, something that you really think needs to be added?

McKinley: There is one thing. I'm glad that you didn't forget to ask that and it's something that by its very nature I don't think would ever be asked in an interview but I do want to say; which is that on a personal level one of the things that has driven me to sustain this activism, to be able to do so and its very important to me, is a sense of personal integrity and honesty. And I humbly submit that is something that I do believe is necessary in any struggle, in any movement. And I do think without trying to elevate that to some kind of serious status at all, but I do think that without that and the reproduction of that within a movement like the APF that it doesn't matter how hard we struggle or how hard we try if the honesty and personal integrity is not there we are always going to fail in the end. I do hope that some of that residue has hopefully been left, irrespective of all the arguments and other things that have happened and that I have personally been involved in - that that sticks. Because it doesn't matter what

the organisational form is as far as I'm concerned that takes place, what matters is the content of your activism and struggle. That's all.

