COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION: A CONCEPTUAL REVISIT

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION: A CONCEPTUAL REVISIT

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ABSTRACT

The article begins with a revisit of the concepts of community, development and community participation to lay the foundation for a further discussion on the difference between social engineering and social development. The author argues that social engineering bears the roots of an alien community development approach, only to be rejected in time. The reader is systematically taken through the concept of "community bonding" and argues that it is a prerequisite for community participation and sustainability in development projects. It is argued that sustainable development initiatives have a long lasting effect because of the self-perpetuating nature thereof, as it is implicit to the concept that the initiatives come from the community itself and that the community takes ownership thereof. The article concludes by introducing the concept indigenous community development and argues that indigenous community development encapsulates all the foregoing necessities for successful community development projects. "If it is not indigenous community development, it is not real community development".

1. INTRODUCTION

Ten years ago, an article on community development and community participation would have been a topical issue in South Africa. Today it is common knowledge and generally accepted that community participation is one of the basic pillars of any successful community development project. But, was there any conceptual development in the topic of community development and community participation since the days of its inception? Are we still dealing with the same conceptual content and issues since the early fifties when the concept of community development was officially introduced as a policy in Egypt and India? (Dunham, A. 1970:145).

In this article I will take a brief look at the approach to development during the pre- and post-apartheid times in South Africa. I will argue that the problem with community development projects in general, is a lack in understanding of the difference between *social development and social engineering*, especially on the side of the politicians and in some cases, the people involved in designing projects for the purposes of community development. I will postulate that once a community development specialist understands the difference between social engineering and social development, one is forced to have a new look into the operational definition of social development. Following this, it is also argued that the basic difference, and thus the success of community development exercises, lies in development practices indigenous to the target community. [1]

2. ABSENCE OF SCIENTIFIC INPUT TO HOW SOCIETY REALLY WORKS

Looking at the current community development scene in South Africa, one detects a

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[1] In this article the concepts of *social development and community development* are used as *exchange words.*

general absence in the debate on how society really works. It seems that in many cases, today's social scientists are often so busy consulting on contemporary issues that their attention is focused on inputs for crises management by the clients and not so much on basic research regarding development issues.

I cannot but think of the times during the apartheid phase in South African history when one of the common underlying themes of articles in social science journals, was that of "how society does not work", referring to apartheid as not being the solution to problems with human interaction. Now, let me salute the scientists that contributed in their way to the socio-political changes that happened in the country. After all, the scientists seemed to have had the last say over the politicians, namely "we told you" - a saying often said to be the only satisfaction social scientists get out of their work! But, before we praise our colleagues too much, it seems that these prolific writers suddenly disappeared from the scene and that current times separated the "children" from the "real scientists" among the South African social scientists. Fact of the matter is, it is now in the advent of the new fully democratic South Africa that we really need the scientists to come to the fore and tell us "how does society really works!" It is clear that we need to go back to the drawing board to see how does the proverbial "nuts and bolts" of society really fit into one another.

With the popularisation of the concept of community development, especially with the introduction of the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) after the first full democratic elections during April 1994, community development projects were designed, and embarked upon with varying degrees of success. This is not uncommon as development projects all over the world show this element of uncertainty in the projected outcome thereof.

But then, how does society really work? In short, what makes one community "tick" and the other not? Why would a development project be successful in community "A" and the same project fails in community "B"? The answer to questions like these will give us some indication of the reasons why the original Redistribution and Development Program (RDP) in South Africa did not live up to the expectations some people have had thereof. As it is often the case, the answer lies in asking the correct questions and not so much in giving the correct answers to the wrong questions.

DEVELOPMENT AS A SOLUTION?
The solution to the devastating poverty and environmental problems of Third World countries is often seen as `development', i.e. the development of Third World countries towards the First World ideals of economic growth through industrialization and high consumption patterns. However, many people have begun to seriously question the wisdom of this approach.

Limited resources
It is argued that the earth's finite resources would not be able to support the entire world's people if everyone had the high consumption patterns of First World countries.

Mahatma Gandhi, when asked if, after independence, India would attain British standards of living, commented that "... it took Britain half the resources of the planet to achieve its prosperity; how many planets will a country like India require?"

A different type of development?

Development is conventionally seen as economic growth, dependant upon `throughput growth', i.e. growth that depends upon an ever-increasing consumption of energy and natural resources. This type of development tends to be unsustainable. One alternative being suggested is qualitative development, with minimum inputs and outputs and maximum reuse and recycling, and little or no growth in throughput.

Development programmes in Third World countries probably need both quantitative growth (to address poverty), and qualitative development. The richer countries of the First World need to bring a halt to throughput growth, and include in it a more qualitative growth. For example, an industry-oriented economy (high throughput) might be characterised by coal mining and steel manufacture, whereas a service-oriented economy might focus on fibre optics and electronics (low throughput).

Who benefits?

Third World development programmes that focus on economic growth as a solution to widespread poverty, assume a `trickle-down' effect, i.e. that the benefits of economic growth will trickle down to all members of society, including the poorest. However, economic growth does not always benefit the poor in a country. Many development programmes now give special attention to human needs, and the distribution of development benefits, rather than focusing all efforts on economic development. A more people- oriented development should empower people to take greater control over all aspects of their lives: social, political, economic and ecological.

TOOLS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Integrated Environmental Management (IEM) is a tool, or environmental check, used to support sustainable development. Integrated Environmental Management, which includes environmental impact assessment and environmental auditing, is of potential significance in less developed regions where people want avoid the environmental problems associated with uncontrolled development.

Integrated Environmental Management has an important role to play in ensuring that a particular development does address the needs of all people, including the poor, as public participation is an essential part of the process.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Community development endeavours are flawed with projects that started, sometimes with enthusiasm and large publicity stunts, only to disappear after a while because of a lack of sustainability. In the next part of this article, I will argue that sustainable development projects necessarily assume community participation.

Just as the concepts of *community* and *development*, sustainable development is a common, but fairly imprecise term originally used to describe economic development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept link's development and environmental problems, and formed the basis of, for example the 1987 Brundtland Report, Our Common Future (Webster's 1999:5935). Using the concept of sustainable development is generally accepted as synonymous with economic growth, which may in some cases be contradictory to sustainability and environmental protection. By the late 1980's, sustainable development emerged as a term encapsulating three basic areas, namely;

- economic growth as a continuing necessity for developing countries, i.e. economic sustainability,

- people-centred development and the alleviation of poverty and inequality, an explicitly humanistic redistribute orientation aimed at the consistent improvement of human well-being, which entails the requirement of social sustainability; and

- environmental management, both within nation-states and globally, in order to sustain ecological systems and resources - the requirement of ecological sustainability.

The above sentiments were echoed, and to a large extent refined during the Earth Summit held under the auspices of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. This summit was attended by 178 government representatives and brought together more heads of state (114) than had any previous conference on any topic up to that time. This summit is generally interpreted as a watershed event in the environmental and economic development sphere. During this summit, the underlying quest was a search for a worldwide sustainable development approach, with the focus on the economic or environmental thrusts.

Despite the fact that the concept of sustainable development is probably as multifaceted as the concept community development, the concept of sustainability and its global acceptance suggest an integrated approach to development that should provide solutions to all the dimensions of social and environmental systems and their systemic interdependence through a process of self-sustaining development. But, where are the successes of sustainable development project and what are the criteria used to measure the successes? The search for success stories of sustainable community development practices humbles any community development specialist. They are very few and the level of success limited, simply because there is no quick fix and/or guaranteed outcome for development projects. Evaluating the successes and failures reveal that in most cases the failures are caused by a lack of community participation and/or enthusiasm for the development endeavour. Why this? Why do development projects often start with enthusiasm, only to slip into apathy over time? What then is the key to sustainable community development? As a synthesis to this article I will argue that successful and sustainable community development projects are only possible through *indigenous community development*.

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
The concept "indigenous" is popular among anthropologists and environmental scientists alike as they usually use the term with reference to the original inhabitants/species/habitat that are living/growing in a specific geographical area. In this sense it could be argued as an historical fact that the people indigenous to Natal are the Zulu people. In line with this argument, it is also argued that the Cape Malay people are indigenous to Cape Town, and more specifically, the Bo-Kaap. The Afrikaners also claim that they are indigenous to Africa, although their European ancestors only came to the Cape in 1652. At the same time the Indians are seen as indigenous to Natal, although they originally came to South Africa in the late 1700's to the Cape and during 1860 to Durban, to work as slaves on the sugar farms (Preston, A. 1989:49). Environmentalists use the concept "sustainable" in connection with fauna and flora that adapted over millions of years to grow and live in a specific

area and developed into a sustainable ecosystem. For example, the fynbos is indigenous to the mountain ranges of the Western Cape and the Gemsbok is indigenous to the Kalahari and Namib Desert because of its biological survival capabilities developed over thousands of years to survive in the specific environmental conditions.

From the above examples it seems that "indigenousness" reflect on the "original" (referring to origin). This could in some cases date back millions of years back, or even a few hundred, depending only on who or what is the first known to be linked to an identifiable geographical area, the latter being one of the elements in the already mentioned working definition of the concept of a communities. In this article I use the word indigenous with a more contemporary reference and in a broad sense in the meaning of the word. It is argued that indigenous community development encapsulates all the elements of a sustainable community development project. Indigenous is the opposite of alien. Alien refers to "outside coming in" or an "intruder' or "intrusion". In this sense, indigenous refers to native, local original, domestic or authentic. In short, indigenous community development per definition includes community participation, but then in more than just mere participatory action. It also implies local initiatives, knowledge, planning, and execution of projects in interaction with the limitations of the local social, economic and natural environments. The concept indigenous community development also bears all the elements of sustainability in projects. It excludes all forms of artificial or alien elements/ inputs to the target population as defined in a specific geographical area. Indigenous community development projects will also per definition address the real needs of a specific community. It will also address specific issues/needs timeously, as it will be the result of clear intra-community communication and implies (per definition) the existence of full community participation.

Implicit to indigenous community development projects are the following elements of community involvement and sustainability:

Elements of community involvement:
- Full community participation
- Bottom-up development approach
- Addressing the real needs of the community
- Initiated by the community
- Planned by the community
- Executed and driven by the community
- Accommodating local knowledge, cultures, norms and values
- In interaction with the capacity of the social environment
- Timeously executed

Elements of sustainable development:
- Respecting and caring for the community of life and nature
- Improving the quality of human life
- Conserving the earth's vitality and diversity
- Minimising the depletion of non-renewable resources
- Keeping within the environment's carrying capacity
- Changing personal attitudes and practices
- Enabling communities to care for their environment
- Providing frameworks for integrating development and conservation
- Creating a global alliance at all levels

Seen from this perspective, any outside development initiatives can be described as alien and in that sense, as a form of social engineering - something that excludes indigenousness and therefore, participation and sustainability. To conclude: if a community development project/program is not indigenous, it is simply destined to fail, it will not be internalised by the community as "their" project and community participation will not be fostered.

BASIC NEEDS THEORY ENCAPSULATES VARIOUS THEORETICAL APPROACHES

It seems the basic needs theory is currently the only true and distinguishable theory that specifically addresses the issue of both sustainable environmental and social development. This theoretical approach seems to depict a true human ecological theoretical approach in its own right. All the other mentioned theories are little more than different approaches to the issue of social development, trying to identify the trigger (catalyst) to set the development process in motion. All of them facilitate some or other basic argument of what should act as the catalyst or the point of departure of proposed development actions/projects. Obviously what the catalyst is would differ from community to community. From the basic needs theoretical perspective, development is defined as "putting people in a position to shift their own goal posts". This dissolution argues that satisfying basic needs within a specific time and space realm, will give rise to the development of a new set of ("higher level") basic needs. According to the basic needs theory, this process will repeat itself, working in an upward cyclical helix. People will get stuck as soon as the basic needs that hinder them to move on to "higher levels" of achievement and/or self-esteem that is outside their locus of control. Addressing the basic needs defined as those issues that are beyond the locus of control of the members of the target community, will naturally develop into a different (presumably "higher") level of basic needs that are beyond the locus of control of the people in the target community. This development cyclical helix is cultivated by the continuous satisfaction of basic needs as it is perceived by the target population. The more developed the target community becomes, the less issues are beyond their locus of control.

The information on the basic needs are collected according to a prescribed procedure using the focus group data collection technique and the Priority index (P-Index) ranking technique.

One of the most important phases of any community development project lies right at the beginning of the undertaking, when the needs of the community in question have to be determined and the priorities allocated. We will start by supplying background information on what it is that initiates the process of community development and the principles applicable to the P-Index – a measuring technique specially developed to determine and prioritise the actual needs within communities.

The basic needs approach takes for granted that community involvement, and community ownership, are indispensable if a community development project is to be successful.

WHAT EXACTLY IS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

According to the basic needs theoretical approach, "community development" is probably one of the most common terms used among people involved in programs in the upliftment of communities. Yet, it is important to realize that not everyone

attaches the same meaning to the term. A mere glance at any newspaper is enough to make one realize that virtually every politician, regardless of his or her portfolio, has a great predilection for the term community development. The reason? Community development refers to something with which everyone is in sympathy. That is why it is used at every turn, and preferably within the context of "upliftment". And this is exactly what one might expect. Community development simply has to be a good thing! Moreover, if a so-called community development project involves some concrete manifestation, for example a building, community leaders usually have no doubt that the project simply has to be a success. Simply not true!

It is of the utmost importance that all who take the development of communities seriously should be clear about what is meant by *community development*. The term is a compound of the words *community* and *development*. Therefore, let us look briefly at what these two words signify.

What do we mean when we speak of a community?
Here we literally have a case of so many people, so many minds. There is such a profusion of opinions about what constitutes a community that Hillary was able to devote a whole scientific paper to expounding the different meanings of the term. So, for example, we could speak of a *church community*, referring to the members of a particular congregation or denomination. Or we could speak of the Christian, Jewish or Muslim community, in which case we would be referring to all the Christians or Jews or Muslims, not only within a particular community, but in the country as a whole, or even in the whole world. So there are a number of examples of how people may attach different meanings to the word. But, regardless of any particular reading of the term, it is clear that *community* invariably refers to some or other *group of people*.

When we speak of *community* from the basic needs approach and in the context of *community development,* it is of the utmost importance that we should know what we mean by community. There is a fair measure of consensus among scientists that when we speak of community development the word *community* refers to a group of people within a particular geographical area. Such a group is often referred to as the *target group* or *target population*.

What is meant by development?
The second part of the concept "community development" refers to *development.* Here too, we need clarity on the intended meaning. After all, not all development is necessarily desirable.

A study of a variety of community development projects revealed many examples where the development in question was actually not "beneficial" for the community – at least not in the medium to long term. Examples of development that can be seen as detrimental include cases where urbanization proceeded at such a rate as to have a negative effect on the environment and on established communities. Consider the routing of highways and main roads in such a way that they bypass the smaller country towns. Formerly, when the road ran along the main streets of the towns, businesses such as cafes and hotels flourished. One by one these country villages, victims of bypasses, have simply bled to death. And then there is the influence of development in the form of automation, on job opportunities. It is of course a splendid thing to be able to provide, quickly and efficiently, new and better roads for motorists. However, the use of machines means that less manual labour is required to achieve

the same end, which sometimes could result in the loss of job opportunities. And then there is the whole problem of how the ecosystem continually has to yield wherever cities, roads and dams are built.

Fortunately there are of course many examples of beneficial development. Think how development in medical science provides immunization against disease, how the provision of electricity and clean water in remote areas enhances the quality of people's lives, and how the development of the computer, is associated with progress in virtually every aspect of human endeavour.

Development implies change

If it is true that development can be either positive or negative, it follows that development is in fact merely a form of *change*. In the context of community development we actually have in mind some or other form of *positive change.* Successful community development, then, implies *positive change among people within a particular geographical area*. This is not to say, that community development will always be free of any negative side effects. Far from that! Any form of social change usually has some negative impact in some or other sphere.

WHEN IS A COMMUNITY ACTUALLY DEVELOPED?

When we say that a given community must be *developed,* it is logical to assume that there are other communities that do *not* require development. The question now arises as to when a community is actually developed. Is development something that only some communities' need, while others do not?

From a study of various community projects using the basic needs approach, it was clear that virtually all of these projects focused on so-called neglected or underdeveloped communities. No great insight is required to grasp the underlying message, i.e. that there are indeed communities that do not need traditional development projects. Since no record could be found of a development project aimed at a upper class community, we must conclude that higher class communities do not also require development. This notion is of course misguided. However what is true is that higher class communities require a different form of development, or development with a different kind of content. The nature of the need for development would therefore differ from one community to another, but what is of the utmost importance is that *each community must itself determine what form of development it requires at a given point in time*. What is more, it simply is a fallacy that so-called *developed communities* do not also require some form of development. What is true, however, is that the seriousness of the need for development in most socio-economically lower communities is probably more time-critical than that of most socio-economically higher communities.

In the light of the above, it is now possible to arrive at a definition to which most community developers would subscribe, and upon which this manual is based:

Community development is the gradual positive change, among people within a given geographical area, towards self-determined ideals, with minimal outside interference.

OWNERSHIP OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

It is a general accepted fact that people take ownership seriously. To take away something which someone regards as his or her property, and in particular

something that was made or conceived by him- or her self, is to court serious trouble. Ownership usually goes hand in hand with caring for and keeping safe that which is owned and this goes for personal as well as for communal property. In the case of communal property, the extent to which the individuals in question identify with what is owned is usually determined by the degree of ownership that the community claims for itself. This element features in all successful community development projects. The greater the proportion of the target community claiming for itself "ownership" of a given project, the smaller the likelihood of the project dying an early death or gradually disappearing into the sand.

THE CYCLIC SPIRAL OF SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

From the basic needs approach it is argued that underdeveloped communities are often caught up in a *culture of underdevelopment* from which they find it difficult to extricate themselves. A vicious circle arises from a complex system of reciprocal influences between several subsystems in the community, resulting in an intrinsic inability to break free from hopelessness and underdevelopment. Although there may be a variety of causes for this phenomenon, they all tend to manifest as hindrances preserving the cycle of underdevelopment and preventing enhancement of quality of life. Until such time as these hindrances are removed, development is simply not possible.

What are the hindrances that we are talking about? The hindrances refer to the target community's perception experiences of their unsatisfied basic needs – that which they experience as keeping them from attaining a better life.

If the basic needs of the community were to be satisfied, we could expect that in due course a new set of basic needs would emerge. And as such "higher level needs" become satisfied, the community will systematically achieve a higher quality of life. What is it that happened here? The community itself *shifted its goal posts.* This led to *change* within the community, something that was necessary to stimulate positive development. It is also clear that this process could only be initiated by removing unfulfilled basic needs (hindrances) as these were perceived by the community at a given point in time. This process repeats itself by enabling the community in the course of time to identify a new set of hindrances that block progress to more advanced levels.

But what is it that starts this process? Or, to put it differently, how can the vicious circle of underdevelopment be broken?

The process simply starts when the basic needs of the community – *as these are identified by the community itself at a given point in time* – are addressed. In this way the community is enabled to systematically shift its own goal posts, constantly driven by repeatedly emerging new sets of unsatisfied needs. This process typifies the already mentioned operational definition of community development in action, i.e. *to enable people to shift their own goal posts*. If this process is not activated, stagnation occurs and a community is caught up in a vicious circle of underdevelopment. The *fuel* for the process of community development resides in the community itself, and the match which must set the process alight, ignites when the hindrances (unsatisfied basic needs outside the locus of control of the people in the target community) are identified by the community itself.

It is clear from the basic needs approach that no community developer, consultant, or

any other individual is able to develop a community. Successful sustainable community development is a *process*, often a long and tedious process, in which the target community must continually be enabled *to shift its own goal posts*. Although the initial break-out from the vicious circle of underdevelopment is often initiated to a greater or lesser extent by support from the outside, the process tends gradually to become increasingly self-driven.

What information is required to get this process going? According to the basic needs approach, the answer is simple. All that is needed is for the actual basic needs of the community must be identified and satisfied. Thus, we can ensure that the development occurring within a given community is in fact community-driven and not merely some idea forced upon the community from the outside. The role of the community developer is merely to create an environment of freedom within which the latent development potential of the community can bloom. When an individual community developer tries to call the tune, we typically find that whatever enthusiasm and motivation there may be, is mostly that of the individual person. If for some reason or another such a developer ceases to be active in the community, the project invariably runs out of steam. The reason? Most often the community did not assume ownership of the project. To put it differently, the community did not itself identify the hindrances responsible for inhibiting development.

PROPER TIMING IS VITAL

When projects are proposed, one often hears the following comment: *We have already tried it, but it didn't work!* Or: *It should have happened long ago. When we needed it, no one listened*. This type of pronouncement bespeaks a very important factor when embarking on the basic needs approach, i.e. timing. The contribution of proper timing to a successful community development project can hardly be exaggerated, as the basic needs approach argues that "real needs" can only be real needs at a specific point in time.

Too early

It is often felt that doing *something* for a community is at least better than doing nothing. Such an attitude could of course extenuate just about any project or activity undertaken on behalf of a particular community. And, should the project fail to have the intended effect on the community, one would often hear that at least *something* was done; or that the fault was with the target community in question – usually because some person or group contrived to sabotage the well-intended development initiatives. The point remains that to do *something* is at least perceived as better than doing *nothing*. This argument is simply not always true. The failure of a given community development project can sometimes have wide-ranging negative effects, not the least of which is to dampen enthusiasm for future projects, this in turn resulting in renewed failures. It is evident that projects that are initiated too *early,* and for which the community is not yet *ready*, are doomed to failure, however well-intended they may have been.

Too late

The opposite can also occur. Projects can be tackled too late. The result is often that the project either fails to have the intended impact, or that other changes have in the meantime occurred, rendering certain facilities or services redundant, however desirable they may have been at an earlier stage.

Three basic community development mistakes

Given the above, we can conclude that three basic mistakes can be made when identifying community development projects:

1. The *wrong* projects, that is, projects not addressing the real needs in the community, can be undertaken.
2. The right projects can be undertaken *too early*.
3. The right projects can be undertaken *too late.*

It stands to reason that those community development projects optimally predisposed to success are the *right projects* tackled at the *right time*. The core idea here is that when undertaking a project, success depends crucially upon timing.

ACTUAL NEEDS: THE RIGHT THING AT THE RIGHT TIME

How does the basic needs approach argue when the time is ripe for a given development project/activity? The answer to this question can be found in one word, namely *actual* needs. It is important to realize that, in the context of community development, *actual needs* are of necessity needs that are manifest *at a given point in time*. This means that a given service or facility cannot truly fulfil an actual need if it is offered either too early or too late. A need can only be *actual,* if it is what a community regards as important for its development at a given time. From this the important point follows that if only we can succeed in identifying the actual needs of a given community, the timing will automatically be right. Following the basic needs theoretical approach, it would appear that the community developer about to embark on a viable community development project, need only to determine the actual needs of the target community. The premises in question are (i) that needs within a community can differ from time to time, (ii) that the community must be involved in the development, and (iii) that services or facilities must be provided neither too early, nor too late.

The question now is how to measure the *actual needs* of a community. A number of methods are available, varying from very complex to very simple. On the complex side we could think of a scientific survey employing custom-made measuring instruments and complicated scientific sampling techniques. On the (over) simplified side we could for example mention unstructured interviews with one or more of the community leaders. Both the simple and the complex procedures have strengths and weaknesses.

Regardless of the technique employed, the background provided above suggests that the following are indispensable for the community developer:

- Information reflecting the actual needs of the people in a community.
- Primary information not yet interpreted by some expert or another.
- Information presented in such a way as to be accessible for further interpretation and implementation by specialists from diverse backgrounds.
- A simple process not requiring special and expensive training.

THE PRIORITY INDEX (P-INDEX)

One of the available techniques meeting most of these criteria is the Priority Index (P-Index) that was developed in 1993, and has been used in a wide variety of circumstances and communities. The success of the P-Index is attributable to (i) its simplicity, (ii) its ability to reveal the actual needs of a community, and (iii) the reliability of the information it elicits, regardless of whether respondents are literate or illiterate.

Assumptions underlying the P-Index
As we have seen, any community development project (including the provision of services and/or facilities) must be aimed at satisfying the actual needs of a community. After all, it is the community, not the developer, who should benefit from the initiative. This is why determining and prioritising the needs of a community, though not the ultimate aim, is a most important first step towards achieving the ultimate aim of *raising the quality of life within a given community.*

A study of various community development projects has revealed that in most cases the likelihood of success was already established at the time when the actual needs of the target community were being determined. The same study also showed that not all techniques were equally successful in determining a community's needs. The techniques used to determine the needs of communities are given below, each followed by comments on its usefulness.

(i)   Community leaders were consulted to indicate needs within the community.
Although useful information can sometimes be obtained in this way, the underlying assumption is that community leaders are properly informed regarding the needs of their people. Though this may of course be the case from time to time, it certainly is not always so. Moreover, political parties or other groups may at times decide on the priority of a project and force the leader to echo their views, regardless of the wishes of the community at the time.

A related problem confounding this technique from time to time is the inability of some leaders to distance themselves from their own preferences. It is only natural that the needs perceived by trade union leaders, school principals and church leaders should at times differ.

(ii)   Individuals in a community are randomly selected and presented with a list of needs that they are to arrange in order of important to unimportant.
Although various, and interesting, rank ordering techniques are in use, these are all based on the same underlying fault, namely that the needs in question are *presented* to the community instead of being *generated* by the community itself. Such practices are often regarded as paternalistic – an impression commonly regarded as enemy number one in community development work.

(iii)   Random interviews are held with members of the public, or alternatively focus group sessions are conducted, where respondents are required to generate items (needs) and arrange them in order of preference.
This technique bypasses the problem of paternalism, but the ranking of the items remains a problem. The item appearing at the top of the list tends to form the anchor for the positioning of all the other items. In other words, if a respondent found item B at the top of the list instead of item A, this may affect his placing of the rest of the items.

There is furthermore the erroneous assumption that the item appearing, say, third on the list, would be half as important as the one appearing at the top, and that item number five would, in turn, be half as important as item number three. In actual fact, of course, order has nothing to do with importance, and number two may be much

less important than number one, whereas number five may be almost as important as number one. There is no substance to an assumption that distance between items has any bearing on importance.

The P-Index offers some solutions to the above mentioned problems
The P-Index was specifically designed to prioritise the needs within communities or other target group with the basic needs approach in mind. It is aimed at (i) determining the *actual needs* of the community at a *given point in time*, (ii) ranking them in *order of importance*, (iii) without being *paternalistic*, (iv) in such a way as to reflect the *real differences in urgency* between the needs represented by the various items.

Further problems often encountered using some measuring techniques, and largely surmounted by the P-Index, are the following:

▪ Illiterate, semi-literate and highly educated individuals can all be used as respondents, and their opinions are all measured with equal validity. This is made possible by using a measuring instrument known as the Schutte Scale (Figure 4), which also allows for rank ordering without having to weigh items against each other. Furthermore, it also enables the community developer to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data.

▪ The P-Index is not paternalistic. Respondents are not presented with a ready-made list. In fact, respondents are required to verbalise and motivate their needs themselves. In other words, the different members of the community determine what it is that the community needs. The community creates its own list.

▪ Applying the technique is relatively cheap, yet it presents a reliable picture of the actual needs of the target community. Since the technique uses data obtained from six groups of about eight respondents per group, significantly less time and money is needed than in door-to-door surveys. Moreover, the procedure is so simple that minimal training is required, and trainees from the local population are quite suitable.

▪ Even if social or political conditions within a community should be unstable, it is usually possible to continue with an application of the P-Index by simply organising group sessions outside of the community.

▪ Experience has shown that the P-Index is capable of reflecting, in a transparent and accountable fashion, the reality within a community.

Further advantages of the P-Index include the fact that it also functions as a projective data-gathering technique. Respondents in geographically based data-gathering groups are requested to express not only their own opinions, but also to respond on behalf of the rest of the people from the same geographical area. It is also suitable for small-sample surveys, especially in communities regarded as politically sensitive, or where other interest groups – like gangs – create divisions within communities, rendering door-to-door surveys undesirable.

The difference between priority and importance
Efforts to determine the needs of communities tend to be based merely on the order of preference of respondents, in terms of the perceived importance of the need. In practice, results obtained in this way have proved to cause more problems than they

solve, particularly in socio-economically lower level communities. Such communities usually have a pressing need for whatever one may care to mention, so that ranking needs in order of importance is simply not meaningful. The P-Index surmounts this problem by conflating respondents' perception of the *importance* of a given facility with their current level of *satisfaction* vis-à-vis that facility. (See Figures 5 and 6.) As a result of this technique, a facility which respondents regard as very important while at the same time being quite satisfied with the current state of affairs, will occupy a lower position on the P-Index than one sharing the same level of importance while being regarded as highly unsatisfactory.

Since the response technique used (Schutte Scale) is a non-verbal qualitative response technique, cross-cultural data can be gathered across a variety of communities with the assumption of an equal measure of validity.

PERCEPTIONS ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF DEVELOPMENT

There are four perceptions deal with the question how development should be administrated by a developmental organisation. These theories are:

a.   ***Downwards decision-making****.* This theory believes that development can be best administrated through central planning and decision making. Development happens exactly where the knowledge and resources are lacking. The developmental organisation should therefore prepare and implement an extensive plan for development.

b.   ***Upwards decision-making****.* This theory is the opposite of the previous one. It puts local participation central in the process of decision-making on development. The developmental organisation should only play a facilitating role in the decision-making processes. The planning of the development has to come from the people themselves.

c.   ***Learning process management****.* This theory regards development as a learning process. Both the developmental organisation and the people in the programme undergo a process of learning. In the learning process both parties have to support each other and learn how to act effectively in the situation. It is a continuous process. In this process the willingness to admit that errors have been made, honesty, purposefulness, a sound feeling for the case and good leadership are necessary.

d.   ***Adjustable administration****.* Dennis Rondinelli set an extensive model for the administration of development on governmental level. He emphasizes the adjustability of the administration. For this purpose the government's administration should operate decentralised and sensitively, creatively and innovatively. On the one hand it requires that more responsibility should be given to officials and on the other hand that good communication and control channels should be created. Government should continuously consult the target group, enter partnerships with and learn from the target group in such an administration.

To direct effective developmental administration is not an easy task. It depends on what development wants to achieve, what the development includes, what is the attitude of the people to development, which resources are available for local development and on which level the development is administrated. It causes that that

which may be a successful administration model in one developmental project, may fail in another project. Still it is evident that a reliable and service directed administration that can be trusted and understood by people and with which they may feel at home, is essential for effective development.

GENERAL REFLECTIONS ON DEVELOPMENT

A variety of developmental theories had been dealt with. In view of the current disillusionment over the ability of the developmental theories, to indicate a universal direction for development, the question arises whether it can be said *how* development should take place.

In South Africa it is obvious *why* development should take place. The quality of living of the largest part of the South African population is harmed due to insufficient means, housing and education. These shortcomings should be addressed.

Development has to take place in South Africa. In view of the previous discussion, a number of important considerations in regard to development can be exempted. They are:

a.   The development should be to the advantage of the people who are targeted by the development. Developers usually use a large portion of the developmental funds for administrative costs and a limited share reaches the target group. This is for example a problem with the Lotto-system. Half of the money received from the community in this way, is used for prize money and administration. The rest is given to welfare organisations. It is possible that a percentage of the money allocated to them, is spent injudiciously on unnecessary administration and salaries, so that the advantage for the target group is eventually very small.

Development which is structured without giving maximum advantage to the target group, should be questioned. The target group should therefore be clearly defined and controls should be in place to ensure that these people will have full advantage of the development.

b.   The advantage which is promised to the target group, should be determined by the parties involved in continuous open communication. The target group should be able to identify with these advantages. For this purpose complete information should be given on a continuous basis, the target group should be accompanied and open communication channels should be maintained.

c.   Development should be according to the purpose of existence of each institution. The authority has the responsibility to provide an infrastructure and related services, the economic institutions have to generate economic growth, the welfare organisations have to provide supporting services, the churches have to provide spiritual guidance, teachers, education and culture organisations have to enrich community life. The developmental approach of each of these institutions will differ in view of the objectives and target groups. There need not be a uniform developmental approach. Most important is that each institution will perform their developmental responsibility in a responsible and effective way.

d.   Development happens in different ways. The cultural model of the African

Renaissance is currently a model which is generally propagated for Africa. It wants to call on Africa to again appreciate its history and on the grounds of a pride in itself to develop according to own measurements. Other approaches, dealt with in previous lectures, also give important ideas which are important when considering development. They are:

i. Development is not the transferring of Western rationalism and technology. Cultural superiority leads to the failure of development.

ii. Development is not only a local case, but should also be regarded in view of broader divisions between rich and poor, which can actively maintain underdevelopment. Development should take note of broader powers, which are harmful.

iii. National and local elites can use development for their own benefit and harm their subordinates.

iv. Development has to actively overcome the harm which was brought about by apartheid in South Africa.

v. In development the differences among regions, urban and rural areas, among generations, genders, ethnic groups, religious groups, governments, climatic regions, political climates and among resources available should be understood and considered.

vi. Governments have the most important responsibility in regard to development.

vii. Development has to take place with the consideration of the nature and impact of the international economy.

viii. Nature conservation and sustainable development is non-negotiable characteristics of development.

ix. In the past men were more benefited by development than women. This inequality should be corrected actively by development.

x. Local culture should be acknowledged and used in development.

xi. Local potential should be actively promoted.

The previous considerations and ideas indicate how successful development can be reached.

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