



Media Statement

MISTRA releases its report on the analysis of South Africa's 2021 local elections and coalitions

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The **Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA)** released a report analysing the recent local government elections under the title: *When Wedding Bells Ring: Coalitions With(out) Concord* on the 14th of December 2021.

MISTRA's report goes beyond 1st November 2021 local government elections (LGE2021), and explores the conversion of the electoral mandates into local government. It comes at a time of political turmoil, serious concerns about service delivery, corruption and elections themselves. The party system reflected the spirit of the time through a substantial level of fragmentation resulting in 70 hung councils.

When Wedding Bells Ring unpacks this unfolding world. South Africa from 2016 to 2021 experienced a 260 per cent increase in the number of hung councils, where coalition governments need to be constituted, unless the parties choose (or are forced to accept) the unstable route of minority governments. In the 2016–2021 local government term South Africa experienced high levels of coalition instability and disruptive local government. In the LGE2021 Party-politicisation ruled, rewarding opposition parties while the hitherto dominant African National Congress fell below 50 per cent in terms of national support.

"The growth in the number of coalition governments had been anticipated as part of South Africa's hitherto gradual transition from party dominance by the African National Congress (ANC) to some form of more equitable multipartyism – and yet, the scope and scale of the coalition governments that resulted were hardly expected", – said Professor Susan Booyesen, editor of the report and Director of Research at MISTRA.

When Wedding Bells Ring presents a set of 19 compact analyses, written by a range of experts and researchers including **Professor Susan Booyesen, Joel Netshitenzhe, Professor Mcebisi Ndletyana, Advocate Jennica Beukes** amongst others, exploring the state of the art of coalition formation in the wake of Local Government Elections 2021. The analyses mine the election results to understand the reasons for and impact of the outcomes. It follows through with analyses of the emerging coalition culture shaping a large proportion of South Africa's hung council governments. Besides offering definitive election analyses, the report does a 'wall-to-wall' analysis of the hung municipalities across South Africa. It includes case studies of all the coalition metros, as well as the clusters of local council coalitions in the nine provinces.

"There are many factors that were unique to the 2021 local elections such as the timing, the COVID-19 pandemic, the short campaign time, parties' access to resources, the long weekend effect by having



the elections on a Monday and so on. But macrosocial trends such as the state of the economy, service provision, corruption and other such factors had a massive impact on the outcome”, remarked Joel Netshitenzhe, MISTRA’s Executive Director.

This MISTRA study also charts youth perspectives on elections and coalition politics, in the knowledge that young people will in due course be the ones who will be tasked to negotiate the traps and opportunities that come with the loss of outright electoral majorities.

The essential message from this report is that South Africa needs a separation of political parties seeking their gains and fulfilling their mandates for constructive governance.

Dr Yacoob Abba Omar, MISTRA Director Operations, concluded by cautioning that the political context has increased in complexity and thus, the country needs to establish stable and developmental, social justice oriented local government coalitions that are not impeded by interparty contests.

The full report can be downloaded on the MISTRA website: <https://mistra.org.za/mistra-research-projects/when-wedding-bells-ring-coalitions-without-concord/>.

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Issued by the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA)

