Podcast Series 1 - Engaging with Human Rights Scepticism

Episode 3 - Negotiating tensions
Koen De Feyter and Paul Gready

Hi, this is To the Righthouse, a new podcast series by the Global Campus of Human Rights. From scepticism to hope, from utopia to empathy, we discuss human rights, riding waves, but also signaling where the light is. This podcast was recorded in Venice, Italy, on the island of Lido at the Global Campus headquarters.

George Ulrich (GU) - Hello out there. We've now reached the third episode in the Global Campus podcast series on engaging with human rights scepticism. Our topic today is pragmatic human rights scepticism. To explore this, I'm joined by two eminent human rights experts. Professor Paul Gready, Director of the Centre for Applied Human Rights at the University of York, United Kingdom. Paul has worked extensively with Amnesty International in Africa and Asia, and in his numerous publications consistently focused on the practical implementation of human rights and on human rights challenges in the new millennium. An additional key point of interest for Paul Gready is human rights cities. Koen Feyter is Professor of Public International Law and spokesperson of the Research Group on Law and Development at the University of Antwerp, Belgium. Koen serves as a member of the United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development. A long standing research interest (of his) of particular relevance in our present context is on the local relevance of human rights. I am George Ulrich, Academic Director of the Global Campus of Human Rights and host of the podcast series.

First a few words about today's topic. As opposed to other expressions of human rights scepticism, for example scepticism based on the premise of cultural relativism, what we call pragmatic scepticism does not take issue with the very idea or desirability of universal human rights. Rather, it is characterised by a critical assessment of the practical application. And it's typically linked with a claim that human rights are excessively idealistic, not practical, not realistic. This point of view was vividly impressed on me early in my own career in the late 1990s, when I was sent by the Danish Centre for Human Rights to Dar Es Salaam, to engage with the Tanzania Law Reform Commission about bringing national legislation into conformity with international human rights standards and obligations. In informal conversations with members of the commission, I was told that 'we would love to share in the social and legal protections that you enjoy in the affluent, protected, homogeneous and well functioning Scandinavian countries. But this is not realistic for the time being. Human rights as defined by the international community are a luxury that we cannot afford, cannot yet afford. We need instead to focus on national security matters, on combating crime, ensuring social stability, and on the need to develop the economy. For this, we require stronger, more effective, perhaps more draconian legal provisions. But as society hopefully develops, we can gradually turn our attention to human rights and similar niceties'.

It should be noted that pragmatic scepticism of this type is prevalent in all parts of the world, for example, in relation to security concerns, which are widely invoked to override human

rights considerations in the name of securitization. But the issue is somehow more charged when presented by representatives of the Global South as a matter of unwelcome foreign interference in domestic affairs, and possibly as a deliberate means of suppressing developing countries in their economic growth and prosperity. A related expression of human rights scepticism is based on charges of vested interests, on equal treatment, hypocrisy and double standards in the enforcement and implementation of human rights. I suggest that we save this issue and this particular perspective for the latter part of our debate and begin with the question of human rights as an unaffordable luxury. Does this line of argument have any merit at all and how to respond to it? Paul, I'd invite you to begin by sharing your views on this question.

Paul Gready (PG) - Thanks, George. And thank you for inviting me to take part in this podcast. I'm actually going to start from a slightly different direction, position, in the Global North, talking about our work in York as a human rights city. York is a medium sized, middle class town in the north of England. And in 2017, we became the UK's first human rights city. At the time, when we declared it as a human rights city, we had the support of all the main political parties in the city, most civil society actors, religious groups, and so on. So we've marshaled significant support across the city over a six year campaign. And we've worked within the context of a decade of austerity, debates around Brexit, of course,and in the UK, most recently, we've had to work in the context of COVID-19. So a very difficult national context for talking about human rights where the Human Rights Act, which is the European Human Rights Convention incorporated into UK law, had become very polarizing within UK political culture and media. But I think we had to face what this podcast talks about, this pragmatic scepticism, really all along in the work that we've done here in one guise or another. So for example, when we first started the work, there was a real perception we got from local government, but also from people in the city, that human rights are not relevant in a context like York; that human rights apply only to particular categories of people - prisoners, refugees and so on - or to faraway places; that in a relatively comfortable city like ours, human rights were, they were also seen as applied to extreme events, I suppose that's the other thing I should mention; that human rights really weren't relevant. And that in order to make the case that they were relevant, whether that be economically or in relation to security or on other grounds, we had to enter into a debate, we had to win an argument that couldn't be won purely on legal or moral grounds. The Human Rights Act applies to local governments in the UK, but knowledge of the Act was almost non-existent. And simply to say that this is a legal obligation took us a very, very small distance in terms of winning that debate. What we had to engage with it's issues around implementation and evidence, and a broader question of justification of human rights that went beyond a kind of proclamation of human rights as inherently and necessarily good. Let me stop there, George. I think that's a fair introduction of what I wanted to talk about.

GU - Yes. Thank you, Paul, I find this very interesting. I think the challenge or part of the challenges I see, is a question of reconciling competing societal objectives, whether it's security objectives and human rights, or economic development objectives and human rights, or public health objectives and human rights, or whatever it might be. And if I take your point, if I understand what you're saying correctly, I think part of what you're suggesting is that that cannot be done just in general terms in theory. That's something that has to be done hands-on, in practice, all the time. And in a certain sense that it's a challenge that's never finished, never ending, but a very pragmatic challenge. That's how I hear you at least, and I

really think that's important also in the context of development cooperation. But Koen, maybe you would step in from your point of view.

Koen De Feyter (KDF) - If I may respond to what Paul was saying, I think the point is well taken, and a lot of the research that I've been involved in, in the Global South has actually made exactly the same point that, that you have to go on the ground to get a real sense of whether human rights work, particularly in my case, and for marginalised communities in the South that you need to learn about their experience in trying to mobilise the theoretical empowerment, that, that human rights promises to try and understand all the impediments that are there, the factors that may be beneficial, and so that, clearly you have no need to go beyond the law. I mean, I'm a lawyer by profession, but in order to understand whether the law can work or whether the law can be a solution, you really have to go down and get the experiences of the communities that are trying to invoke human rights. So, although the context is very different, I think that the two experiences would reinforce each other.

To go back to your original question, and, of course, the sort of the reality check of human rights. I mean, there has been quite some research, for instance, by Olivier De Schutter, who is now the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty, to show that, you know, in particularly in least developed countries, if you start from what would be a reasonable taxation level on the society, which would result in the budget that the government would have, that that budget would probably not be sufficient, in some of the least developed countries to even comply with the core obligations of economic, social and cultural rights under the Covenant on esc rights, or what you would need to, to really ensure Civil and Political Rights, which is why he's made the arguments that a Global Fund for social protection, for instance, should be established to assist countries that can reasonably in a scientific way, acceptable way, demonstrates that they cannot domestically, find resources that are necessary to even protect minimum level on the assumption that the political will, if it is on the assumption that the political will of a government would exist, which might, of course, also be very problematic. And we know that there's issues of corruption in many of these countries as well. But even in an ideal scenario, where there you would have a goodwill government that takes a really positive view and takes its commitment seriously on human rights, that may be a problem. And so I think, you know, Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights starts with "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." But sometimes I think it ends immediately after your birth. Right? Because that's when the equality ends. Because you're born into a situation, in vastly different situations. Where, and it's not only about maternal mortality rates, but it's also the conditions of the hospitals. And, and not all of that, I think is a consequence of lack of political will, it is also a consequence of real global inequality and an inequality within countries. So I think there is some merit to the argument.

PG - I mean, certainly the work I've done on rights-based development completely aligns with what Koen is saying there, and I think, really, part of what we're suggesting is a different way of working with human rights, I think I mean, the classic, more legal way of rights is quite top down approach, which you could perhaps characterise as localization of taking international or domestic law and looking to apply it in local contexts. And we've distinguished localization from localism in our work, which is we've instead tried to start from the priorities of local people and then taking those to rights to see the extent to which rights and law can advance those rights. So for example we, early on in our work here, did a survey in the city to identify priority rights of residents in the city, which were overwhelmingly socio-economic rights:

housing, health and social care, education, decent standard of living and non-discrimination and inequality. And we then identified indicators linked to each of those rights and have on an annual basis reported against those rights within the city. But the basic ethos of that was very much that we start from what matters to people in their everyday lives in the city. And we bring that to human rights to see what human rights can contribute. But our approach hasn't been 'let's teach everyone about the Human Rights Act'. And that, for me, is a fundamental difference perhaps from an orthodox or mainstream human rights approach. You know, we use the PANEL principles that are originally from within rights-based development work as again a key instrument of operationalizing rights beyond legal articles, which are often quite hard to implement, or to kind of see how you would implement (them) in their original phrasing. Yeah, so I think that approach, in a sense, I brought to York from the work that I've done on rights-based development, that approach which was a much more bottom-up process-based approach to human rights, if you like, I brought to York from work that I've done internationally, and I think it's an approach that is relevant, you know, across different contexts, actually.

GU - Thanks to both of you, I find this very interesting and also interesting to hear how the experiences in York and your experiences working in the Global South Koen align so closely, which I think is a very, you know, in and of itself a very important point. I see, in both cases, an indication of something that I in a different context have called a test of pertinence: that the human rights framework, and especially rights-based programming, has to prove itself in concrete and actual situations. I think it's very interesting Koen, also, that you're saying that in many parts of the world, in the framework of global inequality, there simply has to be an international commitment that supplements the commitment that's taken at national level. And I think this is a very important and meaningful point. It doesn't completely address the counter narrative, let's say, where you might have people who say 'we can do better with a non-human-rights-based approach to development, that we can actually be more effective in our development by relaxing the constraints that are imposed on us by a human rights framework, you know, that we can deliver better the local expectations or meet local expectations more effectively if we set aside at least some of our human rights commitments'. What do you do? How do you respond to that kind of argument? You could say, on the geopolitical arena that, to some degree, China's advocating a non-human-rights-based development paradigm and it has to be taken seriously…

KDF - Yeah, I think China now calls it the development approach to human rights as a counter narrative to the human rights approach to development. They've sort of reversed the formula, and they're saying that their Silk Road Project is exactly that, right? No conditionalities in terms of human rights, for instance, but just funding for infrastructure, and that is for them an element of progress towards the realisation of human rights, somewhere in the end, at the end of the road, perhaps. I'm not very sympathetic to the argument, for different reasons. I mean, it sort of goes back to the old division between development and human rights, right, to say that they are separate things. And I don't believe that and I think in the UN, at least, we've sort of moved beyond that to say that human rights are an integral part of development. And so therefore there cannot be any tension between the two because if your definition or your concept of development includes human rights, there cannot be development that is the expense of human rights. Conceptually, I still think that is the correct way to go about it. And to go back to our discussion of your previous question, of course, if you want to start from below, then it's really important that the voice of the people be at the

bottom of the society where the marginalised groups are, wherever they are, can be heard and that there's active free and meaningful participation in the development of policies by states. And so, therefore, there is a need to protect also civil and political rights in the context of the development process very much because I do not believe in the concept of a benevolent government that is far removed from the people that will then do what the people want. And I think there is an entitlement to active free and meaningful participation in decision-making by individual people and also by communities and that is something that human rights very much try to try to explain or try to protect.

PG - Yes. I was recalling, I mean, when I first started teaching human rights in the 1990s, the Asian values debate was very much the big discussion in terms of cultural relativism and so I mean, these arguments are not new either. They've been around for a very long time in one guise or another. I mean, essentially development comes first and then rights can come later. And yeah, I'm not sure that the evidence base for that is particularly strong, but also, as you say, I think if you believe in a particular approach to accountability, to development rather, which includes participation, but also things like accountability, it's impossible to envisage those without civil and political rights as well, isn't it? They require civil and political rights, alongside economic and social rights going hand in hand. I think the challenge of trying to relate it to York is always that human rights is not the only game in town in terms of how decisions are made, in terms of, you know, the kind of operational human rights, operational decision-making frameworks and so on, it's always a crowded field. And I mean, that's part of why the case needs to be made. And, you know, in York at the moment, York is, you know, it's a free trade city, there's SDGs, there's stuff around the environment, there's economic policy frameworks, there's all kinds of things. And so part of what policymakers are all wanting to know is where does human rights fit? You know, and how does it add value? I think those are the two questions and how does it fit within the existing decision-making frameworks that we've got? And what's the value added? What's it going to do for us that's not already done by existing frameworks.

GU - Yes, Paul, I take your point, absolutely. I'm just curious: what do you (do), how do you, do you have examples of when you feel the human rights framework has little to add, so to say, that the synergies between human rights and the realisation of other policy objectives are more questionable? You know, where you may be inclined to focus predominantly, and that could be on public health… It could be, I mean, in years past, I was also quite interested in the whole issue of population control, for example, and there would be people in that field, who would question whether a human rights-based approach to population control was really effective. Now, you could say maybe the same about certain environmental policies, you know. Are there, are there times when the frictions are sort of so significant that they require some form of recalibration of approach?

PG - That's a tough question. I mean, I think we've tended to try and focus on areas where we think it can add value. And so it's, and there's lots of areas we haven't looked at. So we haven't really done a lot of work on public health yet, for example; we haven't done a lot of work on the environment. And I think the environment is an area where, you know, the arguments around human rights and its value are perhaps at an earlier stage than in some of these other areas. And it would be more, more challenging, I think, to make the case and possibly because of that, we've tended to focus on other things. But we haven't had a concrete piece of work we've done where we've done it and I thought 'well, actually, there's

not a lot that human rights can add here'. But I think that's partly because we've identified areas where we think it can make a contribution and that that hunch, or that assumption has borne fruit. We've lost arguments. I mean, I can certainly talk about areas where I mean, we've had a very recent one, where rights have come right into collision with security concerns, and we lost the argument.

GU - Yeah. Could you give us some details on that?

PG - Yes, I guess I can, I mean, it's an unusual one in some respects, but it's actually about what's called in the UK blue badge access or disability access to the city. And so during lockdown, what are called foot streets, so the pedestrianized areas in the city were expanded initially on public health grounds, to ensure social distancing, and so on. And then as things opened up a little bit, the rationale became a little bit murkier, a little bit more difficult to really pin down. Some were arguing that the extension should be made permanent on the basis of economic grounds, pavement cafes, and others were arguing on environmental grounds. But in the end, the argument that came to the fore, and that was used to push it through was security. And so York has enacted a policy that knowingly and actively excludes people who need vehicle access to the centre of the city from gaining access to the centre, despite there being a significant campaign. And in the end, the chief grounds for that was York is a tourist centre, lots of people come here, there's lots of students and young people as well from around the world as well as residents, of course, and the argument that York was a significant security threat won the day in the council over a kind of inclusive city centre that would allow access to all residents, including some of the most marginalised. So, we fought that all the way as did the disability groups. But today, I mean, the decision was taken, the campaign goes on, but as it stands, a category of people who need vehicles to access the city centre, shops and facilities there will not be able to access the city centre.

KDF - But on the question of effectiveness of human rights, I mean, I think one of the hardest debates that I've come across is that: how do you determine in fact whether they work or not, right? And so and certainly in the development cooperation world, you're often faced with people that want a quantitative approach, right, and that say 'well prove us, prove us that a rights-based approach to development works better than policy that would not be based on human rights. And that brings in the whole debate about indicators, and all the work that has been done in that area to try and, in a way, adopt that type of methodology to also show that human rights work. And I'm certainly not an expert in that area, but what we've tried to do in our research is, again, because we wanted to come from below in a sense, is to ask the communities that were invoking human rights, whether they thought that it had worked. So not taking the sort of more economic approach of showing results that can be quantified. But asking them after having attempted or having invoked human rights, and after, you know, the results for them became, were available to ask basically whether they were satisfied and whether they would do it again, or whether they were disappointed with human rights appeal and would not use the instrument in the future anymore. But in the world of development cooperation, that is not an approach that is generally accepted, because they're very much result-oriented. Also, often because development, development administrations are under pressure from their own societies to prove that they are effective, because of the way they're working with taxpayer money. So you have to prove that the money that you spent is better spent when you take a human rights approach. That's in theory, it's not always easy to make that crystal clear.

GU - Interesting. Does it help you in redesigning projects? I mean, can you go from a sense of limited success or even failures to identifying how projects could be redesigned to become more relevant in the local context?

KDF - Well, I can tell from experience, right, so I think I mean, for me, the first step is at least to ask the question, and to check what the perceptions were within these communities, and I think that will help or should help in the second stage or the third stage of a project. I mean, I definitely, I think that's the case. But I can't give you from my own experience, but they may exist. I don't know. Sort of a wonderful example that proves maybe Paul from your experience in New York? No?

PG - I think yes, perhaps. I can. I mean, I think for me, the question is also, this very much builds on what Koen's been saying is, effectiveness or who's, who's it working for, essentially, you know, I think a dominant characteristic of the global economic model that prevails in most, if not all countries is yes, there are beneficiaries of that model, but there's also rising inequality, and in some cases, increased poverty. And I think what human rights does through a focus on non-discrimination, for example, is: it can shine a lens on that. Sometimes in ways that in a way should be obvious, but they aren't. So we did some work here with a group of young people who in the UK called NEETs, so those who are 'not in employment, education or training', so young people who have fallen outside really off the prevailing systems, in York we had a higher number (of them) than the national average and higher than compared to cities. And so we did some research on that group in the city. That's unsurprising, there was a lot of activity going on trying to support this group, but no one had talked to them. No one in their activities had actively (to come back to the basic point around participation) had engaged with them about their priorities, issues and, and how they perceived the problem. And from our perspective, that may seem the most blindingly obvious thing to have done, but it wasn't happening in the city. And so in a city that was relatively prosperous, relatively wealthy city, but one that's highly unequal, that's an example of a group that was being left behind, that was marginalised economically and in terms of a whole range of other opportunities. The human rights lens enabled us to identify that group and then do a piece of work with that group to engage them in finding solutions to the challenges that they were facing. So, you know, that's a very concrete example, in York of where, using the PANEL principles, rights-based approaches, made a difference, and it isn't, in that example, it's not, it's not rocket science, it's not something we think 'Oh, that's really', but it, it wasn't happening. It wasn't happening in the prevailing approaches to that issue in the city. And then a whole raft of things happened on the basis of the report we wrote. There was increased budget allocation, there was better ongoing engagement with that group, and so on. So there were structural and other changes that happened which have meant that the number of NEETs - those not in education, employment and training - has remained low, lower than national average now in the city.

GU - I thought I would take what you just said, Paul and Koen, as a segue to the final question I also anticipated, which is the perception, which is a fairly widespread perception in my experience, that the cards are, the deck is stacked somehow, that the human rights agenda benefits some more than others, and is sometimes operationalized in the service of powerful interests. And that in turn gives rise to a certain level of double standards in international human rights, politics and diplomacy, and so on. Is this something you're bothered about? Is this something we should be bothered about?

PG - Yes, I think we should be. Because I think it matters, that kind of, I suppose it feeds into a broader critique of human rights as being somewhat elitist, remote from people's everyday concerns and so on. And I think, you know, there are examples of that. One is, you know, I think the difference in approach that we've talked about in the context of this podcast, that the top-down quite legalistic approach to human rights - that assumes that if you teach people their rights, they'll act accordingly - is not one that in my experience, both internationally and here, that works outside of the human rights bubble terribly effectively. It's one that I think if we are talking with highly educated like-minded people, can seem very persuasive, but I found in York, in early public meetings we did here, that I needed to talk about human rights in a very different way. Another example would be: the framing of human rights, the funding of human rights in the UK, and I think in many countries, is very, very dominated by people and thinking in the capital cities. We're constantly being told about NGOs in London who are being funded to do local work around the country, when they have no connections or branches in those areas. And that you know, I guess it feeds into, I guess, the critique around human rights having been overly professionalised too elite, too remote, too distant from people and I think there are real issues to address there, across a whole range of issues of which I've only touched on some, you know, I mean, the key point for me is that human rights doesn't have to be, shouldn't be like that. But the sad reality is that it quite often is.

KDF - Again, following up on Paul's point, I think it is a challenge to listen well to people that are poor and uneducated. And also to be able to be open, to opening up the professional language of human rights to what they are seeing. And I think it's far from easy to do that, and then maybe also in training people in human rights, we pay too little attention to those kinds of skills, because, you know, often people that, also students that want to go and work in human rights, think about, you know, the Geneva system, or NGOs, the work for the European Union to become civil servants, all of which is very valuable, but for the kind of work that Paul and me are talking about, you also need another set of skills. And also, I think, a flexibility in the language that you use and not sticking always to the technical legal terms that we as experts or as professionals feel comfortable with. And if we work on poverty in York or if we work on poverty in Bangladesh means that that problem remains the same. And it's there to not teach people that are uneducated, right. And to get away from 'I have the knowledge and they need to be told how they can use human right', for instance, which is sort of almost intuitively what you start doing. And it takes a lot of effort to resist that tendency when you want to work with people that are perhaps the most in need of human rights protection. Different point, and back to your question, of course in the work that I now do on the right to development in the UN, the argument of the selective use of human rights comes up all the time. And I mean, I can't, I'm not a voice from the Global South, but for instance the criticism of the rights-based approach to development as it's used by the EU, or by the US or by developed countries is very often that it is perceived as an instrument of foreign policy, right, and so that it's full of choices, that governments, donor governments - right, now we have to call them partners - but, you know, donor governments make choices that donor governments make, both in terms of the issues that they prioritise within human rights, in terms of the countries they wish to work with, or or not; the use of sanctions, also sanctions for for human rights violations, which is heavily criticised by the overwhelming majority of developing countries in the UN, and so on. And, and so, again, I think, you know, we have to acknowledge that, for instance, in the rights-based approach to development aid, one of the reasons why there is resistance against the right to development is because that speaks about a duty of cooperation in order to address inequality, while the rights-based

approach to development aid is really sort of a best practice within development aid, but development aid remains a sovereign decision by the the country that is providing the aid. I just did a consultancy for the Belgian development cooperation on the integration of human rights into their new development cooperation policy with Palestine. They're starting a new five years Cooperation Programme. And it's clear that yeah, of course, this is a very politicised issue. The whole issue of the Occupied Territories and the role of Israel and Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, which doesn't necessarily have a wonderful human rights record either. But from doing that exercise, you can see that - and I was working with the technical branch of the Development Corporation in Belgium, not a political side, but the people that need to prepare, technically the portfolio that they're going to propose (to the) Ministry for Development Corporation- and you feel the political pressure all the time on all the choices that are made. That doesn't mean that the human rights interventions that in the end get decided are wrong or could not be useful. But they're also selected on the basis of the political pressure that the Belgian government feels from the international community, from the EU, the different political parties in Belgium that play, that have different positions on how to deal with relationship between Israel and Palestine. All of that gets translated into the human rights interventions that will be made in Palestine through Belgian ODA in the next five years. That's a factual assessment. And I think that happens very often you know, and maybe Palestine is, of course, a very sensitive issue in terms of the politics. But even in less tense, less sensitive relationships, I think, some of that happens, and developing countries notice, know that, and they're very much aware of that. And this is also that creates a degree of resentment against this rights-based approach to development. And then obviously, always, the colonial history comes up as well, right, they've seen all of this before, (this) is often the argument, you know, we've seen this doing you in the previous generations as well. And that then becomes a really emotional debate. (It) doesn't mean we shouldn't try. But we have to acknowledge that that problem is there, and try to tackle it as best as we can.

GU - Thank you, Koen. Paul, I don't know, do you have any final thoughts you'd like to share before we wrap up?

PG - I think just on that, the issue of inconsistency. We've not talked a lot explicitly about politics and power. And, you know, inevitably, human rights become refracted through those lenses. And it's naive to think it wouldn't. And even within the city context, we've tried to work across all the political parties, but for a variety of reasons, not explicitly political, but because of some of the issues we've worked on, I think there is a perception now that we're more aligned to one political party, then to others. And often I think where that happens, human rights will be more often aligned to oppositional politics. But it's hard for me to see how that's avoidable sometimes, frankly, but it does lead to the perception and sometimes the reality of inconsistency of not seeming to be the same thing to all people and privileging certain groups over others. And yeah, I mean, there's a range of ways that can happen, but politics and power is one key, or two key vectors, aren't they?

GU - Thank you. That's a very welcome also concluding note, I think, Paul, because our next session in the podcast series will be exactly about the relationship between politics, power and human rights and the question also of politicising or re-politicising the human rights agenda, you know, so I think that's a very fine place to end. I just say that, what I took away from this, in part from this, what I feel is a very, very interesting and rich discussion, I must say, is that the package of issues that we've somehow bundled together under the label

'pragmatic scepticism' are very relevant and present in human rights work in at all levels in all parts of the world. And not surprisingly, pragmatic doubts or pragmatic questions require pragmatic solutions. And I think a lot of what you talked about was how these are challenges that need to be dealt with in a nitty gritty way on the ground, bottom-up, and in interactive engagements. I think another point that came through the entire discussion was the need in this regard for an ethos of humility, to a certain extent, of not thinking that one has all the answers but being willing to engage with an open mind, openness as such, being willing to listen, able to listen, being willing to learn, and also being reflexive, being aware of the way in which policies and decisions affect people and the interests in the power relations that are, that infuse this, you know, and I feel these are the sort of some of the themes that came through the entire discussion and I really feel there's a lot to think about and to digest from this. So I really thank both of you for, for giving us your time and your, your thoughts.

PG - Thank you. Thanks, George. Thanks Koen.

KDF - It was a pleasure. Thank you.