

## Ep.1: Innovative responses to problems

[00:00:00] **Kentse:** [00:00:00] Welcome to the 'Just for a change' podcast, powered by the Bertha Center for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship. First off, what you need to know about us is thinking differently and innovatively about solving big social issues is what makes us tick. We love offering new perspectives on social innovation and social justice.

[00:00:29] So we hope you'll be inspired to make a difference. If you are changing the way we're changing the world.

[00:00:41] Welcome to the, just for a change podcast with me, your host Kinsey, Debbie. At the birth center, we work with inspiring leaders who are catalysts for social justice, economic change and human rights. We observe the world through a systems change lens, which means we don't see any social [00:01:00] issues as a problem in isolation.

[00:01:02] Neither do we try to address it in that way. There's always a ripple effect or chain reaction. If you will, of small incidents thinking patterns or beliefs that leads to bigger social problems, surfacing. Looking through a systems change lens helps us to focus on the root causes of social problems and allows for the transformation of the whole system that created the problem in the first place, personally, something that I've noticed in my work focused on mental health and the large treatment gap that we have in South Africa is that the current estimates indicate that less than a third of South Africans can access the mental health services that they need.

[00:01:42] Now you may think to yourself that the solution would be simple. If we just increased funding for mental health, then shady, that would plug the gap. However, in order to adequately address mental health needs in South Africa, we need to impact the bigger picture, thinking about how our institutions are designed, [00:02:00] how we train practitioners in the field, the policies that we have designed and implemented the role played by activists and INGOs, as well as the current attitudes about mental health.

[00:02:12] And at the same time, not forgetting the existing socioeconomic drivers of mental health, such as inequality, unemployment, the incidents of HIV and AIDS and the high levels of crime and gender based violence. We start to understand that the issue of mental health is a whole lot more complex. Social justice and social systems.

[00:02:32] Innovation are fundamental to the birth of sentence, vision and strategy. In a nutshell, we see the social systems innovation as an approach that helps us to do the work that moves us towards the transformed, inclusive, and sustainable society characterized by social economic and environmental justice.

[00:02:54] Throughout this podcast series, we'll be featuring a variety of guests. As we highlight the work [00:03:00] and thinking of the birth of center and innovators researching teaching and working in the field, we'll discover how

creativity cutting edge innovation and collaboration can help make the world a better place.

[00:03:18] Who are some of the people behind the birth of vision. We've asked a few of our birth team members to share their thoughts on why a systems thinking

approach is key in changing the way we change in the world. The systems approach is key because it asks us to look at the complexity of a challenge and recognize that there are numerous factors.

[00:03:39] People, organizations, And forces at play and that those need to be considered when thinking about how to address the challenge, it expands the range of choices available for solving a problem by broadening our thinking. And it helps us to articulate problems in new and [00:04:00] different ways. It's enables us to explore the entire relationships that exist within environments.

[00:04:10] When you tinker around the edges of the system, the wholesale buy-in tends to be thin and incremental approach in a time of such global urgency is not fast enough to solve problems. So when we talk about system thinking, we're looking at fundamental. Change within an ecosystem, looking at the building blocks of that system and seeing how they can be up ended.

[00:04:47] And although there is a drag and a Herculean effort required to begin with, I think that it will accelerate the process towards change [00:05:00] as we advance to a very uncertain future. Speaking of a systems approach, something that is topical in the world right now is how to respond innovatively in a crisis.

[00:05:13] What do you do when your nation is hit by a pandemic and you only have a few days to prepare? COVID-19 took everyone by surprise. At first, many of us felt detached from the situation almost as if we were simply hearing about tragic events happening abroad. First in China, then Italy, then Iran. Then it started to snowball.

[00:05:35] And soon the reality hits all of Africa. Those in low income communities are hit hardest with people losing jobs and masses going hungry. Imagine having to stand in a four kilometer queue, waiting for a food parcel because you have no other means. This has been the reality for many, even if we knew months ago, what we now know.

[00:05:58] With the poverty and [00:06:00] inequality levels in South Africa, who knows how much time would have been enough time to adequately prepare. In our first episode, we talked to Tracey Malawana and Ella Scheepers about Cape town together and their involvement in community action networks. Tracey Malawana is currently the deputy general secretary of equal education and Elisha shippers is a birther scholar who is currently pursuing her PhD at the graduate school of business at UCT.

[00:06:28] Keep talk together is a rapid community based response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the aim to inspire ordinary people to form local community action networks at their local neighborhoods. The impact has been immense Tracy and Ella. Thank you so much for joining me today and given our current situation, this interview is being recorded online. As innovation is needed in all things.

[00:06:53] Ella. I just wanted to start with you. You're part of the Woodstock Cannes in Cape town. What's the story [00:07:00] behind Cape town together. And how did the Cannes first come about?

[00:07:03] **Ella Scheepers:** [00:07:03] Sure. Hi, good afternoon everyone. Um, yeah, it's so strange to be doing this, not in person and not being able to kind of see faces, but thank you so much for having this conversation.

[00:07:14] I'm quite excited looking forward to exploring the different narratives that are happening across the city, but also across South Africa. In terms of the Cape town together networks typically, and the Woodstock can, we were one of the first cans to start up because the Cape town together Facebook page went to riot and put out a call for people to join for people who are interested in community activating around covert 19 specifically.

[00:07:46] Saying that it was coming and that public education was needed in order to protect our communities and to protect ourselves. And so there was this why citywide call that was made on Facebook and my [00:08:00] partner signed up. On the Google form that they created, it sounds so basic. Um, and it was so incredible because through that form, they were able to start connecting people who were all in the same neighborhoods, but who had never met before.

[00:08:15] And so we got an email that said, Hey, these people in your neighborhood also signed up on the form and said that they were interested in getting involved in local community, organizing around COBIT. So here you go, run wild. So the people on the. On the email all then connected to each other. We set up a WhatsApp group and then we set up office zoom call, which was one of the strangest experiences.

[00:08:40] Cause we've never met in real life. And we were all on a zoom call, kind of like, we're not sure what we're doing. We're not public health experts. We actually have no idea where this is going, but it was an incredible combination of. Activists who had been activating in Woodstock for a really long time and UVS [00:09:00] who had just moved there or who were just interested in getting involved and helping out. And through that connection, we were able to find small ways forward.

[00:09:10] **Kentse:** [00:09:10] Now, this is really interesting cause Tracy you're based in Johannesburg and not Cape town. And you're specifically based in 10 Baeza. What drew you to, to Cape town together? And why did you feel it was important to get involved in this movement that hadn't actually sprung up in Joburg yet?

[00:09:25] **Tracey Malawana:** [00:09:25] So I work for a social movement called equal education, currently serving as the deputy general secretary there. So my colleagues are our head office is based in Khayelitsha and my colleagues are part of the Khayelitsha. Um, Ken. So I was, you know, engaging with them and trying to follow some of the things that they've been doing.

[00:09:48] But before that, I had this idea that we need to organize, um, what counselors do something in their communities because I stay in a township. Right. And, [00:10:00] um, before logged down, there was no meeting that was called. There were no pamphlets that were like raising awareness about COVID-19 and how people can protect themselves.

[00:10:10] The stigma and, uh, and everything that has to do with uh COVID-19. So I was somehow engaging with my colleagues who are part of the Khayelitsha CAN. And, um, you know, I started like putting together a

proposal of what is it that we can do. Um, and engaging some of the young people that I know in Tembisa, then I think, um, few weeks after, uh, there was a call for, uh, Gauteng together, um, which I also thought maybe I should sign up as an admin.

[00:10:41] It was also difficult for me because, um, I work full time. Right. And at the same time I want to do this something nice for my community because there's a gap

in that. There's no one is filling that particular gap. So I signed online, uh, but mine [00:11:00] was a little bit different, so I didn't, uh, you know, uh, wait for the Gauteng together to give me to allocate me, uh, a number of people who are going to assist.

[00:11:10] So I approach young people who are unemployed in my, um, my city, um, township Tembisa. Then I asked those young people to, um, you know, for us meet and, uh, try and identify things that we can do in these communities.

[00:11:26] **Kentse:** [00:11:26] I'm just wondering if you could give us context when you speak about informal settlements, what are the challenges that are cropping up there? And what role has been part of the CAN played in assisting in that area?

[00:11:37] **Tracey Malawana:** [00:11:37] So, if you look at informal settlements and the people who live in informal settlements, in most cases, they are marginalized and poor, um, access to basic needs like water, like clean drinking, water, sufficient, uh, healthy food, especially for pregnant, pregnant women, people with chronic disease.

[00:11:55] Um, you know, the issues of, uh, because of the condition that people are

[00:12:00] subjected to in those areas and the issue of dignified sanitation, uh, the issue of access to sanitary pads for girls, a healthcare services, accurate to information. It has been proven difficult and near impossible, you know, in some communities.

[00:12:15] So those are some of the challenges that I see there there's issues of land. Uh, people are, you know, um, they, they live on top of each other if I may put it that way. So it's quite difficult to even practice social distancing. How do you even begin to speak about social distancing and such in such a setting?

[00:12:32] **Kentse:** [00:12:32] No, what you're saying. Um, Tracy is actually really interesting because Ella you're organizing in a completely different context. You're based in, in, in, in a suburb Cape town in Woodstock. Could you perhaps some path, what are some of the unique challenges that you encountered in doing this work in Woodstock? Reflecting on what Tracy just said and how the CAN approach them.

[00:12:53] **Ella Scheepers:** [00:12:53] I mean, I think what's interesting about Woodstock specifically is that it is very much. [00:13:00] A mixed income community. We have people who have been living here kind of pre Apartheid. We have kind of working class community. We have very, very, very middle class, upper class, rich community, and that's all in one place.

[00:13:20] And previously it's been really, really difficult to bring people together because of the class and race segregation of the community, the discussions around gentrification. have been really violent in some ways, uh, towards those who are being pushed out by the kind of gentrifying forces, uh, and the kind of.

[00:13:48] Yeah, raising rising and rent of tariffs, et cetera, all the challenges that happened around gentrification. And so any kind of community organizing has been [00:14:00] really segregating in many ways. And unsupportive of those who've been living in this community for the longest. And one of the things that I think COVID has done is that it's really brought the community together in a way, way that it had never been before with this recognition that Corona was something that impacted everybody directly.



[00:14:23] Um, and that. You know, it, it was something that, to varying degrees, obviously, um, in terms of the impact on people's lives, but, uh, everyone as if they were going to be affected. And so the challenges were this thing around people were at different, very. Very different places in their lives, different levels of privilege, um, and very different levels in their activism.

[00:14:56] And that's been really difficult. So there are people who have been active in this community for a [00:15:00] very, very long time. We've got a feeding scheme that has been here for years and years, and know deeply about the community, about its vulnerabilities. And then you have these new very excited, very well meaning, um, People with lots of resources who want to get involved.

[00:15:19] And so what does it mean two. To create a space where this different level of activism, this different level of awakesness to your community of people trying to come together and kind of required this idea of moving at the speed of trust is something that's. That has sat with the community action networks a lot, because it requires patients to not treat everyone with suspicion, especially those who have been doing this work for a very, very long time.

[00:15:49] And they're suddenly like, who are you? You know, who are these new people who suddenly want to get involved? Um, and so there's something about a humility [00:16:00] leaving space for the more experienced to take the lead. Well, not dampening the excitement of the newbies who want to get involved and want to show support.

[00:16:08] **Kentse:** [00:16:08] No, thanks Ella. I think those, those reflections are actually quite important. And they're bringing me back to something that Tracey mentioned earlier about organizing and not coming from the outside. And, and Tracey, I want to go back to something that you spoke about working with young people. And I'm curious about what has been the response being part of the Tembisa CAN working as you know, equal education. This isn't an apolitical space. There's a lot of history here. How has the community responded? To the wick of cans. And I'm asking, assuming that a lot of the people that are driving this process are young people. How's the rest of the community responding to that.

[00:16:46] **Tracey Malawana:** [00:16:46] Yeah. So I think maybe let me first mention that it has been quite difficult for these young people, for the Tembisa CAN, because most of the people that I work with are people who are maybe within the higher [00:17:00] education, um, you know, um, sector, I like students.

[00:17:04] Um, and some of them are unemployed. So it's not like in other CANS where people come from a, you know, certain institutions, um, let's say maybe or organizations that can somehow support financially in terms of transport and all that. So for the Tembisa CAN, we had to think about how are we going to support people to get to those five communities, the 10 people, including myself to access those five communities.

[00:17:31] And then because of that, we then say that it's better if we identify people in those communities so that they are able to organize in their

communities, that we don't need to worry about transport. And, you know, uh, maybe, um, let me say, um, maybe stipend for food. Um, so those are some of the things that we had to think

about, but at the same time, you need to think about air time for those, uh, for, for, for our team members and also for the people that are identified in those communities.

[00:18:00] [00:18:00] So I just wanted to highlight that, that, that has been one of the difficult things to do because, um, you're working with people who do not have some form of, um, you know, financial support either from like home or from an organization that they are associated associated with. Um, so we, what we, how we access these communities is that we, we reach out to street committees.

[00:18:26] Because you can't just like rock up in a community and, you know, we want to do things in your way cause you, you don't belong in that community. So there's also that. So we've, um, we set up meetings with the ward counselors in those, um, sorry, not ward counselors, uh, street committees in those communities.

[00:18:45] Uh, we, uh, introduce ourselves. Uh, explain what we wanted to do. Check whether are they doing, um, any work come on. COVID-19 and there was no one's doing any work around COVID-19. So we, [00:19:00] we were welcomed by those communities, but, um, most, most, most important were welcomed by the people who are leading those communities. Then does another issue.

[00:19:08] Then when you are like insight, most of those people are street. Committees are very old. So now you need to think about how do you then mobilize young people within that community. Cause you know that when working with old people, things can go quite well, but there's also an issue of no, um, , uh, age and all that.

[00:19:32] So we, we, we, we access those communities then we're like, we're looking for young people who are going to be able to drive this process. Um, we're not going to be burnt out. So those, um, the people within the ward, um, that particular community and the streets and street committees, we're able to identify young people within that setting.

[00:19:56] And, um, they linked us with those people and that's how we [00:20:00] came about, um, you know, having a group. Like small groups of people organizing those different communities,

[00:20:06] **Kentse:** [00:20:06] Sho Tracy that's I think what you're unpacking, there are so many important issues. And I think that leads me to, um, an article you recently wrote Ella in open global rights, about some of the organizing principles of the cans.

[00:20:20] And Tracy just mentioned two right now around ownership, but also the idea of thinking about innovative ways to support each other and finding resources to share amongst the community. I'm wondering if you could perhaps unpack what are some of those organizing principles that have made the CANS successful?

[00:20:39] **Ella Scheepers:** [00:20:39] So it's interesting because my partner and I both have worked with feminist organizations for quite a long time. And I

think what we started seeing was that we, that some of the feminist principles that we've seen work in terms of. How feminist [00:21:00] organizations share power and engage with the idea of power?

[00:21:04] Well, what we were seeing happening in the community action networks, and it was such an empowering experience as a woman, as a woman of color, to feel like I was in a position within my community with the privilege that I have to engage and organize and. And be present, um, in ways that I hadn't felt in a very long time.

[00:21:32] And I actually received that kind of feedback from other women, the CANS being majority women, which is really, really interesting. And I think that that fact there's something about this power of what it means to be aware of our power, but also want to engage with it. And so the principles were just pointing out how the different ways that the community action networks and specifically as in Woodstock, we're [00:22:00] trying to think about our organizing differently.

[00:22:03] And so one of the key ones was focusing on critical, critical connections, more than critical mass. So it wasn't about how many people we had in the network. It was about the relationships between those people and the extent to which we trusted each other and the extent to which we respected each other.

[00:22:21] And the extent to which we acknowledged the privilege and the power that was playing out in the relationships between us. So were we being humble in the way that we were engaging with each other, and we'll be trying to build solidarity. And then there was this idea of practicing collective consciousness, which was instead of there being particular leaders, you know, where you could say, well, this person is the leader, or this person is the decision maker.

[00:22:48] And then one of the final ones was moving at the speed of trust, which was really hard when you're working in a pandemic, when everything feels really urgent and, you know, people, uh, [00:23:00] hungry and now it's raining in Cape town, and these are urgent choices that require urgent responses, but we recognized well, and we recognized that we wanted these to be longterm relationships.

[00:23:12] And so we needed to build relationships of trust that allowed us to find responses that weren't just short term, but also would hopefully build longterm solutions to these challenges. So where some things required, immediate responses, other things required us just to sit with the question for a little bit.

[00:23:30] To say, okay, we don't have an answer to this right now. Can we sit with this and, and return to it next week, which is really difficult to do, especially as activists, um, to be able to say, okay, well, we need to talk to some more people. We need to reach out to more of the network. And then we can try to answer this question.

[00:23:51] So those have been some of the interesting organizing principles that I have. Felt have been very different than I think people feel like they [00:24:00] want to become involved because they feel the sense of ownership. They feel the sense of relationship between the people in the community action network, but also their relationship with their community is stronger.

[00:24:10] **Kentse:** [00:24:10] I think what's really important about what you've shared is this idea that Cape town together is, is a network. So because it's hyper local, there is no central node or a place where you can go and say, These are the people that are driving this process, everybody's driving, where they are comfortable and leading where they're comfortable, which is actually quite unique.

[00:24:28] When you think about social movements globally, as well as here in South Africa. And I'm wondering Tracey, you're involved with equal education and your work has really been around transforming the education system in South Africa. Thinking about that parallel of how the CANS are organized, where there isn't a central leadership structure.

[00:24:46] Do you think that has contributed to the success of Cape town together?

[00:24:51] **Tracey Malawana:** [00:24:51] Mmm, I believe so. I believe because of, um, you know, the, the moment to find [00:25:00] ourselves, um, in, I think that there's a, I think that, um, moment creates an opportunity. For people to, you know, when you, okay. Let me say, when are you leading during crisis?

[00:25:14] It's different. It's different than when you leading you no. Yeah. In a normal context. So you'd look at, um, let's say your fees must fall. If you still remember your fees must fall. Um, you know, protest actions. Mmm. There were no leaders.

Everyone was like, I'm doing my best. I want this work. Then you look at other, you know, um, you know, moments of crisis where people are like, if you have resources, bring your resources.

[00:25:44] If you are fluent in terms of like public speaking, you'll do that. If you're comfortable in this, just do whatever they want to do. What we, well, we went to, uh, sorry. Do whatever that you think is best, uh, for the moment that we are in. And [00:26:00] do whatever that will get us to our end goal, which is maybe, um, no accessing free, um, education.

[00:26:07] So I think even in this context, because it's a moment of crisis, everyone's trying to do their best and everyone has good intentions and it's easy for, for, for, for, for, uh, those, uh, community, um, action networks to be, to operate without anyone leading that process. But if we were organizing it in a different context, then I think it will be a different story.

[00:26:32] Um, but at equal education, how we organize in schools and that work is led by equalizes, um, school going learners in those particular schools, it's not led by me. Um, I only, we only like provide a space on weekly basis where people can need. Um, and, you know, engage in like different topics that are affecting their education and learning, teaching and learning within, um, [00:27:00] a school premises or inside the classroom.

[00:27:03] So I think, I think that's something to learn, um, that organizing during a crisis creates Mmm. Certain opportunities for us to maybe you try and think about when organizing and in a normal context. So for instance, we, we will be like hosting a panel discussion with a group of, um, you know, a young activist while organizing within the education sector.

[00:27:31] Uh, and we have led or organized shooting, um, crisis moments in different parts of, of, uh, of the world. And, uh, what do you read about it even online? It's different than when you organizing in like, you know, in a normal context. So I'd say that it does work. Mmm. Yeah. I think, I think anything, let me say organizing in crisis creates a certain opportunity, and I [00:28:00] think there's

so much to learn about that, but it's also different when you're organizing in a normal like context.



[00:28:08] So I'd say that. Um, I think, I think that the community action networks are successful because everyone wants to do what's right. We are in the middle of a crisis, but if we're organizing a normal context, um, in one to achieve. Uh, something that, uh, nobody cares about. I don't think it would have been like, um, I don't think the response would be, would have been like the same.

[00:28:32] **Kentse:** [00:28:32] Thanks, Tracy. And I think when you're speaking about all these different social movements that we've had in South Africa, fees must fall. Rhodes must fall, um, particularly around gender based violence. Even before we had the lockdown. It leads me to the next and final question around. How do we see the work and impact of CANS going beyond the pandemics?

[00:28:53] I think both Ella and Tracy, you have both reflected on what have been some of the things that have made the community action [00:29:00] networks relatively successful, um, during this period, but looking forward, what do we think the impact of this can be? Whether it's to our ways of organizing or how communities relate to one another and maybe Ella, if you could reflect first around, what do you think this is going to look like post COVID-19 or post lockdown?

[00:29:18] **Ella Scheepers:** [00:29:18] Yeah, I think we've been thinking about this as a community, the action network. I have a feeling that quite a lot of the Cape Town CANS are already starting to think about this because they feel the movement of time end of the crisis shifting. And there's this sense of. Kind of all of what has been created, but also this deep questioning of what is next and, and how, I just remember somebody asking, like, how do we hold onto this?

[00:29:51] How do we, how do we keep this momentum? Keep the sense of connection. And we had a Woodstock CAN futures dreaming [00:30:00] session two weeks ago where we just. How does zoom. And we were like, okay guys, so what would this, what would you want us to be doing? You know, what, what would we be doing each of us? What would it look like?

[00:30:12] Mmm. Firstly, I realize it's really hard for people to dream when you're in it. Um, it's really difficult to. Without connecting it to direct action. If that makes sense. So people are like, well, you know, we can't do that right now. And we're like, yeah, but this is what dreaming is, right. Thinking what is possible.

[00:30:34] And so that practice of dreaming and the, the responses were so beautiful. So work around getting businesses Woodstock to support. Unemployment in Woodstock too. So, you know, one business, must hire, a certain amount of people from the community. Um, what does community gardening look like? They want to start community gardens.

[00:30:56] What does a kind of community [00:31:00] support for local craftsmanship look like? And like all these really beautiful, very possible ideas. And I suppose the challenge is. That if this level of engagement came out of Corona, recognizing the things like the housing crisis, didn't getting people together, things like the water crisis, didn't bring people together.

[00:31:24] And so time will tell whether this is sustainable. You know, whether this community action network is a sustainable success that people are coming together and they're doing things and feeding people and they're raising funds and they're making masks and. that's been powerful, but. So success to us, I think, is that this

engagement happens around other issues that it happens around unemployment, around poverty, around police brutality, around gentrification, around things, the direct people, and continue to directly affect [00:32:00] people in our community.

[00:32:02] And so I think that's what sustainable success would look like to us. And. It does feel possible, um, on our good days. So we'll see. Thanks.

[00:32:12] **Kentse:** [00:32:12] Thanks Ella. Tracy, I wonder what the future, from your perspective, organizing in Tembisa looks like based on the work that you've done with the cans.

[00:32:22] **Tracey Malawana:** [00:32:22] Um, yeah, I just wanted to echo what, um, and also seeing that even in moments of crisis, we need to dream. Uh, we need to imagine life beyond, you know, the pandemic then, though we can't do that, but we need to find alternative ways or to find ways to even like allow ourselves to dream beyond the pandemic. So I think for us, um, what we've been doing is trying to build Mmm hope within those communities. Um, trying to, um, show the [00:33:00] communities that there's so much that they can do, trying to show them that they have the power to decide, How, their communities look like, and they have a power to demand, um, you know, better services from, um, their local government or municipal.

[00:33:16] So what we've been doing, we've been trying to link, uh, different communities with the ward counselor. So engaging the ward counselors and say, this is what you, this is your role. This is what you're supposed to be doing. And, uh, seems like not doing that. Um, no particular things you need to go and maybe, um, meet with, um, a particular community.

[00:33:42] Do you need to engage, um, a mayor around these issues? This is the number of people that have identified to do not have access to, um, you know, uh, Sufficient food. Do you need to make sure that those people are somehow assisted by government in that, um, in that particular city, the city of [00:34:00] Ekurhuleni in our context.

[00:34:01] So I think we've been, um, trying to link communities with their, um, ward counselors, but at the same time, thinking about how does municipal work and, uh, what is it that will take for that community to access basic needs from government, especially since, um, ward counselor, that particular area. It doesn't really, you know, so, so those are some of the things that we've been doing to people.

[00:34:31] Um, you know, uh, just reminding them that they have the power because the votes now, when then for a particular ward counselor, Um, for, you know, local elections. So they have a right to demand those things and they also need to give themselves time to understand and learn how municipality operates. So our long term, um, goal is to get, um, [00:35:00] ward counselors active in like all the informal settlements that they, um, that they lead.

[00:35:07] Um, and also making sure that, um, there's synergies between, uh, provincial government. Mmm. City, government cities, government,

and in City Ekurhuleni like and so forth. Then there's also synergies within a local, um, government, because at this point in time, yeah, we are lacking that. So those are some of the things that we're trying to, to build as a long term solution.

[00:35:36] **Kentse:** [00:35:36] Thanks guys. That was the last question. So thank you so much.

[00:35:44] The Bertha Centre team has the opportunity to learn from the best in the business when it comes to innovation. Fergus Turner was a Bertha scholar and now works on the systems, justice innovation team at the Bertha Centre. He recently caught up with social entrepreneur and [00:36:00] changemaker Neo Hutiri, the man making waves and bringing technology healthcare and access to more people in Africa

[00:36:08] **Fergus Turner:** [00:36:08] In 2014 fellow Bertha scholar and founder of Technovera, Neo Hutiri, was diagnosed with TB. For anybody, this would present a massive challenge. Not only is TB a health risk, but it also presents the issue of access to many people. Waiting in queues for hours on end is a real challenge. Imagine having to plan your day around a clinic visit. Neo decided to turn this challenge into an opportunity.

[00:36:34] Neo began designing the Pele box. Now, thank you so much for joining us on the segment 'Positive Outlook' Please tell us a little bit more about Pele box, how it came to be, and a little more about your journey, your personal story.

[00:36:50] **Neo Hutiri:** [00:36:50] Hey Fergus. Thank you very much for having, um, I, I guess my journey with, um, with, uh, with Pele box as a solution, somewhat [00:37:00] started, as you rightly said, um, um, in 2014, in particular, it was January.

[00:37:05] Um, it was the first week of the month. Um, and first week, um, of that year at that time, um, I had, uh, for the last three months I had been coughing consistently. And, uh, um, I had ultimately decided to. Move it beyond just, Oh, this is something that will go away. Um, and I went to my local clinic, um, at the time I lived in the Vaal triangle, um, lo and behold, the, the, the results came through.

[00:37:35] Um, and I was, uh, I tested positive for tuberculosis or TB. Um, I was somewhat taken aback. Um, As many of us would when you somewhat get diagnosed with a, um, a scary condition, um, where all of us know that sometimes TB does end in fatality. Um, and [00:38:00] I had then decided to start this rigorous program of wanting to be on treatment.

[00:38:04] Um, so when you're on a chronic treatment, which TB is part of, uh, you'd normally have to go collect medication at your local clinic on a monthly basis. Um, and you have to repeat that cycle continuously, that we give you a certain amount of pills for the duration. You'd have to finish that and then you'd have to come back in a very, very simple thing that most South Africans would know is something as let's say, anti-retroviral treatment for HIV.

[00:38:30] Um, similarly that would be a chronic condition that you have to go and take medication from your local clinic on a monthly basis. And I somewhat got presented with this journey of wanting to be well. Um, but also introduced to another challenge, which is having to spend hours and hours in queues. Um, and I was almost.

[00:38:53] Um, like I felt like my treatment or my disease was not necessarily the biggest challenge that I had, but my [00:39:00] biggest challenge was the fact that I was wasting hours and hours and queues. Um, and South Africa is, um, has the

biggest HIV, um, uh, programme in the world, which means that we've done really well in putting as many people on lifesaving treatment for their.

[00:39:16] Um, for antiretroviral treatment, but the unintended consequence of that is that a lot of our clinics are somewhat, um, um, um, uh, clogged. We end up with a clinic that sees a lot of patients compared to what it was designed for. Um, and that means that a patient's average time in a clinic. Can be anything from two hours, if you are in a Metro like city of Tswane to three and a half hours, if you're on the outskirts of a small town, um, in some cases to a whole day of having to go to a clinic and go to collect your treatment.

[00:39:52] Thank you for giving us a real telling experiential sense of how you got here. [00:40:00] Um, with this in mind and taking into account where we are. During this global pandemic. I wonder if you can shed some light reflect on the link, the linkages between health care, social innovation. And social justice, of course, the issues that you're referring to intersect with many social justice issues experienced in this country and across the continent.

[00:40:22] Um, and so for some people that may not be obvious, um, how, um, in your story, and also in the current context, healthcare intersects the world of innovation and social justice. So if you could tell us a little more about how you see these things coming together and what that means to you. So within the social innovation movement or our community, um, we obviously go on this journey of wanting to say, there's a social problem that exist.

[00:40:51] Um, and the social problem could be something as, um, there isn't enough access to decent quality health [00:41:00] care for a group of people. And this can be communities in low income settings, whether you're from a township you're from a rural setting, um, you might not have. As, as much of the means I'm afforded to you for you to go into a private hospital and go get the best quality care that a, um, the top 1% in the country can.

[00:41:22] Um, so a social innovator or a social, um, uh, change, um, innovator would effectively look at the challenge and say, um, how do I apply? It business model or a, um, process of rigorously into, um, like, uh, assessing how this problem exist. And then on top of that building solutions that can effectively help address that.

[00:41:45] That's really, um, you know, it's a fantastic example of showcasing systems thinking in action and the intersection of systemic thought and systemic problem solving with justice as always. [00:42:00] An absolute pleasure to connect with fellow scholars and people doing the kind of work that you are up to. Um, thank you so much for your time.

[00:42:09] Thank you so much for your energy. And we look forward to hearing from you very soon.

Kentse: Opportunities for social innovation to create positive impact are all around us. We can become overwhelmed by the need, or we can choose to change our perspective and become creative and proactive. How can you

make a difference in your local community? Perhaps there is a CAN in your area that you can link up with? Or perhaps you'd like to start one if there isn't one already. If that is something that interests you, please see the link to the CAN Facebook page in the show notes.



Thank you for tuning in to, 'Just for a Change' powered by the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship, the podcast where we offer new perspectives and social innovation and social justice.

[00:42:55] If you're curious about solving social issues in your community. Well believe we can make a [00:43:00] positive, tangible difference in the world, then make sure you subscribe so that you don't miss any of our upcoming episodes. Also remember to have a look at the show notes, if you're interested in finding out more about the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship.