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**COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE UPGRADING OF INFORMAL
SETTLEMENTS: THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL GUIDELINES**

by

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis submitted for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor at the University of the Orange Free State is my own, independent work and has not been submitted by me to another university/faculty.

I furthermore cede copyright of the thesis in favour of the University of the Orange Free State.

Lucius Botes
Bloemfontein
May 1999

For Hubré my wife



When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist. When I ask why the poor do not participate in producing their own food, they call me a pathological optimist.

Dom Helder Camara – paraphrased by the author

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ANC	African National Congress
CBO	community based organisation
CBDO	community based development organisation
Cf.	compare <i>confer (atur)</i>
Eds.	editors
et al.	and others <i>et alii</i>
FRESBA	Freedom Square Builders Association
HDI	Human Development Index
IDT	Independent Development Trust
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
pp.	pages
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SANCO	South Africa National Civic Organisation
UCT	Upgrade Community Trust
UDF	United Democratic Front
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCHS	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organisation

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Community participation in the upgrading of informal settlements: introduction and methodological framework



A key issue in any development project is the participation of community members. Academics, policy-makers and developers have intensively been pondering over community participation for the past two to three decades. The notion of community participation, popularised by many development agencies and the United Nations, is increasingly being applied in urban and rural development fields such as health, education, housing, service delivery and social work. According to Chaufan (1983:9) community participation is the "single most-written-about-issue in the field of rural development" (*cf.* Alihonou *et al.*, 1993:13; Stiefel & Wolfe, 1994:40-73). By the 1970s the policy statements of the major international donors and implementing agencies all emphasised the importance of community participation. Some even called the 1980s the decade of participation. The presence of community participation is now, in the 1990s, effectively obligatory in all policy documents and project proposals of these organisations.

1. Rationale and background for this study

The concept 'community participation' is loaded with ambiguity, despite the fact that the literature dealing with the subject is extensive. While contemporary writings on community participation are often coloured with lofty sentiments, the difficulties of achieving effective and meaningful community participation in practice, are not always recognised. In many instances, ideas on community participation are indeed a case of old wine in new bottles. It is therefore important to move beyond the development rhetoric of community participation and to unravel the deeper meaning and impact of a participatory approach in development. According to Gaigher (1992:11) there have been many calls for more par-

ticipation in development programmes but relatively little critical analysis of the actual forms such participation should assume. Moreover, Dudley (1993:164) warned in this regard that community participation could be a false horizon and called upon developmentalists to advance beyond it in their thinking.

If one analyses the current international discourse on development thinking, there is evidently no longer a search for grand structural transformations but rather for the promotion of democracy and for egalitarian and participatory styles of politics and development. With this as a point of departure, this study attempts to unravel the notion of community participation in development. Participatory development is, due to its very origin and nature, not a paradigm that operates at a macro level but rather deals with micro-level situations and contexts. Promoting community participation also requires development scholars that are both paradigmatic and pragmatic in their orientation. Over the past decade community participation has been incorporated as a key element in a wide variety of development programmes and projects claiming to bring about collective involvement. Though the results have often been disappointing, the reasons for failure have not always been clear. A comprehensive overview of participation is beyond the scope of this study. Participation occurs within different contexts which include industrial participation, worker participation, popular participation and political participation. This study will deal with community participation in development initiatives, specifically in urban development and in urban upgrading projects.

All over the world, and in South Africa in particular, enthusiasm and ideological fervour for community participation in development exist among politicians, funders, academics, developers and communities themselves. Moreover, in South Africa, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (ANC:1994), adopted by the ANC-led government is called "a people-driven process" (*i.e.* "active involvement and growing empowerment") as a guiding principle for rebuilding the country. Yet, politicians, ever adroit at representing popular concepts as straightforward, often do not acknowledge the difficulty of achieving participation at grassroots level. Therefore community participation should be high on the development research agenda for South Africa.

In 1996 an estimated 22 million of South Africa's 40 million people or 54% of the population were urbanised.¹ By the year 2010 it will probably grow to a projected 75%, making South Africa the most urbanised Sub-Saharan African country and one of the most urbanised countries in all of Africa (*cf.* Van Rensburg, 1996:376). Despite the many advantages urbanisation holds for the South African population, the scope and rate at which urbanisation is currently taking place, especially among the black population, present several problems and disadvantages, such as urban poverty, for the socio-economic well-being of the population. Of the black people residing in urban areas 41% could be regarded as being poor of whom 60% could be regarded as relatively poor, while 30% are absolutely poor (Pillay, 1996:39). This justifies attention to the urban poor, since the migration process (rural to peri-urban to urban) is not yet complete in South Africa.

Together with rapid urbanisation, the South African housing crisis has intensified, and the phenomenon of informal settlements² and land invasion has grown. Informal housing is a major

1 *Cf.* Statistics South Africa, 1998. Statistics with regard the urbanisation rate in South Africa differ substantially and also according to the definitions of what is considered as "urban". In the South African context "urban" is defined as any populated area with some form of local authority.

2 "Informal settlements" refers to urban neighbourhoods consisting of less formal houses. These houses are usually built with unconventional building material such as corrugated iron, plastic, wood, etc.

element of South Africa's urban landscape that can no longer be ignored or wished away. More than 8 million South Africans live in informally constructed shelters. To give some perspective: the total number of urban people for the whole of South Africa living in informal housing currently exceeds the total population of Gauteng (the former Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging area – which is now one of the nine provinces of South Africa). Approximately 29% of the South African population or 2,5 million households, live as informal settlers, squatters or backyard dwellers (South Africa Survey, 1997:756). [Official estimates in 1992 were 1,5 million households or 17% (South Africa Survey, 1993:206,212)]. More than five million of the individuals in informal urban housing are situated in South Africa's six major metropolitan areas. Strikingly, more than half of the black metropolitan population is resident in informal housing.

The housing shortage in South Africa has been widely documented (Gelderblom & Kok, 1994; Le Roux, 1996; Pillay, 1996:22). Other important basic needs constitute water and electricity provision. As in many other developing countries, one pressing development issue in contemporary South Africa concerns the upgrading of informal settlements. The primacy of the upgrading of informal settlements as a development priority in South Africa is evident in the active and continual involvement of a wide range of role-players and stakeholders of statutory and non-statutory status in this problematic sector. The development period after the watershed date of February 1990 has, in particular, been characterised by extensive programmes for upgrading informal settlements throughout the country.

Given the highly politicised nature of informal settlements (often accompanied by land invasions), tendencies to boycott perceived "top down" and unpopular initiatives are common within the South African context. The high incidence of social problems such as unemployment, violence, low income levels and poverty in such areas, requires that informal settlement upgrading projects should be facilitated in a more participatory manner. To date, however, little has been done to identify tested and proven criteria to ensure true and meaningful community involvement in the upgrading of informal settlements - particularly ones tailored to the South African context.

When analysing documentation and literature on participatory development, one is often left with the uncomfortable feeling that the challenge to transform participatory development ideals into reality remains unsolved. Protagonists of community participation in development employ the commonly uttered rhetoric of "people-centred development", "bottom-up approaches", "grass roots involvement", etc., but it is not at all clear whether these are anything but platitudes long since devoid of any agreed upon or precise meaning. The discourses on participatory development are usually seen as self-evident and unworthy of attention. This being the case, the research problem of this study relates not only to the complex and problematic nature of community participation as a development phenomenon, but it also specifically deals with the actual difficulty of achieving and promoting community participation. The research problem thus begs the following questions:

- What is community participation?
- How is one to achieve meaningful and successful community participation?
- How is one to monitor, measure and evaluate the impact and success of community participation?
- How will one design and implement the upgrading of informal settlements in a true participatory manner?

It is significant to note that in this study the problems raised above will be directly applied to the field of upgrading informal settlements. This makes particular sense, since this development field is a relatively new one in South Africa. (Before February 1990 the common inclination was simply to bulldoze such communities.) In a sense, the upgrading of informal settlements as a field of study is still largely "unspoiled" by misappropriations of the community participation concept. Although some guidelines for the assessment of community participation in general terms do exist and the critique may be that this study is just another rehash, there are no specific guidelines applicable to upgrading projects. Several bibliographic searches indicate that "community participation in the upgrading of informal settlements" is definitely not a topic that has been researched exhaustively in the South African context.

The researcher's interest in this research topic arose from his involvement since August 1991 in five site-and-service informal settlement upgrading projects in the Free State, Northern Cape and North-West provinces of South Africa, financed by the Independent Development Trust (*cf.* Map 8.1). These projects provided approximately 6 000 households with serviced sites. The concept "serviced" includes water supply to each site, waterborne sanitation including a toilet structure, graded roads with access to each site, paved bus routes and tenure registered in favour of individual owners. As a consequence, the researcher interacted with various community leaders, community-based organisations and development agencies. The researcher was one of 18 consultants in South Africa whose tasks *inter alia* were to analyse community dynamics, to ensure inclusive, negotiated and participatory development and to facilitate the emergence of viable social compacts in these communities.

2. Value of the study

As noted earlier, vast quantities of literature on popular participation have been published since the 1950s and from the 1970s onwards even more followed on community participation in particular. This study could therefore easily be viewed as studying the "science of the obvious". I am, however, of the opinion that the way in which this study evolves differs somehow from most other discourses on community participation. Firstly, it attempts to trace the roots of community participation back to some of the social and development theories and paradigms from which community participation originated. Secondly, it attempts to achieve conceptual clarity on community participation in relation to development projects. Thirdly, it discusses different methodological attempts to analyse community participation in urban upgrading projects. Fourthly, it pays some attention to community participation in low-income urban development and housing projects. Fifthly, it analyses the community participation dynamics of a selected case study of informal settlement upgrading. Lastly, it discusses some emergent guidelines for promoting or facilitating community participation in urban upgrading projects.

This study will attempt to unravel the complexity of community participation, and, as a result, could have significant value at various levels and for different interest groups. The value of this study could therefore be explained by answering the questions: For whom is this research of value? (stakeholders and interest groups) and how is this study of value (levels or areas). In terms of the "whom question", this study could be of value to a wide range of interest groups such as academics, developers, communities, development workers, policy makers, politicians and civil servants. This study may also be useful to the state, parastatals, service organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations as institutional or

organisational interest groups. With regard to the "how and at which level question", the research has definite potential to contribute to the sociological, practical, theoretical, methodological, ideological and policy levels of development. Two of the most important units of sociological inquiry are "the community" and "social action". A study of community participation in development thus makes this a very valid sociological research topic. This study could contribute to more socially acceptable and effective management of upgrading projects (practical level). This study will identify and analyse the development theories that contributed towards the emergence of a participatory development paradigm (theoretical level) and will also attempt to describe and apply the different assessment methods of community participation (methodological level). As this study evolves many of the normative issues associated with the what, the why and the how of community participation in informal settlement upgrading will also be critically debated (ideological level). The ultimate aim is to develop some guidelines towards promoting community participation in the upgrading of informal settlements (policy and practical level).

3. The "sociology of participatory development"

Another question which arises is whether sociologists should be involved in the field of community participation. Authors like Cernea (1985), Hulme & Turner (1990), Paul (1987) and Uphoff (1985) plead that Sociology should take a more applied role in development interventions³. Cernea (1985:10) for instance states:

"Sociologists have to face the nuts and bolts of development activities, to roll up their sleeves and to deal with mundane, pragmatic questions of translating plans into realities in a sociologically sound manner. They need to link data generation, action-orientated research, social analysis, design for social action and evaluation into a continuum and thus stretch sociology's contributions far beyond simple pronouncements".

The need for sociological involvement in the development process is also a result of the recognition that repeated failures have plagued development programmes which were sociologically ill-informed and ill-conceived, thus failing to address the important socio-cultural variables of projects. The drive for a multidisciplinary approach in initiating or analysing development attempts also makes the involvement of sociologists that much more important.

Hulme & Turner (1990:65) comment that despite all the approaches in the Sociology of development, there is still some doubt whether sociological theory has made any significant contribution to the practice of development. Current approaches to development tend to emphasise three

3 Hulme & Turner (1990:153-182) distinguish between the enlightenment and engineering roles which sociologists exercise. The enlightenment model implies that the role of sociologists stops at passively disseminating/analysing research findings. When an engineering role is adopted, sociologists are also actively involved in the direct application of their research findings. There is also a dual approach where the involvement of sociologists is both through enlightenment and engineering. The researcher also supports this dual approach. The fact that the researcher was involved from 1991 to 1995 in facilitating the establishment of four community-based development organisations (CBDOs) in informal settlements (Northern Cape and North West, South Africa) and the organisational development training of three other CBDOs in the Free State Province in South Africa, serves as testimony to seeing his own role as that of an involved sociologist (Engineering role). Conversely, the researcher also participated in the planning, execution and analyses of four base-line data surveys in the one informal settlement (Enlightenment role).

main aspects in the development discourse: a more practical and applied approach; a more people-orientated approach and a more problem-orientated approach. In trying to solve social problems development theory became less paradigmatic and grand theoretical in nature and more pragmatic.

Many have indicated that people are now the basic priority in development. Slogans like 'putting people first' (Cernea, 1985), 'development is for people' and 'people must at all times be central in the sociology of developing societies' (Coetzee, 1989), emphasise that a people-orientated approach is acknowledged. However, Van Der Kooy (1989:65-92) points out that this has not necessarily been integrated into practical approaches and strategies. Hulme and Turner (1990:65-67) suggest that the work of economists has generally come to dominate development because of their ability to translate theory into practice. The roles of sociologists and anthropologists have often been reduced to playing a secondary and supportive role. The contribution of the non-economic social sciences which study people, cultures, and societies, are, according to Cernea (1985:3) and Taylor (1994:67-68), of vital necessity. However, due to certain external and internal factors the sociology of development could not fulfil its anticipated role in the past. (Hulme & Turner, 1990:151). External to the discipline of sociology, project personnel tend to be ignorant of the sociologist's contribution and tend to view sociology as being synonymous with critical left-wing ideology. Within the discipline of sociology there is a lack of relevant training. In this regard 'relevant' refers to more applied sociology and less conventional, paradigmatic sociology. One argument used by conventional sociologists is the charge that applied work detracts from scholarship and is less important than basic, conventional sociology. Because of this conventional view of the role of sociologists, some maintain that sociology is in a state of a crisis and even refers to the impasse of a sociology of development. For a sociology of development to be relevant, sociologists need to leave the mainstream of basic research and work more closely with practitioners with the aim of solving practical problems, which can also have important theoretical implications (Taylor, 1994:69). Related to this problem is whether the findings of sociology should be applied to society through the enlightenment or engineering model. According to the enlightenment model, sociology's contribution is sufficient in the dissemination (*i.e.* description, analysing and explaining) of social phenomena. In the engineering model the social sciences are translated into tools of change and are used purposively to organise new social actions and relationships and to initiate interventions. Hulme and Turner (1990:153) advocated a combination of these two models.

An additional value of sociology lies in its methodological ability to evaluate or assess programmes and projects. In developing countries, the role of the sociologist in the evaluation of development initiatives is increasingly being acknowledged, and mechanisms, which increasingly call for more practical inputs from the sociologist, are being explored. Sociologists are beginning to study the nature, processes and methodologies of development (Taylor, 1994:87-88). Chapters eight and nine of this study will elaborate specifically on the community participatory-related dynamics of a selected case study.

4. Research aims and objectives

The proposed research has four main aims. The first aim is to clarify community participation⁴ as a concept and as a phenomenon within the framework of development projects in general, and on the upgrading of informal settlements in particular. The intention is to move beyond the common rhetoric surrounding the idea of participatory development and to reflect critically on the manner in which community participation has been conceptualised and operationalised by different actors in the development field. This aim intends to construct an 'analytical' framework of community participation in development projects.

The second aim is to analyse the process of achieving community participation in the upgrading of informal settlements. Relevant questions to be answered are: To what extent is the implementation of community participation in the upgrading of informal settlement problematic? Why does community participation so often fail? What are the criteria for effective and meaningful participation?

The third aim is to develop the assessment methodology to measure the impact of community involvement in the upgrading of informal settlements. Questions to be explored are: How does one measure the extent of community participation? How does one measure the impact and success or failures of community participation? This assessment methodology will then be applied to a selected South African case study.

A fourth aim of the study is to develop theoretical and practical guidelines for the planning and implementation of community participation, ensuring sustainable development.

From these four more general aims the following seven specific objectives could be cited:

- to identify and describe the historical antecedents of community participation in development projects;
- to differentiate between the different definitions of community participation by various role-players;
- to elaborate on the different approaches to community participation and what each mode of participation entails;
- to identify important constraints on community participation;
- to construct guidelines for implementing upgrading projects in informal settlements in a community participatory manner;
- to identify the criteria by which success or failure of community participation in upgrading projects can be assessed and;
- to make recommendations to ensure that community participation is more successful.

5. Research design and methods

An extensive and in-depth literature study on the notion of community participation in development clarifying the concept of community participation and different approaches to participatory development were identified and discussed. In doing this literature study, the researcher first systematically scrutinised development literature for any ideas on participatory development in general. After a better understanding of this paradigm was gained, the researcher consulted

4 Both 'community' and 'participation' are very ambiguous concepts and they will therefore be extensively discussed in Chapter 3, sections 1.1 and 1.2.

specific sources (books, scientific articles, popular articles and project reports) to describe and analyse the role of community participation in the upgrading of informal settlements.

Documentation on several upgrading projects was accessed at the international level at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, and at the national level and at the local level. A significant quantity of relevant development documentation (*cf.* References) was accessed to develop conceptual clarity for studying community participation.

A second method which was used, in addition to a documentary study, was a rapid assessment of existing evaluation reports on South African urban upgrading initiatives. Permission to access documentation of 103 Independent Development Trust (IDT) informal settlement upgrading projects in South Africa was obtained. This exercise often included indirect data sources such as project reports, plans, analyses, evaluations, papers, policy documents, discussions and debates of which some circulated among the different development agencies and institutions that are involved in informal settlement upgrading in South Africa.

In this study base-line survey data, secondary data and minutes of meetings of the development trust (social compact) responsible for the upgrading of Freedom Square and Namibia Square informal settlements (in Bloemfontein)(*cf.* Map 8.2), were used as direct sources of field data and as a third method of coming to a greater understanding of issues related to community participation. The main purpose of using several research methods was to suggest and generate ways (guidelines) in which meaningful community participation could be increased in the upgrading of informal settlements so as to improve the results.

Participation and development initiatives should be analysed dialectically, that means in opposite relationship to one another, as consequences of the interaction among international, domestic and local groups who act in response to changing economic and political priorities. This theoretical orientation affects the decisions on how to organise this study. It starts by indicating how and to what extent theoretical paradigms on development contribute towards the emergence of community participation. It proceeds with both a development and a sociological analysis of the historical and international contexts of participation and development. Next, the South African context is introduced to indicate how community participation evolved in the South African urban development and informal settlement upgrading scene. The study culminates in mapping out some guiding principles and conclusions on community participation in urban informal settlement upgrading, focussing on Freedom Square as case study - the biggest informal settlements in Bloemfontein (South Africa) with approximately 4200 households or 20 000 residents.

With regard to the Freedom Square case study, a first survey of 164 households was conducted within six months after the first land invasions occurred (October 1990). Students from the departments of Sociology and Geography at the University of the Free State, were trained as interviewers. In 1993, a follow-up study with the assistance of one Masters student (Geography), two Honours students (Sociology) and ten trained interviewers from informal settlement communities, was completed in 1993. This study was conducted by means of in-depth interviews, historical analysis of relevant documentation (minutes, letters, agreements, etc.) and a survey of 113 households. The researcher facilitated three further surveys in Freedom, Bloemfontein: one in 1994 with regard to small loan preferences of residents of the settlement and in 1995 another survey. The latter was part of a national survey on the upgrading of informal settlements in South Africa in collaboration with researchers from the Institute of Socio-

Economic Research of the University of Durban Westville. A final survey was conducted in 1997. It focussed on the housing-related needs of the Freedom Square community. The methodological considerations for selecting Freedom Square as case study, are further discussed in chapter 8.

6. Arrangement of material

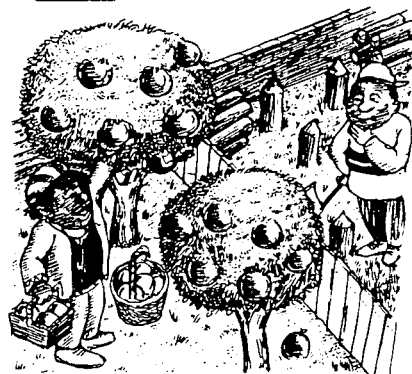
This study will analyse and evaluate the history, anatomy, physiology, pathology, ethics, psychology and sociology of participatory development. In this context, the history refers to the different paradigms and theories of development that have contributed towards the emergence of the participatory development (Chapter 2); the anatomy refers to what community participation in development entails and who is responsible for community participation (Chapters 3 & 4); the physiology of community participation deals with the institutional and organisational dynamics of participatory processes (Chapter 5); the pathology of participatory development refers to the problems (difficulties and dilemmas) associated with community participation (Chapter 6); the ethics of participatory development refers to its normative dimensions about what constitutes ideal and authentic participation (Chapter 3); the psychology and sociology of community participation are associated with the values, beliefs, structure and dynamics of community participation in development as well as community participation in practice, in particular the upgrading of informal settlements in South Africa (Chapters 7, 8 & 9).

This thesis comprises nine chapters:

- Chapter 1 devotes attention to the research problem and rationale for this study, what the research wants to contribute, aims and objectives of the research and the design and methodology employed in pursuing this study.
- Chapter 2 focusses on the theoretical origin and historical roots of participatory development.
- In chapter 3 a clarification of three very elusive concepts, *viz.* "community", "participation" and "development" is done. An operational definition for community participation in a project context is also provided.
- Chapter 4 deals with important dimensions and aspects of community participation in development. Aspects like the importance and advantages of community participation, the principles and preconditions of community participation and stakeholders in community participation are among the issues that are dealt with in this chapter.
- Chapter 5 focusses on the organisational and institutional dynamics of community participation. The participatory development roles of government, international and national development agencies, NGOs and CBOs are analysed.
- Chapter 6 indicates that promoting the ideals of community participation is not an easy task. Participatory development is a complex and difficult endeavor, an assumption that is substantiated through unravelling the impediments and obstacles related to promoting community participation.
- The notion of community participation, specifically in South Africa's urban development context, is attended to in chapter 7.
- Chapter 8 analyses the dynamics of community participation in one selected informal settlement upgrading project as case study (Freedom Square, Bloemfontein).
- Chapter 9 concludes with some guidelines on the promotion of community participation in urban development and urban upgrading projects.

2

Participatory development: historical origins and theoretical roots



“Beneath every participation programme lurks a particular social theory, paradigm, or at least a set of assumptions...” (Kasparson as quoted by Lund, 1987:8)

In international development circles the community participation¹ approach is emerging repeatedly, although it is called by various terms and is woven into development programmes in different ways. Community participation is not a new idea in development studies, but is based rather on a rich legacy of ideas and practical agendas which have helped to facilitate the formulation of present-day proposals for the involvement of local people in development.

With a view to tracing the theoretical origins of participatory development, it is useful to distinguish between three broad approaches to development. These approaches are modernisation (Parsonian theories), dependency and underdevelopment (Marxist and Neo-Marxist theories) and people-orientated (alternative development theories) approaches. The existence of these three broad development approaches can be validated in many introductory texts in the Sociology of development and development studies [*i.e.* Barnett, 1988; Harrison, 1988; Hulme & Turner, 1990; Martinussen, 1997; Swanepoel & De Beer, 1997; Taylor, 1994; Webster, 1990]. Within the people-orientated approach two perspectives will be examined, one ‘mainstream’, the so-called counter-revolutionaries, and the other, more ‘alternative’ or people-centred development.

The counter-revolutionaries are of a group of economists, mainly from Western governments and multilateral agencies such as the World Bank,

¹ Throughout this study I will use the terms ‘community participation’ and ‘community involvement’ interchangeably - well knowing that some people distinguish between participation and involvement, albeit rather in an artificial manner by applying semantics and assuming that involvement is a higher form of participation. To the researcher both community participation and community involvement are two sides of the same coin.

who emphasise the notion of 'building institutional development'. Issues of underdevelopment will thus be addressed through an improvement in the ability of institutions to make better use of available human and financial resources. The counter-revolutionaries take the stance that economic growth needs to be promoted and that international aid is still a necessity (although its distribution and misuse by local élite can be questioned). To them, poverty alleviation lies in economic growth with a "human face".

In contrast, the people-centred development vision gives priority to the role of voluntary organisations, NGOs and social movements as important building blocks of civil society. They also regard true people's participation as the central dynamo in any development drive. To 'people-centred' protagonists growth is subordinate to equity and they view international aid with much more circumspection, arguing that aid creates dependency, while neglecting a country's most important resource, its people. The label of 'people-centred development' clearly reflects the orientation towards the social energy of people and their ability to transform institutions. People-centred development is seen as encompassing a form of empowerment through organisation and resource control.

There are, amongst others, especially three reasons why studying development theory is important in analysing community participation in development. Firstly, it assists us in exploring the historical roots of participation to obtain a better understanding of the plurality of approaches influencing the context and content of the participatory development paradigm. Secondly, it discards the idea of a mono-perspective on the complexity and challenging problems facing community participation in development. Thirdly, it sensitises us to be aware that the development approach we use will influence, even determine, the way we see participation being incorporated in national development initiatives and local level outcomes.

This chapter has two main aims. Firstly, to provide an overview and synopsis of the historical-development roots of participatory development by exploring and identifying the development contexts and approaches that contributed towards the emergence of participatory development. Secondly, to analyse and systematise the different contributions of various development approaches towards the emergence of community participation in development.

This chapter will focus primarily on the emergence of the participatory development paradigm. Alternative development theories, and both micro-development theories and macro-development theories are useful to explain the emergence of the participatory development paradigm. Promoting or enabling community participation in development initiatives demands that policy-makers and project implementers take note of the historical origin and various constructs that are used when discussing community participation in development. Of course, it is impossible to review these antecedents here in any detail, but some of the more important influences on contemporary community participation theory and practices do require elaboration.

1. Participatory development: a multitude of historical antecedents

Since World War II and during the first two development decades (1950 - 1970), many people associated development with economic growth, technological advancement and the accumulation of capital. However, since 1970 there has been a growing awareness that development also implies important non-economic dimensions and that development is more than material advancement. Discontent increased with the established "modernisation" economic develop-

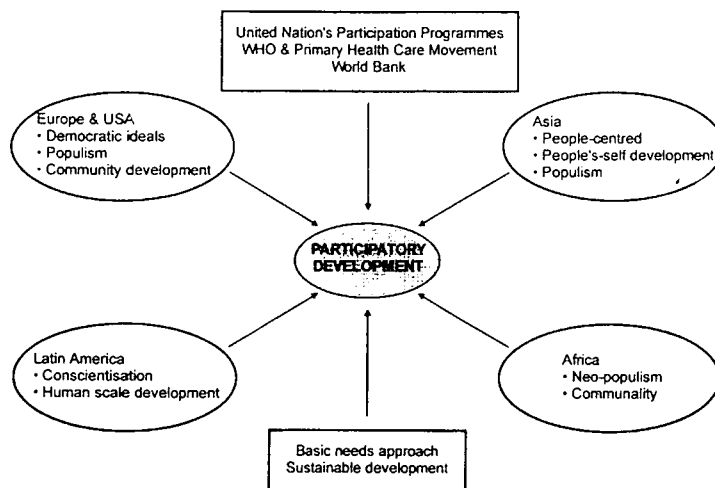
ment strategies and the 1980s saw a growing acknowledgement that development programmes based on pure economic growth were not only unfeasible, but also destructive to resources and social institutions in the societies they were meant to develop (Ayres, 1995; Cadribo, 1994; Hall, 1986; Lund, 1987:4; Moser, 1983.)

The failure of accelerated growth, rapid industrialisation and modern technology models to provide adequate redistribution of resources, sufficient employment, alleviation of poverty or fulfilment of basic needs, has in the past two decades resulted in a search for alternative approaches to development. The essence of alternative development approaches is that people become the main actors of their own development.

Critics of economic development strategies have seriously questioned the "go for growth" approaches and have indicated that economic growth alone is not "a rising tide that will lift all boats": the fruits of economic growth would not automatically spread and "trickle down" to the poorest of the poor (Van Zyl & Beukes, 1993:122-123). Societies have to find a strategy of economic growth which has poverty alleviation built into it and which embraces concepts pertaining to quality of life. Due to this economic view of development, many people were classified as "poor", and therefore as objects of sympathy, paternalistic intervention and assistance. They (the poor) have also internalised a negative self-image. Perceiving themselves as 'inferior' they have sought to be developed by their 'superiors', surrendering their values, cultures and their own accumulated knowledge and wisdom.

Alternative development strategies also emphasise a closing of the 'consciousness gap' between the leaders of society and the masses. The urge for community involvement in development initiatives stems mainly from a humanist view of development. Increasing people's share in the fruits of development progress is an important notion for approaches such as 'redistribution with growth' and the basic needs approach. It is indicated that past planning was highly centralised and bureaucratised, encouraged by pre-designed blueprints from the West, as well as by frequently authoritarian or paternalistic attitudes of planners or policy-makers. Hall (1986:92-93) and Cadribo (1994:23) note that the failure of many schemes was attributed to a lack of popular participation by beneficiaries in implementation and evaluation, causing severe management problems.

The argument that will continuously feature in this paper is that, in the first place, many strands of development thinking, critical of standard growth-oriented approaches, give rise to the current notion of participatory development. Secondly, the emergence of participatory development could be regarded as one of the consequences of the rise in alternative development theories. This is schematised in Figure 2.1.



(Designed by author)

Figure 2.1 Participatory development: the outcome of a multitude of global historical antecedents

1.1 Community participation: the legacy of Western democratic ideals

The notion of community participation is an ancient one because the relationship between participation and social development has existed since the time of the ancient Greeks. In Aristotle's view, participation in state affairs was essential to the development and fulfilment of the human personality (Cohen & Uphoff, 1980:214; Taylor, 1994:91).

By arguing that ordinary citizens have a right to share in decision-making, proponents of community participation reveal the inspiration of Western democratic ideals. On the level of popular culture, participation is synonymous with democracy (Morgan, 1993:7; Gilbert, 1987:66). However, the link between community participation and democracy is not based on notions of representative democracy, but rather on a modern variant of liberal democratic theory known as neighbourhood democracy or participatory democracy. Indeed, many proponents of community participation are sceptical of representative democracy and its possibility of providing meaningful opportunities for the involvement of the masses. Drawing on the theory of neighbourhood democracy, they advocate the creation of people's organisations and community-based development organisations.

The notion of community participation in development, therefore, emerged from attempts to democratise development (cf. Clark, 1991). Part and parcel of these attempts is the idea that those people who are influenced or affected by the outcome of development should be allowed to take part actively in decisions that affect their lives. Ordinary people should therefore become co-decisionmakers in development (Mayo & Craig, 1995:11). Community participation and links between democracy and development are of growing importance in the current international development debate, because in the last instance development is a political process within which people develop their capacities to exercise economic and political choices. The emergence of the participatory development paradigm is therefore to a large degree the point of convergence between development and the ideals of democracy.

1.2 Community participation in populism and neo-populism²

Views on community participation are also infused with populist notions, which are characterised by the belief that "virtue resides in the simple people who are in the overwhelming majority". Well-known sociologist Peter Berger (1974:13) argues that every human being knows his own world better than any outsider. Those who are the objects of policy should have the opportunity to participate not only in specific decisions but in the definition of the situation on which these decisions are based. This may be called cognitive participation. According to this view, a development planner should have cognitive respect for those things which are meaningful to people. This is congruent with the ideas of the well-known Tanzanian populist, Julius Nyerere, when he argues that ordinary people do know what their basic needs are and can be relied upon to determine their own priorities of development and then work for them (*cf.* Kakonge & Imvobore, 1994:9).

Populists have for some time also been placing greater emphasis on uncovering indigenous and popular knowledge. Some even refer to "sustaining development on the indigenous". Traditional knowledge, wisdom and cultural values of the local people are considered to be important (*cf.* Abed,1992:32; Ake,1990; Chambers,1983:75-101; Dudley,1993:74; Pieterse & Simone,1994:43; Rahman,1993:157; and Rahman,1995:24-32).

There are many definitions of populism, but common to all is the idea that the solution to problems of poverty and underdevelopment is with ordinary people themselves, who would pursue development in a non-industrialist small-scale manner through their own input and by means of appropriate technology. These small-scale enterprises are located in small towns and villages and reflect a world of equality and community. Populist writers call for ecologically-sound and harmonious development, with the necessity of appropriate solutions being found for the problems of development among ordinary people. These solutions are seen as applicable both to countries of the 'rich north' and of the 'poor south', and are usually small-scale and rural-based.

Populism has considerable influence in development studies, particularly in developing countries where it has been embraced by political leaders, intellectuals and technocrats. Some of the major exponents of neo-populism have included Julius Nyerere (already referred to above) with his *Ujamaa-Socialism*, the International Labour Organisation concerned with the World Employment Programme, Schumacher with his "small is beautiful" ideas, the Intermediate Technology Development Group, and Lipton with his warnings against urban bias. By analysing the linkage between community participation and populism/neo-populism, it is quite clear that the community participatory development paradigm was influenced by populist ideas on development.

1.3 Community participation and African communality

"*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*" is the Zulu version of a traditional African aphorism. This can roughly be translated as "a human being is (only) a human being through other human beings". The idea of Ubuntu essentially means "I am because we are – I can only be a person through

2 Twentieth-century neo-populism, according to Kitching (1990:21), is theoretically a much more ambitious critique of industrialisation than nineteenth-century populism in that it is not purely oppositional. It rather attempts to argue that there is an alternative pattern of economic development, which can be just as effective or even more effective than large-scale industrialisation in eliminating mass poverty; additionally, it can also be less costly in social or human terms.

others". This African form of humanism emphasises the sense of community, which provides an important base for building development on indigenous community knowledge and organisations. Many South Africans (particularly blacks) view the community as a collective entity evolving from generation to generation. In this view individual prosperity is inseparable from the prosperity and growth of all. Taylor and Mackenzie (1992:227) refer to the organic African community, which operates as a mechanism of survival in Africa, while Ake (1990:14) views the African culture as profoundly participatory in character and as linking participation to communality.

Although the above views on *Ubuntu* could be regarded as true romanticism and thus detached from reality, the assumed prevailing culture among ordinary people in Africa makes participatory development a very applicable strategy. The key values of *Ubuntu* are group solidarity, interdependence, teamwork, conformity, compassion, love, human dignity, mutual respect and collective unity. Mbigi and Maree (1995:1-5) make use of the idea of *Ubuntu* in their search for a solution to the development problems facing South Africa, stating that Africa's achievements and genius do not lie in technology but in social and spiritual spheres.

In the work of the Arab historian and social thinker of the 14th century, Ibn Khaldun, we also find this strong feeling of traditional solidarity, in other words where the individual disappears to the benefit of the social group, which he names "Asibiya" (Tri, 1992:110).

There are, however, examples of development projects all over Africa where local knowledge and practices are being condemned to obsolescence and the socio-cultural values or the souls of the people are destroyed in the name of development. In these contexts, the human potential, basic wisdom and knowledge of Africa's local peoples have been seriously underestimated and undermined by international and national development agencies (Pieterse & Simone, 1994:43; Taylor & Mackenzie, 1992:257).

Indigenous knowledge and African communality should be seen as essential ingredients of participatory development. People and local communities are both the source and ultimate purpose of development.

1.4 Community participation and the conventional community development movement

In the 1950s the United Nation Economic and Social Council defined community development as follows:

"[Community development] is the processes by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities ... This complex of processes is then made up of two essential elements: the participation of people themselves in efforts to improve their level of living with as much reliance as possible on their own initiative; and provision of other and technical services in ways which encourage initiative, self-help and mutual help" (United Nations, 1971:2).

In this report popular participation and involvement in the development process are defined as the primary objectives of community development (United Nations, 1971:39). Several authors (Abbott, 1995:156-168; Moser, 1989:90; Sheng, 1990:57) emphasise the close link between community development and community participation. The community development movement, with

its emphasis on change, popular participation, local involvement and leadership training, can thus be regarded as the precursor of the community participation approach.

Although community development may be regarded as an immediate precursor to the community participation movement, contemporary community participation advocates have been vociferous critics of community development. They mainly claimed that the implementation of community development failed because of its bureaucratic administration; its superimposed direction and tight control by the state; its indiscriminate application of Western-based modernisation and economist theories; its lack of understanding of local social structures; its overemphasis of the physical, technical and concrete objectives and products of a project without striving for less tangible goals such as an appropriate development process; its lack of self-reliance and human dignity; its stereotypical view of the community as 'simple, homogeneous, harmonious, sustainable and relatively autonomous' without recognising the diverse composition of many communities and the presence of both overt and covert conflict (*cf.* Gaigher, 1992:12; Hulme & Turner, 1990:190-191; Korten, 1991a:7; Lund, 1987:4-6; Midgley *et al.*, 1986:18; Marsden & Moser, 1990:6; Morgan, 1993:44).

Protagonists of participatory development argue that conventional community development approaches did not only have a long list of documented failings but also stifled the innate capacities of ordinary people to determine their own destiny and perpetuate the structures of inequality and oppression (*cf.* Swanepoel & De Beer, 1983:101). They maintain that an alternative grass-roots approach, which liberates the powerless and ensures their involvement in community life, is needed to promote genuine participatory development.³ Midgley *et al.* (1986:145) point out that unlike the old community development approach, the new concept of community participatory development involves an aggressive criticism of existing power structures and requires a far more direct role of ordinary people in deciding matters affecting their welfare. The key premise of this section is that not only did the community development approach contribute towards the emergence of participatory development but that the disillusionment with the practical implementation of community development contributed to the emergence of the participatory development paradigm.

1.5 Community participation in Western social work and community radicalism

Although social work is concerned primarily with the problems of needy individuals and their families, it has also, since its inception in the late nineteenth century, focussed on communities seeking to organise and mobilise people to improve local amenities and social services (Midgley *et al.*, 1986:19). During the 1960s the American style of community work and organisation transformed conventional methods of community work: instead of seeking to help deprived communities to improve their social and environmental circumstances, the new community work activists urged that people take direct political action to demand changes and improvements. According to Dudley (1993:7) participation used to be the rallying cry of radicals. The initial assumptions of the social work projects that poverty could be reduced by local improvements, the provision of better services and the stimulation of community interest, soon lost appeal and

3 The terms "participatory development", "participative development" and "participation in development" will be used as synonyms.

many workers began to see their task as one of raising the political consciousness of the poor. However, the end of the Cold War, with the collapse of experiments in socialism, has contributed to the erosion of socialist institutions and structures and left radical thinking in disarray. In this regard Rahman (1995:29) pleads for keeping alive the radical spirit in grassroots work social activism through supporting the values of social activism.

Community action ideas have had some popularity in social work circles in developing countries and many non-governmental organisations also adopted radical community work methods. Projects associated with radical community action attempt to increase the productive capacity of the group while strengthening collective interest. Midgley *et al.* (1986:20-21) note that the contemporary participation movement in the Third World has been much influenced by community work radicalism in the West. This reflects the influence of an increasingly popular structural approach in community work which focusses on economic, social and political factors rather than on individual, family or cultural factors in seeking to account for deprivation.

1.6 Community participation in Latin American conscientisation

Another contributing force to community participation was the *conscientizacion* movement popular in Latin American grassroots rural development schemes. *Conscientizacion* is a concept associated with Paulo Freire's book, *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (1972). Freire suggests that adult education and literacy techniques could use the life experiences of oppressed peoples to awaken a "critical consciousness" about the roots of oppression. This happens with a dialogue where the oppressed are enabled to become active and reflective about their reality (including actions, values and situations), to struggle in order to transform this reality (the process of conscientisation). Through this self-reflected awareness ordinary people will be stimulated to self-driven collective action to transform their own social reality (Mayo & Craig, 1995:6; McLaren, 1997:147-153; O'Gorman, 1995:209; Rahman, 1993:81; 1995:25). This is opposed to the conventional view of development that viewed economic growth as a dominant measure of quality of life. Sometimes the community knows what it knows, but may be unable to articulate this consciously. Development workers need to be helping a community. However, there are also some who caution that conscientisation cannot be induced from outside because it is a spontaneous occurrence.

There are many examples of development workers using Freire's techniques to promote social awareness, to help the community to systematise their rudimentary knowledge of their problems, to decipher their needs and abilities, to inspire community mobilisation and to use it in the resolution of their problems (*cf.* Alihonou *et al.*, 1993:52; Checkoway, 1995:12-14; Morgan, 1993:65; Salole, 1991:12; Stiefel & Wolfe, 1994:30). The process of awareness creation sets in motion a process of reflection, mobilisation, organisation, action and further reflection among the poor – which are all critical elements of participatory development.

1.7 Community participation and the basic needs approach

The basic needs and bottom-up development approaches are often described in tandem. This views the basic needs approach as a contributing force towards the emergence of the participatory development paradigm. The basic needs approach emerged as a result of attempts to impose development on communities without seeking the involvement of those communities. A

basic needs approach, in addition to community organisation and the empowering of the community are the three key elements necessary for genuine community participation. In fact, many define development as "the ability and desire of people to satisfy their own needs". The assumption which predominates in this approach, is that members of the community need to express their needs and need to know how to meet them (*cf.* Heald,1991:30; Max-Neef,1991:39; Vitoria,1992:31). Development geared to the satisfaction of fundamental human needs cannot, by definition, be structured from the top downwards. It cannot be imposed either by law or decree. It can only emanate directly from the actions, expectations and critical awareness of the poor themselves. Instead of being the traditional objects of development, people have to take a leading role in development.

The basic needs approach to development, as a humanist development strategy, shifted the focus of development from economic growth to people and their needs and to poverty alleviation as a prerequisite of development. Therefore, before development can take place, people's basic needs should first be satisfied. Since the basic needs approach places great emphasis on "peoples' needs", it is inevitable that the development priorities of ordinary people are the guiding principle for these development approaches. The issue of "development from below" or "bottom-up development", which the basic needs approach put on the development agenda in the 1980s, makes this approach one of the theoretical roots of the participatory development paradigm.

1.8 Community participation as essential for sustainable development

Of central concern in any discussion of sustainable development in wider human terms is the issue of participation. The term "sustainable" highlights both the environmental and social dimensions of development processes. The ideals of sustainability, which imply a long-term balance between available resources and intended development, came to the fore during the 1980s and reached global proportions at the Rio Earth Summit in 1993. The World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission) of 1987 called for 'development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations' (Serageldin,1994:2).

From the conclusions of the Brundtland Commission to the agenda of the Earth Summit, one of the main prerequisites of sustainable development is securing effective citizen's participation. On the one hand, sustainability cannot be ensured without the participation of ordinary people, and on the other, participation alone is no guarantee of sustainability because local and national élite can hijack a participation process and ordinary people are no ecological angels. However, despite these reservations, the chances are very good that development initiatives with insufficient attention to social factors or with little or no community involvement may be unsustainable. In this regard Kakonge and Imvbore (1994:8) indicate that lack of local participation has contributed to the failure of many environmental projects in Africa. It is the ordinary people alone who can make development sustainable, and development has not really occurred until it is sustainable. It is only when development is people-centred and community-driven that one can refer to sustainable development. Brohman (1996:308) observes that:

"Sustainable development practices must be based on more than just ecological soundness. They must put local people's priorities first, by promoting methods and stress dialogue, participation, and learning by doing, emphasis-

ing the inseparability of social and environmental problems from the perspective of those experiencing them.”

This entails that people who benefit from and bear the brunt of change should define development for themselves and be empowered to be the driving force of their development. Besides adopting appropriate technologies and encouraging conservationist lifestyles, using of bottom-up, participatory planning approaches could make development processes more environmentally sustainable. Community participation and involvement in decisions ensure acceptability and consequently sustainability of development initiatives (*cf.* Akello, 1994:4; Elliot, 1994; Fitzgerald *et al.*, 1997; Kakonge & Imvobore, 1994; Warburton, 1998).

1.9 Community participation as an important dimension of human/people-centred development

Human scale development (*cf.* Max-Neef, 1991; Van Zyl & Beukes, 1993) or people-centred development (Korten, 1991b) emerged as an alternative development paradigm to the standard definitions of development (such as economic growth, measurable in GNP, per capita income or similar quantifiable indicators). This relatively recent development paradigm emphasises the fact that development is much more than only economic and technological advancement and industrial growth. According to a people-centred view of the development reality, it is possible for a country to grow economically while the well-being of its people declines. The distinction between human development and economic growth has been given sufficient empirical substance in the *United Nations Human Development Reports*. In human scale development and people-centred development approaches, development is about people, about a more egalitarian approach to development through self-reliance and self-help with community participation as one of the most important mechanisms to ensure the redistribution of resources. According to this paradigm, one has to take cognisance of values, shared beliefs and social structures. One of the best-known writers about people-centred development, David Korten, describes it as follows:

“Development is a process by which the members of society increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilise and manage resources, to produce sustainable and justly distributed improvements in their quality of life consistent with their own aspirations.” [Cited in the Independent Development Trust (IDT) Consolidation Manual, 1993:1]

The human-centred development paradigm refers to the improvement of human conditions which will eventually lead to political autonomy, economic growth and broad social and institutional reconstruction. In a sense it pleads for the humanisation of development politics where people themselves should be drawn into theorising and research on development issues. Social reconstruction makes provision for principles of freedom, equality, fraternity, satisfaction of basic needs and a process of community growth. The people-centred development vision emphasises the liberation of the human creative potential and mobilisation of human resources to solve the social, political, economic and material problems. People-centred development implies that development can only be accelerated if the energies and resources of the people are mobilised. To attain this, ordinary people have to become the engine of development and take part in decisions that affect their lives (Coetzee & Graaff, 1996:139-152).

In this regard Rahman (1993:4,14-15) traces the creativist view of development to Marx and the self-mobilised society to Mao Tse-tung. Development and poverty alleviation is to liberate, reinforce and support the creative energy of human beings and the self-managing skills of ordinary individuals, and development planning is planning how to do this. The 'creativist' view of development is contrasted with the 'consumerist' view of the liberal trend in development thinking which seeks to eradicate poverty in material terms. We have to learn how to plan the mobilisation of the human energy of the people, to plan to develop with what we have, not with what we do not have. People have to become constructively engaged in tasks set by themselves and then go about them together, pooling resources and energy whereby they can do better than by walking alone, drawing strength and sustaining-power from a shared life and shared effort. People should not become preoccupied with the negative thinking and dependence orientation of what they do not have. "One cannot move forward thinking of what one does not have; one can only move forward thinking of what one can accomplish with what one has" (Rahman,1993:179-180,185,190). Rahman regards mobilisation as an essential development strategy and a collective attempt to alleviate human misery. Mobilisation is therefore also an important precursor of self-reliant development (*cf.* also Development Bank of Southern Africa, 1991:7; Mugisha 1994:4).

Human-scale or people-centred development emphasises the importance of the social energy of people and their ability to transform institutions. Human development takes place where people have improved opportunities of choice, more life-chances, greater access to resources and greater participation in decisions impacting on their lives. If one analyses the key concepts in the human development paradigm, such as self-reliance, empowerment, the liberation of the human creative potential, people's self-development, capacity building, mobilisation, etc., it sets the scene for the emergence of community participation and community involvement as important non-economic dimensions of development. People-centred development seeks to place economics at the service of people. Priority is also given to local resource control and ownership. Well-being and not "well-having" is the starting-point for participatory development.

2. Community participation as globally institutionalised development

Although the historical antecedents as identified and explored in the first part of the chapter provide an overview of the sources and evolutionary inspiration for current community participation theory, the emergence of participatory development as coherent approach to social development can be seen as a direct consequence of the global institutionalisation of participatory development among the key world organisations such as the United Nations, World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank, to name a few. The emphasis on popular participation in United Nation thinking was formalised with the publication of two major documents in the 1970s, i.e. *Popular participation in development* (1971) and *Popular participation in decision-making for development* (1975). The former reviewed the emergence of community participation and community development in the Third World, while the latter offered a formal definition of community development in respect of its implementation. The publication of these documents was followed by a major research programme into popular participation by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. Participation was to become one of the major themes around which this research institute's activities were to evolve. Reinforcement for the idea of popular participation also emerged from other international agen-

cies such as the WHO, UNICEF, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank and international women's organisations, to name but a few.

However, an even more significant contribution came from agencies such as UNICEF and the WHO, and especially in the adoption of the UNICEF/WHO Declaration on Primary Health Care at the Alma Ata Conference in 1978. In this document the idea of community participation featured prominently and it called for the mobilisation of local communities to take responsibility for their own health. The report encouraged active participation rather than passive acceptance of community development programmes. UNICEF and WHO were optimistic that "health by the people" was feasible. Indeed, several collections of country case studies gave grounds for optimism, demonstrating that community-based primary health care programmes were already functioning in a number of countries.

The experience in both developing and developed countries has been that the community participation approach has been employed mainly in deprived and depressed neighbourhoods. It is noteworthy that participatory approaches to development are born out of the experience with co-operatives in Romania and Poland, the *kibbutz* and *moshav* in Israel, and farmers' associations in China. In the 1970s a growing interest emerged in applying these participatory processes to housing and urban problems (United Nations, 1971:4-5). Authors such as Koenigsberger, Abrams and Turner popularised the idea of self-help housing (Midgley *et al.*, 1986:22). The initiative was taken by the World Bank, which modified its housing sector lending policies to promote self-help housing in the Third World. Already in 1975 the World Bank stated in its publication *Housing: Sector Policy Paper* that informal settlement upgrading and sites-and-service schemes could be primary lending instruments for more equitable urban development.

Through the influence of the international agencies, the governments of many developing countries have acknowledged the need for greater emphasis on community-based development strategies and some have taken steps to strengthen participatory elements in their social development programmes. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have also been major promoters of community participation ideals. International voluntary agencies ranging from OXFAM to the World Council of Churches have been particularly enthusiastic about community participation ideas, and many academics, especially in the field of development studies, regard community participation as a new and viable approach to social development. Many voluntary organisations in the Third World, including charity organisations, indigenous populist movements and community-based organisations have popularised the ideals of community participation (Midgley *et al.*, 1986:22-23), and the inclusion of community participation is now in effect obligatory in all policy documents and proposals in these organisations.

3. Conclusion

The elaboration of development policies in favour of the poor, the disadvantaged, the deprived and the dispossessed, based on notions of equality and social justice, was the hallmark of much development planning and thinking in the 1980s. This chapter has provided a brief overview of historical and current thinking associated with the participatory development paradigm. One may ask why the influence of applied development research methods *i.e.* Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) is not included in this overview. The answer is: because the emphasis was more on theoretical origins of participatory development than on methodological contributions.

Community participation is now a paramount and popular issue in development studies, to such an extent that many writers have already referred to the rise of the participatory development paradigm. The emergence of participation as an alternative paradigm of development has been phenomenal. The acceptance of participatory approaches to development is not simply the result of Western influence and occurrences in other continents of the world, but it also reflects an awareness of the inadequacy of previous development efforts which failed to communicate effectively with local persons and consider their felt needs and potential contributions. Rahman (1995:26) begs for participatory development as the best poverty alleviation strategy, because mainstream development efforts remain very much non-participatory and poverty-augmenting rather than poverty-alleviating.

The background to the concern with community participation is the perceived failure of strategies for development which have stressed economic growth, and have involved the excessive build-up of a centralised bureaucracy that has stifled individual initiative and collective development. Scholars like Gustavo Esteva (in Watts, 1995:45) maintains that "development stinks" irrespective of alternative development strategies that attempt to give development a more human face, while other scholars in development studies refer to the "crisis of developmentalism" (practice) and an "impasse in development thinking" (theory).

Participatory development was developed primarily in a Third World context and grew out of a wide range of divergent ideas, theories and paradigms (*cf.* Figure 2.1), from all over the globe, which were broadly related to the emerging number of 'alternative development' strategies. The rise of the participatory development paradigm could therefore truly be regarded as the result of a global process.

More often than not, development projects in the past decades have been planned and executed "for" but not "with" and "by" the people concerned. Consequently these projects become failures, due also to inadequate attention to local culture and conditions. Development projects can succeed only if the people in the target area participate in the planning, decision-making, management, implementation, and if they share equally in the outcomes and appraisal of these projects. It is therefore crucial to gain the active co-operation of the local people in all these aspects. Participatory development stresses certain important values over others, such as co-operation (over competition), harmony with nature (over exploitation), and social needs (over unlimited personal desire).

"'Putting people first' in development projects means giving people more opportunities to participate effectively in development activities. It means empowering people to mobilise their capacities, to be social actors rather than passive subjects, to manage the resources, to make decisions, and to control the activities that affect their lives (Cernea, 1985:10).

It is clear that the notion of community participation is profoundly normative in that it reflects beliefs derived from social and political theories about how societies should be organised. The idea of community participation is sustained by the belief that the power of the state or international and national development agencies has extended too far, diminishing the freedoms of ordinary people and their rights to control their affairs, defend their interests and fight against exclusion.

It is evident from the socio-historical overview of the evolution of participatory development in this chapter and the presentation in Figure 2.1, that the participatory development paradigm

emerged from a multitude and rich legacy of development forces and approaches that influenced and co-shaped it. These theoretical roots of participatory development can basically be traced to the populist, basic needs, reformist, sustainable and alternative approaches to development. However, approaches such as human development, basic needs and sustainable development could also be regarded to some extent as emerging from the participatory development paradigm. There are also some strong African, Latin American, South-East Asian and Western influences which makes the urge for greater community participation a truly global phenomenon. The importance of international agencies, NGOs and CBOs in contributing towards the global institutionalisation of participatory development, is also highlighted in this chapter.

The next chapter (Chapter 3) will attempt to clarify some key concepts related to the participatory development paradigm and also work towards a tentative operational definition of community participation.

Community participation in development: a clarification of concepts



The terms “community”, “participation” and “development” mean different things to different people. They are regarded as three of the commoner, most ambiguous, most elusive, and most deceptive words in the sociological lexicon, which are difficult to circumscribe, and which, so far, have not been ascribed universally accepted definitions (*cf.* Abercrombie *et al.*, 1994:75; Groenewald, 1989:258; Mayo & Craig, 1995:1). In a sense, community participation in development is rather like “democracy” or “justice”. People are generally in favour of it, while retaining their individual definitions of what it actually means, and conceding that they might be hard-pressed to agree with others on how we might achieve it.

Medard (in Alihonou *et al.*, 1993:13), for example, records ninety-four definitions of “community” while Cowen & Shenton (1995:28) indicate that there are more than 700 definitions of development in different textbooks. Grouping together these three concepts in multiple combinations such as “community participation in development” or “participatory development” confuse as much as they define. Perhaps these three words occupy the centre of an incredibly powerful semantic constellation; at the same time, very few words are as feeble, as fragile and as incapable of giving substance and meaning to thought and behaviour. These concepts are inherently vague and require some clarification. There is no consensus on what should be understood by community participation in development. Neither is there agreement on how community participation in development can be best brought about, nor why it has proved so difficult to initiate development initiatives in a true community participatory way. Therefore, although particular attention is devoted to describing different conceptions of community participation in development, a seri-

ous attempt will be made in this chapter to acquire conceptual clarity of what is meant by the now familiar phrase of "community participation in development".

1.1 Community

Although it may appear to be self-evident that the proponents of community participation are referring to communities when discussing who participates, the concept of community even though it is central to the issue, is very often poorly defined in the literature. Most people do not seek to define the term community formally, and instead, use it loosely to denote a social-spatial and geographic entity. However the notion of locality can be ambiguous: it can refer simultaneously to neighbourhoods, villages, townships, towns, sectors of a city, cities and even districts or regions. A second definition simply connotes a community as 'a group of people with face to face contact, a sense of belonging together and sharing the same common interests and values' (*cf.* Cobbett, 1987:327; Sheng, 1990:56). This view conceives of community as the lowest level of aggregation at which people organise for common effort.

Linking on to the structural-functionalist analysis of community by Talcott Parsons, Groenewald (1989:259) indicates that community refers to the place where the individual experiences, and has to deal with, the constraints of society and physical environment. According to this view the interacting, structural components of "community" are residence, jurisdiction, communication and occupation. Thornton & Ramphela (in Boonzaaier & Sharp, 1988:29-39) indicate the main characteristics of a community as:

- the presence of a group of people
- a willingness to co-operate
- a coherent social organisation
- a sense of belonging

The main shortcomings in the views of Thornton & Ramphela is that you may find a deeply divided community in terms of geographic borders, where power struggles prevail and where there is a lack of willingness to co-operate and yet, the mere fact that there is a lack of co-operation does not make it a non-community.

There are, however, some problematic aspects with regard to community as a concept. In some cases one can even refer to permutations or deviations from the "standard" concept of community. One cannot assume that there is always a pre-existing community - only in a number of situations, for instance with green-fields development (a specific newly developed area to which people from different communities migrate) or in cases where people have just invaded land, one cannot yet refer to a community in the true sense of the word. Yet, people believe in communities, desire community, and act as if they exist - even when they do not. Communities are dynamic, and are always in a constant state of flux, even when they are ostensibly most stable. Communities are the unpredictable product of history, and the product of people.

Although definitions of community vary, in development circles most authors relate the idea of community to notions of deprivation and disadvantage. For others (*i.e.* Gopal & Marc, 1994:12) the term community refers not only to the absolute poor, but also to a broad range of local-level groups, including grassroots organisations (*i.e.* community-based organisations and small localised NGOs), individual beneficiaries or groups of beneficiaries, informal groups of artisans, business people or entrepreneurs, all of which are disadvantaged, either because of lack of ade-

quate financial assets or because of institutional capacity. Reid (1989) goes even further and suggests that a community should include not only the groups of people immediately affected by development projects, but also private voluntary organisations, co-operatives, schools, universities and private entrepreneurs, all of which constitute unique sources of information useful to planning and implementation. When referring to community in development terms many scholars are clearly not concerned with wealthy suburbanites, affluent landowners, rich farmers or other élite groups. Perhaps this is one reason why many people view the community in South Africa as everybody who is non-white. Although many have pointed out that the concept refers to impoverished villages or low income urban neighbourhoods, they fail to recognise that deprived communities are not homogeneous and that inequalities of one kind or another characterise most forms of social organisation. In this regard many researchers indicate that the very notion of a single, homogeneous "community", represented by a single organisation, is highly questionable (*cf.* Dudley, 1993:11; Friedman, 1992:8-9; Galjart, 1995:19; Chapter 6 of this thesis). Such simplistic definitions of community do not only deny the possibility of different values and perspectives within a particular area, but they also assume a homogeneity of community interests, which rarely exists.

In all communities there is considerable differentiation in terms of gender, age, knowledge, kinship, wealth and social status which may influence people's willingness to share burdens and benefits and rights and duties equally. In defining community, it is important to note the 'the community' constitutes a wide range of interest groups, such as individuals, households, organised groups and leaders, all claiming to represent communal interests. The community can therefore not be viewed in monolithic, homogeneous terms. Gaigher (1992:8) also refers to the stereotypical view that many developers have of the community as being "simple, homogeneous, harmonious, durable and relatively autonomous". In reality each of these images is unfounded when the evidence, assembled by sociologists and anthropologists, is considered. In many ways, people who live in the same area may not be a community at all, because of their difference in interests. It is often impossible that a whole community can participate as an organic entity. In many social compacts the more powerful interest groups have a tendency to dominate the weaker and less literate ones. This often leads to a situation where the most needy community people are not properly penetrated by development initiatives due to this domination.

Not even informal settlement communities are cohesive, integrated and homogeneous entities. In deprived communities, as in affluent communities, we find social, economic and political stratification and therefore differentiation in terms of status, income and power. Marginalised sections in a community also suffer from conflicts, rivalries and factionalism.

In summary, the few essential elements that a community comprises of are: a group of people, interaction among people, common values and norms, a designated geographical area and a "target population" of intended beneficiaries. For the purpose of this study a community will be defined as (a) group(s) of people with shared interests and a shared sense of belonging which generally operate in the same physical environment. The emphasis on shared social-spatial experiences is the common denominator in constituting a community. On the one hand, "community" can best be understood as "an image of coherence", a cultural notion which people use to give to reality and form their social actions and thoughts. On the other hand, the sociological existence of communities is founded on intense social interaction among their members, which inevitably produces social boundaries defining communities and giving members identity. The

concept community will always imply a social and a physical dimension. In terms of this definition an informal settlement community may be defined as a group of people where the majority of households (groups of people) live in informal dwellings (shared experiences), usually demarcated in geographic terms by a name attached to it like Tambo Square or Freedom Square (same physical environment). "Groups of people" and a "shared interest" deal with the social dimension while the "same physical environment" refers to the physical dimension. In development thought "community" seems to be the critical qualifier of participation. In the following section it will become clearer how the concepts community and participation relate with each other.

1.2 Participation

According to Morgan (1993:4) the concept of participation is a socially constructed amalgam of ideas, defined and refined through time. Participation is such an amorphous term which is unitary neither in concept nor in practice. Furthermore it is a matter on which there is considerable disagreement among development scholars and practitioners. Korten (1991a:3) refers to participation as "a word with many meanings" while Cohen & Uphoff (1977:1) describe the complexity of participation as a concept with much disagreement on the scope and substance of the term. To others such as Roodt (1996), participation is a jargon word which has been manipulated by vastly different groups of people to mean entirely different things.

The word "participation" refers to the involvement of an individual or community in various stages of activity. Implied in the concept are: interaction of two parties or more, equalisation of power, decision-making, and a learning process (Koesoebjono-Sarwono,1993:35-36). Some use the term to mean active participation in political decision-making, while to activist groups, participation has no meaning unless the people involved have significant control over decisions concerning the organisation to which they belong. Others associate participation with the equitable sharing of project benefits, yet others view participation as an instrument to enhance the efficiency of projects (Paul,1987:2). Bhatnagar and Williams (1992:2) define participation as:

"... A process by which people - especially disadvantaged people - can exercise influence over policy formulation, design alternatives, investment choices, management, and monitoring of development interventions in their communities".

If one analyses the range of definitions on community participation, it is clear that the effective devolution of power to local communities to choose matters that concern their own welfare and prosperity is at the centre of the philosophy of community participation.

This definition, while suitable as a working definition, raises many further questions and lacks specificity about the nature of the programmes required for promoting participation. Although this definition of community participation is widely accepted, it needs to be made more operational so that technical, social, economic and political interventions can be designed for participation. There have been many calls for more participation in development programmes over the last two to three development decades, yet there has been relatively little critical analysis of what forms such participation should take (Gaigher,1992:11; Hulme & Turner,1990:191-192). In some situations the calls appeared to be largely rhetorical, especially when made by centralised, authoritarian regimes. In others, they appeared to be based on the naive assumption that the poor had

limitless time and energy to devote to participatory activities and that participation could be achieved without conflict of interests. Clearly, much more information is needed if we are to know who participates, what precisely participation entails and how it can be promoted. The relativity of the notions community and participation should by now be obvious.

To Roodt (1996:312) participation implies people involving them, to a greater or lesser degree, in organisations directly or indirectly concerned with the decision-making about, and implementation of development. Korten (1991a:3-6) indicates that the way participation is used in a development context may depend on one's view of poverty and preferences regarding the choice of development strategy to alleviate poverty. In this regard Abbott (1995:159) also refers to "the relationship between a paradigm of development [and] thinking on community participation". It is clear from Figure 3.1 that just as the dependency paradigm superseded the modernisation paradigm, so too community participation/empowerment superseded community development as an approach.

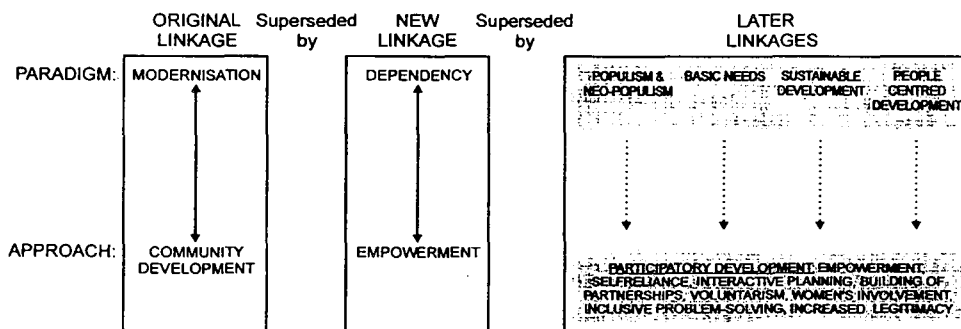


Figure 3.1 A modification of Abbott's model of community participation¹

Figure 3.1 is an attempt to include the role of development paradigms - other than only modernisation and dependency - in the rise of a participatory development approach. Abbott's model illustrates only how the dependency paradigm and empowerment as approach (new linkage) replaced the modernisation paradigm and the related community development approach (original linkage). This, in my view, is a useful but as yet limited explanation for the de-linking of community development and community participation approaches. One should definitely acknowledge that later (more recent) linkages superseded both the old and new linkages in the listed alternative development paradigms (*i.e.* populism and neo-populism, basic needs, sustainable development and people-centred development). Abbott identifies only an original and new linkage without exploring the possibility of later linkages. In his approach to community participation he does not mention that other so-called "alternative development approaches" also contributed to the emergence of empowerment and community participation in what can be

1 This study will make a distinction between the concept popular/citizen participation and community participation/involvement. While the former is concerned with broad issues of social development and the creation of opportunities for the involvement of people in the political, economic and social life of a nation, the latter connotes the direct involvement of ordinary people in local affairs such as project-related or programme-related involvement of end-beneficiaries. Although popular participation and community participation may be distinguished from each other, they are obviously inter-linked.

labelled the "participatory development paradigm" (*cf.* Chapter 2 of this thesis for an overview of the emergence of the participatory development paradigm). An interesting paradox is the argument that these alternative development paradigms have also superseded the dependency paradigm, and yet, approaches such as empowerment, self-reliance, interactive planning, etc. are still important and have not been replaced. The approach of empowerment is just as important, if not more important, in the assumptions of (for instance) people-centred development than in the conceptual and operational framework of the dependency approach. Perhaps Abbott uses 'empowerment' to be an inclusive term for what I see as the outcomes of later linkages.

The definition and function of community participation will rest upon, firstly, the way development planners define development and, secondly, how planners think the community should respond to this definition. For supporters of the economic growth policies (modernisation theory) people are expected to participate as labourers, consumers and entrepreneurs. It is to be hoped that their input will also change their values and attitudes that may currently oppose participatory development. For protagonists of the basic needs theory the focus is on the participation of the poor as co-producers to increase the equitable distribution of the benefits of growth, while for people-centred scholars, development is measured in terms of the empowerment of poor people and the amount of control that they exercise in development decisions which have an impact on their lives. There is a critical difference between the first approach and the second and the third. The first approach focuses on economic growth as the most important factor in promoting quality of life and alleviating poverty. The second and the third approaches, the basic needs and people-centred approaches, believe that people's perceptions of development and underdevelopment are the critical factors; they stress the importance of community people defining and prioritising their needs and learning how to participate in decisions on how change can best be achieved.

Dudley (1993:159) emphasises the point that it is time to stop simply reiterating the cry for community participation. That was yesterday's battle. The challenge now is more to get beyond the general principles and determine the practicalities of how to promote participation in development initiatives. Although there are different views about what participation entails, many definitions draw on resolutions of the UN that were adopted in the early 1970s. One definition of this kind was formulated by a group of experts appointed to discuss community level action in popular participation. It defined participation as:

"The creation of opportunities to enable all members of a community and the larger society to actively contribute to and influence the development process and to share equitably in the fruits of development" (Midgley et al., 1986:24).

This definition suggests that the members of community participate in development if the poorest groups in the community have an effective role in choosing both the development product and the appropriate process, if they contribute to the implementation of decisions and if they derive equitable benefits from these programmes.

The sections that follow deal with the different perspectives on participation. While the linkages of participation with power and self-reliance are highlighted, the different modes of participation are also unravelled.

1.2.1 Participation as sharing power

A central issue of participation is the distribution of power. Morgan (1993:5-6) highlights the political and power dimensions attached to community participation in describing the concept as follows:

"Participation is merely another way of looking at power. Participation is first and foremost a political symbol, by nature amorphous, flexible and adaptable. Unravelling what participation symbolises to different people and groups at various historical periods offers insights into the relations of domination and subordination operating within and between societies."

Although a significant strand of the development literature sees community participation as apolitical, it is by definition political, because participation is about mobilisation, power and the control and distribution of resources. Bang (1986:1394), Bhatnagar & Williams (1992:7), Cernea (1983:93), Convers & Hawker (1989:469), Dudley (1993:7), Lund (1987:1), Mackenzie (1992:1), Sheng (1990:58), Stiefel & Wolfe (1994:4) and Zakus (1998:481) all emphasise the political nature of participation and the linkage of participation to a wider context of political, social and economic change.

Functionalist sociologists such as Parsons conceptualise power in society as a variable sum. According to this perspective, the amount of power in society is not fixed but variable; power lies with members of society as a whole, and power can increase in society as a whole, as that society pursues collective goals. The logic of such a position is that the empowerment of the powerless can be achieved within the existing order without any significant negative effects upon the power of the powerful. The increase in the power of one interest group does not necessarily diminish that of another. The powerless can be empowered, and they can then share in fruits of development, alongside those who have already achieved power. Power is not a scarce commodity, but one that can be enjoyed and shared (Checkoway, 1995:4; Mayo & Craig, 1995:5; Young, 1993:163). In this regard, power is viewed in distributive and generative terms: power is a potential resource in every person or community; the key is just to recognise this power, let this power be unleashed or act upon the power; this is the power some people have of stimulating activity in others and of raising their morale; or this power lies in the actions that enable a community to increase its ability to change its future as an act of choice (Hulme & Turner, 1990:214; Rowlands, 1995:102).

Alternatively Weber's definition of power is conceptualised in zero-sum² terms. This definition of power is more problematic, because there is a fixed amount of power in society (Mayo &

2 Etzioni (in Uphoff, 1993:611) identified three ideal types of organisations based on alternative means of gaining compliance: coercive, remunerative (or utilitarian), and normative. Respective examples would be a prison, a business and a service organisation. Galbraith subsequently wrote about *three types of power* - condign, compensatory, and conditioned. The first of these three types of compliance is negative-sum, the second zero-sum, and the third positive-sum. Another way of contrasting them is to compare the relationships they postulate among people's utility functions. In the first kind of exchange there is negative interdependence, *i.e.* one person's loss is considered as another person's gain, while in the second category, there is positive interdependence of utility functions. In the third situation, there is positive interdependence, with people regarding others' gains as also their own. In terms of Uphoff's classification of principles of organised behaviour: CBOs are more normative with elements of remuneration, while the market sector is exclusively remunerative, and the state sector predominantly coercive, with some elements of normative and remunerative principles of organised behaviour.

Craig,1995:5). According to Checkoway (1995:4) it is common to view empowerment as a process in which a person or community gives power or gets it from another. The notion is that power originates outside the person or community, who gives it to or gets it from another. Increasing the power of one group then implies decreasing the power of other groups. The more power one group has, the less the other has. According to such a perspective, the empowerment of the powerless would involve gains that would, of necessity, have to be achieved from the powerful. This view of power is in terms of dominance, ability to force your will on others and obedience, and it results in the notion of 'power over', since some people are seen to have control or influence over others. Those who assume that power is having a fixed volume (zero-sum terms) see little possibility for co-operative action, and anticipate that existing power holders will resist or co-opt any opposing initiative (Hulme & Turner,1990:214; Rowlands,1995:101-102). A key question in this regard is who controls the development project? The poor or weak will typically participate actively in a project in direct proportion to their ability to assume control of the project. According to Cobbett (1987:329), this usually occurs at the expense of the powerful.

The Marxist perspective on power raises yet wider issues. According to this perspective, political power cannot ultimately be separated from economic power. Thus, the empowerment of the relatively powerless has inherently limited possibilities under capitalism. Although the poor and the powerless may effectively participate in particular development projects and programmes, gains in these projects are all confined by the constraints of the wider requirements of profitability within the global market. Marxists have also been concerned with the power of ideas: in particular with the setting of ideological agendas and the concept of hegemony. Economic and political power is to be seen as both legitimate and effectively non-contestable within capitalist society. Understanding and challenging this hegemony, then, become central to the development of alternative struggles for economic, political and social transformation (Mayo & Craig,1995:6). As one neo-Marxist, Lacoste, indicates: destroying the power concentration of the indigenous élite is an important prerequisite for development. Development initiatives should not be the sole domain of the development élite. Ordinary people should have the opportunity of participating and of sharing in the material benefits.

There are many protestations against a predominantly negative interpretation of power. In line with Foucault and Galbraith, Giddens indicates that power relations can also be emancipatory besides exploitative and dominative. Giddens distinguishes between the 'liberating and productive' and the 'repressive and destructive' aspects of power (*cf.* Robinson,1996:13). True participatory development should strive to promote the liberating and productive aspects of power while trying to challenge the repressive and destructive aspects of power.

Many refer to the equalisation or decentralisation of decision-making power. This implies the sharing of power with the weaker, excluded and more marginal groups in society as one of the key premises of participatory development (*cf.* Kagonge & Imvbore,1994:9; Kok & Gelderblom,1994:58; Midgley *et al.*,1986; Morgan,1993; Stiefel & Wolfe,1994). True participation thus presupposes changes in relations of power and prioritisation of interests. Meaningful participation should therefore help to address powerlessness. Underprivileged people need to escape the overwhelming sense of entrapment and feelings of incapability to do something to improve their situation.

Many perspectives on participation and reasons for supporting community participation tend to fall into two different ideological camps: on the one hand, the left-radical camp suggesting that

real participation cannot be achieved without revolutionary socio-structural changes; and on the other, the technocratic camp suggesting that participation is nothing more than a component of the project design. Those on the left trust that community participation will lead to a transformation of society, while those on the right emphasise the utilitarian results and short-term benefits of participation (*cf.* Convers & Hawker, 1989; Gilbert & Ward, 1984). Along the same lines Swanepoel & De Beer (1997:128-130) argue that there are two ways of looking at participation: either a system-maintaining or a system-transforming process. The former is a weak interpretation of participation and the latter a strong definition of participation. When participation is not taking place as it ought to, where communities are co-opted to participate or at best mobilised to get involved, the weak interpretation of participation is applicable. For the strong interpretation of participation as empowerment, the question "who controls development" is of crucial importance. Those affected by development projects should not be passive recipients of development products but they ought to be the main role players and decision-makers.

In order to bridge the gap between these two camps it is necessary to recognise the social, political and organisational dimensions of participation, while also taking note of people's self-development as a practical expression of the creativist view of development. This view rejects the notion of macro-structural change as the sole prerequisite of people's self-development. If the creative potential of human beings is unleashed, it will inevitably challenge existing institutional arrangements, which will satisfy the 'left-radical camp' and contribute to innovative and people-friendly project designs for the enjoyment of the 'technocratic camp'. The underlying assumption in this regard is that the best promise for development, and particularly for participatory development, lies with the initiatives of ordinary people.

In a more positive and functional way, the most obvious use of participation as a political tool is to bring people together to lobby the state to provide services, or as Paulo Freire puts it, 'unity among the oppressed' is considered as a necessary prerequisite for liberation (McLaren, 1997:149). Governments and international agencies generally describe community participation less controversially as a method to accomplish physical tasks more cost-effectively and with a greater likelihood of sustainability (a weak interpretation of participation), while community-based organisations define participation more in terms of how it can empower a community and of how ordinary people can influence decisions affecting them (a strong interpretation of participation).

1.2.2 Participation as authentic and self-reliant action

Figure 3.2 is a summary of several inputs that distinguish between authentic participation, which involves all three criteria mentioned previously (design, decision-making and implementation), and pseudo-participation, which limits participation to the mere implementation or the ratification of decisions already taken by external bodies. There is an interesting debate with regard to the distinction between true or false participation. On the one hand, there are those who strongly advocate that outside development agencies and/or development professionals should not initiate participation processes at all, but should rather respond to needs identified by local communities and link into existing grass-root initiatives. This is based on the human-centred vision of development, viz. that fundamental human needs and their appropriate satisfiers can be articulated only from within a particular community. The role of government and development agencies then becomes a facilitating and enabling one, to be guided by the proposals put forward by

local-level communities (*cf.* Rowlands, 1995:105). On the other hand, there are those who indicate that pre-determined development initiatives and sources from outside the community could play an important role on unleashing community energies and talents, and are in many instances inevitable (*cf.* Fussell, 1996:46; Galjart, 1981:147).

There are multiple modes or intensity levels of participation as depicted in Figure 3.2. At one end, participation can be initiated, planned and controlled at the grassroots level without professional sponsorship (spontaneous participation); at the other, it is imposed from above, with the organisational components defined by professionals and external agencies such as state authorities (induced or compulsory participation). In the complete bottom-up and trickle-up mode, people have attained full participation in controlling activities of the official decision-making body by having majority representation. In this case the locus of power is jointly shared between the people and the planner-administrators, with the former in greater control. At the other end of the continuum local élite are appointed by outside authorities that have the locus of power. In this case, the role of community organisations is, essentially, to legitimise outside conceived programmes and assist in their implementation. This lead to little people's power in decision-making.

Although there are many possible kinds of participation, *who* participates and *how*, may be more crucial to project success than any definition or quantitative expression of participation. It is useful to distinguish five degrees or levels of community participation: imposition, consultation, information sharing, decision-making, implementation (*cf.* Figure 3.2) However, these levels or mutations of community participation may co-exist in the same project. (Some also refer to the intensity of community participation, thereby depicting the extent to which project participants actually practise community participation). According to Paul (1987:5) the nature of the project and the characteristics of the beneficiaries determine the extent to which community participation can actively be practised by beneficiaries.

In deciding which participation approach to follow, the following factors should be taken into consideration (*cf.* also Sowman & Gawith, 1994:564-565):

- the scale of the project
- the location of the project
- the number of people likely to be involved
- the resources available for community participation (time, funds, personnel)
- the level of training of personnel undertaking the participation programme
- the presence of community development workers in the community
- the level of education of the parties to be consulted
- the socio-economic status of communities likely to be involved
- the level of organisation within the community
- the representativeness of community leaders
- the role of NGOs and CBOs in the community
- the degree of homogeneity of the people involved
- the role of women in the community
- any history of previous conflict or lack of consultation

The community can see the processes of participation as operating on a continuum, ranging from no participation whatsoever, to full ownership. The levels of intensity depicted in Figure 3.2 below should not be seen as watertight compartments, but it may be possible (in a theoretical sense) to move in the course of a project from an initial phase which is at a level of consultation, to community ownership at the end of the project. Planning for participation should allow flexibility in order for this sort of progression to take place. The ideal intensity of community participation is for an end-beneficiary community to shift from an advisory role to a decision-making, and eventually to an ownership role. Being involved in the decision-making process gives the community members the feeling that they are taking part in the project, and as a result, their sense of ownership in that particular project grows. To some authors, this sense of ownership is even stronger when the activities are initiated by the community members themselves, while Salole (1991:8,14) and the Independent Development Trust (1993:5) stress that ownership of development projects is possible even if it is initiated outside the community: ownership is not determined by where the project originates.

A situation of shared ownership is also possible between the development agency and the community. In fact, Abbott (1995:164-166) indicates that ownership and thus ultimate control is not the final stage on the participation continuum. In authoritarian and closed contexts communities often confront and challenge the development agency or government, and empowerment struggles occur outside "the system". In contexts where governments create a more open environment, community control is negotiated and the form of control is more stable. As the decision-making process becomes more complex in terms of the nature of a project, communities do not have the sophisticated support systems necessary to manage complex projects. The result is increased consensus-seeking, and the building of partnerships between the community and other stakeholders. This situation of shared-development and partnership-building could be regarded as an even higher or more intense mode of participation than just unilateral ownership and control on the side of the community.

The characteristics of the decision-making environment will determine which level(s) of community participation is(are) the most suitable entry point at the initial stages of a project (*cf.* Abbott, 1995:164). However, to be faithful to the principles of authentic and spontaneous participation, the challenge to both community members and development professionals will always be to aspire to the highest level of community participation.

Does it really mean that people have participated if they have merely been informed about a development programme? What if they feel moral, peer, and other less benign pressure to donate labour (Salole, 1991:6)? With the imposition, information-sharing and consultative styles of community participation, the initiative still predominantly originates from above. This is why these levels of participation are labelled pseudo-participation. The people are predominantly told what to do and are not involved in decision-making as to how to set about it. It therefore still very much implies a "top-down" mode of thinking and operation.

Pseudo-participation		Authentic Participation		
Imposition	Consultation	Community control	Ownership	Community control
Co-option		Community control		
Anti-participation/Imposition	Consultation	Information sharing	Decision-making	Initiating/control
<p>Implementing pre-designed development projects without any interaction with the target community. Community is viewed as merely a recipient of material development products. An outside stakeholder usually externally drives the development project. Community members are called together and lectured, then they may be offered a resource in exchange for their labour. Often the community members are passive and unenthusiastic about the project. Community members are reluctant to attend meetings with the outside stakeholder who is frustrated by having to urge them to continue.</p>	<p>Project designers and managers share information with beneficiaries. Low intensity but can have positive impact. A two-way flow of information between the implementing agent and the community. Control of the project is firmly in the hands of the agency that looks for inputs from the community for information and advice, which may enhance project design.</p>	<p>The control of the project remains vested in the hands of the implementing agent. Community is consulted on key issues. Development agencies sometimes form advisory bodies with whom they interact on a regular basis.</p>	<p>Decisions are made exclusively by beneficiaries or jointly between the community and the implementing agent (Shared decision-making). Developers and end-beneficiaries have an equal voice in sharing policy and select the desired development strategy. Equal representation of laypersons and professionals on decision-making structures. Decisions are arrived at by consensus. Informal settlers may, for example, decide jointly with project staff on the design of their housing. This is a higher level of intensity. Control over of the project is shared and allows for more influence on projects by beneficiaries than under consultation or information sharing.</p>	<p>Beneficiaries exclusively make decisions. Beneficiaries take the initiative to act pro-actively and demonstrate the confidence to continue on their own. The community both initiates and assumes control for all or some phases of the project. Achieving this highest level of participation assumes that the community are in control of their development and take responsibility for the planning, implementation, management and maintenance of the project - with outside assistance where required. This level of participation shifts the bulk of decision-making responsibility to the community.</p>
Developer driven	Leadership driven	Community organisation driven	End-beneficiary driven	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Therapy • Manipulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • placation • consultation • informing 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community control • delegated power • partnership 	
Pseudo-Participation		Authentic Participation		
<p>Imposed from above with the organisational components defined by professionals and state authorities</p> <p>Induced/coerced/compulsory participation</p> <p>Non-autonomous participation</p> <p>Formal and top-down</p> <p>Restricted participation</p> <p>Sponsored or officially endorsed</p> <p>Task-centered participation</p>		<p>Initiated at grassroots level without professional assistance</p> <p>Spontaneous participation</p> <p>Autonomous participation</p> <p>Voluntary and bottom-up</p> <p>Wide or full participation</p> <p>Without external support</p> <p>Power-centered participation</p>		

(Designed by the author)

Figure 3.2 Authentic and pseudo-participation: a reflection on different modes and intensity levels of participation

Midgley *et al.* (1986:27) distinguishes between spontaneous, induced and coerced participation. While coerced participation is condemned outright, and induced participation regarded as second best, spontaneous participation comes close to an ideal mode of participation, as it reflects a voluntary and autonomous action from the people to organise and deal with their problems, unaided by government or other external agents (*cf.* Figure 3.2).³

For true community participation to take place there should be at least some degree of sharing of decisions. Any development agency intending to plan and implement a development initiative in a participatory manner needs to take cognisance of the underlying value assumptions and the practical consequences of authentic participation (*cf.* Figure 3.2). The process of participation takes place at two levels. The first is at the interface between the promoting agency and project group, where the promoter transfers tasks and responsibilities to the group (external participation). The second level is within the group, which delegates functions, tasks and responsibilities to different sub-committees (internal participation). In the beginning, external participation occurs mainly where important decisions are made between the promoting agency and the project group. As the process continues, the experience of participation leads to a growth in self-reliance of the group members enabling them to take initiatives and build up a "participatory consciousness" (Koesoebjono-Sarwono, 1993:40).

Authentic participation in development can be defined as designing development in such a way that intended beneficiaries are encouraged to "take matters into their own hands", to participate in their own development through mobilising their own resources, through defining their own needs, and through making their own decisions on how to meet them.

The public therefore have the right to decide what they want from a development venture - establish the objectives and policies, delegate to the professionals the responsibility for implementing these policies, and reserve for themselves the role of auditor, *i.e.* evaluate the results. As early as 1975, Fantini (1975:15) pleaded that there should be a quantum leap in changing developers' perceptions towards community participation in development projects. He indicated that the participation of ordinary people on the street was a right and not a privilege, and he entertained the idea that common people had the right to participate in ways that ensured the development venture was indeed serving the best interests of everyone in the community.⁴ Development planners therefore, had a moral obligation to "listen to the people". Fantini even suggested that the right to participate in development projects by beneficiary communities should be legally entrenched.

3 In Bangladesh there is the Rangpur self-reliance movement where the villagers of sixty villages took an oath to reject any form of grant or relief from outside; they mobilised themselves to launch collective economic and social programmes. This position is quite clear from the revealing words of these villagers in a conversation with a development worker: "We want persons like you to visit us, to give us your advice, your blessings, and the dust of your feet. But we do not want money from anybody" (Rahman, 1993:3). This happened during 1974 when these villages were the hardest hit by devastating floods and famine. A similar movement is the Bhoomi Sena movement in India with the philosophy "that no outsider will tell us what we should do" (Rahman, 1993:3,4). Collective self-reflection on the experience of their struggle and the root causes of their poverty are typical of these movements.

4 See also Akello (1994:16), Rodriguez (1988:70) and Sheng (1990:58), all of whom indicate that people have the right and duty to participate. Such involvement provides a basis for increasing self-confidence and self-realisation, which are sorely lacking among the poor and the under-privileged.

Typical authentic participation is thus where 'top-down blueprint approaches' are firmly eschewed in favour of dialogue, mutual consultation at all stages, self-reliance, collective action to solve group problems, democratic decision-making and local control over project activities.

1.2.3 Participation as a means and an end

There is a fundamental split between those who view participation as a means to an end and those who advocate it as an end in itself. Participation can function either as a goal or as a tool. As a goal (end) in itself, community participation appears to be necessary to stimulate individual and social well-being. As an end in itself, participation is part of the process of empowerment, which builds self-reliance, skills and the capacity of the community to act effectively (*cf.* Bhatnagar & Williams, 1992:iii; Dudley, 1993:7; Midgley *et al.*, 1986:15; Schumacher, 1973: 235-285).

As a tool for carrying out a task (means to an end), whether political or physical, community participation is not an end in itself; it is essentially a means for mobilising local resources to achieve development. Community participation may be advocated for pragmatic and utilitarian reasons, as it is a means towards producing better project results. Development initiatives tend to be more sustainable and yield higher returns when they involve those they are intended to help (*cf.* Bhatnagar & Williams, 1992; Nientied *et al.*, 1990:42; Stein, 1990:26). The ideal situation is where community participation as a means has the capacity to develop into participation as an end (Moser, 1989:84). Correspondingly, if participation is viewed only as a means, then it is usually included only in the later phases of implementation and maintenance. Participation as a means is seen as a way of using the economic and social resources of people to achieve pre-determined targets. This passive form of participation is limited to comments and advice, and does not lead to any direct control. If community participation is defined as an end, then community participation is at the outset a pre-condition in decision-making. Participation as an end is a process in which confidence and solidarity is built amongst the people because it is an active form of participation responding to both local needs and to changing local circumstances (Rogerson, 1992:118). In practice, good community participation achieves both: it empowers and builds community capacity (end in itself), but it also is a means of ensuring that the project runs efficiently and effectively (means to an end).⁵

1.2.4 Participation as involvement in different phases

Participation involves different phases. These phases can be more easily observed when the project or programme is initiated from outside. As explained in section 1.2.2 of this chapter, true community participation requires that community members should be involved in all the following phases of the development process (*cf.* Abeyrama & Saeed, 1984:22; Koesoebjono-Sarwono, 1993:40-41):

- Preparation - problems are identified, objectives formulated and plans made. The identification and prioritisation of needs also take place.
- Initiation - the phase in which a person or group proposes a project or programme.

5 Often the interest of an interest group in community participation will depend on the interest group's point of view and power to influence how and when the community participates in a project. For example, a funder may be more interested in encouraging community participation so that a project is cost effective, while a community group may be more interested in building up its own skills and capacities.

- Legitimation - the process to make proposed plans and proposals acceptable to the community.
- Action and execution - covers all the actions concerning the realisation or implementation of a project.
- Sharing - fair and just access to the project benefits.
- Autonomisation - in this phase the change agents are withdrawn, leaving the community to continue on its own. This phase proves whether the project or programme is sustainable.

The pre-investment phases (preparation, initiation, legitimation) of any development initiative are crucial to the success of the project. Community participation is often lacking during these initial planning and proposal phases of a project. Implementation should commence only when sufficient participatory consensus has been reached. The sooner the community become involved, the more intensive the participation will be.

1.3 Development

In recent years development has become one of the most topical issues in the South African context. Development issues are also receiving global attention from across the spectrum: political parties, the mass media, donor and aid organisations, government departments, the business sector, service organisations, non-governmental organisations and deprived communities.

In a study on participatory development it is important to reiterate the age-old question: What is development? Admittedly development means different things to different people and is highly normative.⁶ It is the intention of this study neither to deal with development theory in general nor to map out the different approaches. What is important is to understand that the way in which development is defined to a large extent determines the prioritisation of development needs, and therefore influences actual choices, approaches, strategies, programmes, and projects aimed at alleviating poverty and the problems of under-development.

Besides the first descriptions of development in terms of growth, technological advancement, progress and becoming modern, development is construed as 'a rapid improvement in people's standard of living'; 'a process of enlarging people's choices'; 'equalising people's opportunities'; 'enhancing participatory democracy processes'; and the 'ability of people of having a say in decisions that shape their lives'; of 'providing human beings with the opportunity to develop their full potential, achieve greater self-expression and self-realisation'; of 'enabling the poor to organise

6 According to Stone (1989:209), in his study of five villages in Nepal, there was a pronounced gap between how villagers and project staff perceived concepts like "development" and "community participation". It was specifically the villagers who defined development as coming from outside; for them it did not arise from resources and initiative mobilised within the community. These attitudes and expectations about "development" among the villagers were based on their experience with an earlier style of development. This particular study also asked villagers what they understood by the term "community participation" in development. To the villagers it meant mainly obeying a village council to contribute land, money, labour or some other resource to a specific development project. At one village, the council ordered the people to contribute labour for a road construction project, while at another village each household was ordered to make a financial contribution to the school. Similarly, Gaigher (1992:8) indicates that the reason for failure of many community development initiatives, particularly in Africa with socialist governments, is due to the fact that participation usually means forced labour on projects identified at top-level, without participation of villagers in the design, implementation and control of development programmes.

for themselves and work together'; an 'increase in the ability of the individual and the community to expand its control over factors which affect it' and of 'liberating people's creative energy'.

Even today development is often regarded as a technical engineering exercise, and little attention is paid to historical, cultural, social and political realities. More recent definitions of development mentioned above, which are couched in social rather than in techno-economic terms, provide the philosophical impetus for participatory development. Participatory development can neither be given, nor received; it should be generated from within. The assumptions of participatory development will form the philosophical framework of this study, and, as such, is part of the broader human development paradigm.

In analysing the historical shift in definitions of 'development' over the past four decades [from techno-economic progress (modernisation) to a concern for the alleviation of human suffering (human development)], it becomes evident that the normative dimensions of development theory, which have people and their human well-being as a main concern, have come to the fore.

The following is a summary of the generally acclaimed content of development as concept:

- Genuine development is much more than economics and economic growth. Development is not just about having more, but also about being more. The Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations Development Programme serves as an example that development is more than economics; development is about the quality of human life, as well as the quantity of economic growth.
- Development is a process of enlarging people's choices. The three essential choices are for people to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to those resources required for a decent standard of living.
- Development is a universal issue and not just an issue for the developing world. Rich and poor countries constitute a single world system, and the over-development of the first is closely linked with the underdevelopment and mal-development of the second.
- Development is about relationships. The struggle for equitable and just interaction between different interest groups is at the heart of the struggle for development. Participation is a critical aspect of equity. If development is really to belong to all people, they should share it.
- Development does not simply mean delivering products, but addressing the process through which they are delivered. It is now a well-known maxim that only people can achieve true development and that development cannot be done to people. Representation and involvement in decision-making, action, and outcomes are therefore regarded as essential. At the heart of the participatory development process is the creative capacity⁷ of human beings.
- Development is essentially about positive change or improvement - a change for the better and an improvement in human well-being. Development should therefore be appropriate - culturally, socially, economically, technologically and environmentally. The challenge is to resist the displacement of non-economic values by economic values to avoid the problems of social disintegration and ecological exploitation.
- The three principles of authentic development are: justice (assuring a decent human existence for all people), sustainability (earth's resources must be used in ways that assure the well-being of future generations) and inclusiveness (every person must have the opportunity to be a recognised and respected contributor to family, community and society).

7 Once a community realise the inherent potential within themselves, they can to a large extent prove their own living conditions through "Zilweleni", a Zulu expression that means, "fight for yourself."

2. An operational definition of community participation in development

Definitions are like markings in unknown waters. They need to be distinctive and unambiguous. From the analysis above, clearly, the meanings of community participation can and do change over time and also from one context to another. It is not a static concept but a dynamic phenomenon that can change according to place and due to socio-historical contexts. However, for purposes of this study the following, rather "narrow", operational definition of community participation in development will be used:

Community participation is a **collective process** that has its **focus** on the active **collaborative** involvement of key-stakeholders (*i.e.* community leaders, CBOs and end-beneficiaries) in **joint decision-making** that will influence the outcome of development decisions and actions impacting on the broader development **context** of an end-beneficiary community.

This definition identifies the following dimensions of community participation:

Community: As indicated earlier, community will be defined as (a) group(s) of people with shared interests and a shared sense of belonging who usually operate in the same physical environment.

Collective: The community as a collective of individuals remains the crucial qualifier of participation.

Process: Community participation is a process, and cannot be viewed as occurring at one single moment in time.

Context: For purposes of this study community participation can be distinguished from the broader idea of participation (popular participation) in that it occurs within the context of a development initiative (programme and project). The focus of community participation will therefore be more on local than regional or national issues.

Focus: The focus of community participation is directed towards people, and these people are primarily the intended beneficiaries of a development initiative.

Collaborative: Community participation is a collective effort, not an individual one. Therefore organisational relationships should be considered in the process of community participation. Development specialists and agencies should avoid making decisions unilaterally and imposing development agendas; they should rather act as catalysts. Development decisions are thus the outcomes of negotiated settlements.

Joint decision-making: Community participation requires that beneficiaries take part in and have control over decisions that affect their lives. Community participation is inherently power-related. If a community improves its ability to acquire knowledge, life choices are expanded and the potential for advances in the quality-of-life is enhanced.

This chapter has attempted to clarify the multiple conceptual meanings and uses of "community participation in development". It has also explored the myriad of contexts in which the terms "community"; "participation" and "development" are used so as to provide a better understanding and conceptual clarity of these concepts.

The next chapter (Chapter 4) will share the reasons why community participation is important in development, while focussing on the advantages, principles and stakeholders associated with community participation.

4

Community participation in development: importance, advantages, principles and stakeholders



This chapter shares the reasons why community participation is so important in the design and implementation of development-related initiatives. This is done by means of sharing some of the advantages and principles associated with community participation. The importance of different stakeholders in facilitating community participation is also discussed.

1. The importance and the advantages of community participation

Understanding, communication, participation - these basic words of human intercourse are vital to any successful development activity. All have been shown to be a function of the relationship between project professionals and the people or beneficiaries. However, this relationship is generally weak, largely due to the differences in perspective of these two groups. People and planners need to work closely as partners. Managers should learn to reach out more effectively into the communities where they want their projects to work. At the same time, they should help to re-build the community so that it can make itself heard more effectively.

Many development planners have discovered, sometimes at great social and financial costs, that community participation is the lifeblood of any development venture. In fact, some scholars even regard participation in decision-making processes as an important social indicator in defining and measuring quality of life. In the area of primary health care, community participation had been advocated even before the historic Alma Ata declaration of 1978 (Hardiman, 1986:45). Health planners and health workers dealing with health problems at grass-roots level in developing countries have been particularly vociferous on the benefits to be

gained from involving the community. Local participation also yields high economic and environmental returns in implementing programmes of afforestation,¹ soil management, park protection, urban delivery services (*i.e.* housing, water management, sanitation, drainage and flood control) (UNDP,1992:15). Bhatnagar (1992:3) has indicated that there is some quantitative empirical evidence of the link between participation and development effectiveness that exists in the agricultural and rural development, sanitation, irrigation and water sectors.

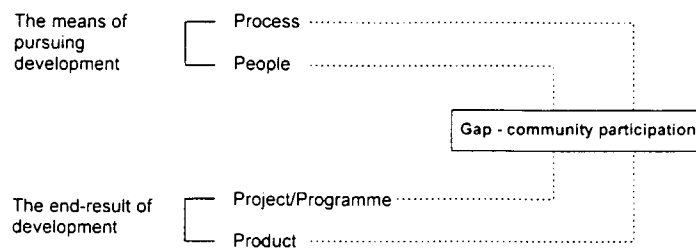
Community participation may therefore increase the access of disadvantaged communities to project benefits; enhance motivation of communities; increase ownership and community responsibility of projects; encourage self-reliance by transfer of skills; build local institutional capacities; ensure that greater proportions of project benefits flow directly to targeted, deserving beneficiaries; and enhance the sustainability of development interventions (Bamberger,1986:vii; Gopal & Marc,1994:1). Besides the above rationale for participation, Kok and Gelderblom (1994:61-62) also mention increased efficiency and effectiveness, increased community enthusiasm and understanding, the involvement of women, improved conditions for cost recovery and cost sharing, and increased community empowerment as potential benefits of participation.

In 1986 Bamberger (1986:viii) indicated that considerable experience had been gained in the rural development sector on the role of community participation, while less experience had been gained in other sectors such as urban development, health services and promotion of small-scale enterprises. If, however, one analyses the published literature and project reports of the past five years this is no longer the case. Although the rural development sector still receives plenty of attention, participatory issues in urban development and health matters are just as high on the agenda.²

The intention of a participatory development approach should be to bridge the gaps between product and process, and project and people, and should aim at achieving a high degree of fit between these different elements (*cf.* Figure 4.1). One of the ways in which these "four Ps" in participatory development (product, process, project/programme and people) could converge into a close-knit relationship is through mechanisms and attempts to foster community participation.

1 Haiti's top-down reforestation programme was unsuccessful until small farmers and community groups were allowed to choose the kinds of trees to be planted, and where. Then, instead of the target of 3 million trees on 6 000 family farms, 20 million trees were planted on 75 000 farms (UNDP,1992:15). However, disappointment has also been experienced with some United States Agency for International Aid (USAID) community woodlot projects, as reported in the USAID files on the projects.

2 This observation is supported by published articles or project reports of the USAID and the SOCIOFILE data bases.



(Designed by the author)

Figure 4.1 The Four Ps in participatory development

Well-known sociologist Robert Merton's classical definition of anomie as a state in which people are prevented from attaining socially desirable ends by socially acceptable means is also applicable to the development context. Often, because of a lack of involvement and participation, communities become the passive recipients or the mere targets of "development" and might experience development anomie. Max-Neef (1991) in his deliberations on human scale development also refers to the need for participation as one of the fundamental needs which, if not properly satisfied, leads to human poverty. Frequently community involvement initiatives are accompanied by assertions that the community's problems do not only entail a lack of material resources, but these extend to include alienation from the decision-making institutions affecting their lives. Development without participation easily leads to the alienation of communities. Based on this, maximum feasible participation of poor communities is promoted.

Community participation often fosters social integration within and between communities. In this regard Midgley *et al.* (1986:26) indicate that community participation strengthens interpersonal relationships, fosters self-confidence, improves material conditions and reduces feelings of powerlessness and alienation. Communities that participate in their own development also tend to take ownership of and responsibility for the maintenance of services that derive from the project (Kaya, 1989:50). Local involvement in development-related projects is crucial, because the local people are the population at the greatest immediate risk from development failures, and local participation ensures that the projects address people's needs and that successful projects become institutionalised.

Another important advantage of participatory development is that it facilitates the learning approach to community development. This approach entails that through every step people take to reach an objective, they learn to do the next step better and to improve on the next project. By gaining in ability to reach a certain objective, people also gain in self-sufficiency. Their reliance on external resources diminishes and they gain in human dignity. But community development can only be a learning process if people really participate, *i.e.* participate not just in a material way, but by thinking, seeking, discussing and making decisions about their needs and resources.

Although community participation in development is not a panacea, a cure for all community ills, or a short cut to utopia, there are numerous advantages in planning from below as against planning from above. The benefits of community participation in development projects could, and probably would, differ from one stakeholder to another. Community participation is therefore region- people- and project-specific. The advantages of community participation for a community-based organisation may not necessarily be experienced as advantageous by state

organisations. What a development professional regards as positive aspects of community involvement may be regarded by the community leaders as detrimental to the community they represent. Recognising that the quality and impact of community participation may be experienced in diverse ways, the following is a cautious attempt to highlight some advantages of community participation in general:

- True community participation counteracts different forms of paternalism and renders communities less dependent, more responsible and more self-reliant on their own knowledge to operationalise their own development future.
- People understand development plans and take ownership in development outcomes if they participate. Public trust and commitment are also promoted.
- Participatory development encourages self-actualisation, creativity and perseverance and strengthens the self-confidence of vulnerable groups.
- People who are involved in a project are more likely to support the project and derive benefit from it; a phenomenon also referred to by many as “commitment through involvement”.
- Participatory approaches to development provide a practical method for grass-roots planning, which ensures that programmes are in keeping with the values and norms of the indigenous society. The local inhabitants are the only people who can provide information regarding the community’s cultural codes.
- Projects with community input also give a better reflection of the interests and needs of that community, which in the end help to avoid costly errors because development plans are rendered more responsive to the interests and needs of the poor.
- Increased local participation reduces the overall cost of development projects in that it ensures that scarce resources are decentralised.
- Participation contributes to the development of organisation, planning and problem-solving skills (institutional capacity) of local communities.
- Community participation makes development more sustainable since it guarantees the future involvement of the people.

The preceding paragraphs have indicated that community participation in planning and implementation is becoming increasingly important: participation is an unavoidable consequence of democracy; is a way of increasing legitimation; is a means of de-monopolising power; and is a means of facilitating social integration. There are, however, also more skeptical views on the value and advantages of community participation which can briefly be summarised as follows: participation can use (waste) enormous amounts of time, increasingly delay and circularise decision-making and can have the disadvantage of constantly having to deal with a changing cadre of decision-makers. The difficulties and dilemmas associated with community participation in development will be extensively analysed in Chapter 6 of this study.

2. Principles and preconditions of community participation

To avoid or at least decrease the impediments on participatory development, it is important to identify major principles and preconditions of participation that can serve as a framework of what constitutes effective community participation, and of how to ensure that such participation can be integrated into the project development cycle. If one browses through the literature on community participation, there are a number of underlying principles and preconditions which need to be highlighted.

2.1 Self-reliance or self-sufficiency

One underlying principle of self-reliance is that even poor people have agency, that is, are knowledgeable about their situation, can think for themselves, and can influence their situation (Galjart, 1995:18). Self-reliance is defined as a state of mind that views the mental and material resources of the members of a community as the primary stock to draw on in the pursuit of their own objectives. Like trees, communities cannot be made to grow by being pulled upward from the outside; they must grow from within, from their own roots. This does not reject the use of external resources, but they are considered secondary. It does however, reject the use of external resources at the cost of a community's self-respect, a community's right to self-determination, or a community's autonomy of choice and action (Rahman, 1993:19-20,69). Self-reliance also enables a community to become more economically, socially, culturally and psychologically independent.

The principle of people's self-reliance is professed by most community development actions, but in reality there is room for much improvement in this regard³. Deprived communities should not wait for state action or other outside help. Through a process of self-development they should assume responsibility for their own development and confront and collectively analyse their problems and mobilise the internal resources and endogenous knowledge within their communities to achieve liberation from all forms of dependence. The essence of self-reliance is self-development by relying on local resources.

2.2 Listening to the people

Community participation has much to do with taking those who are intended in the development into account in the design of projects and programmes, and then relying on them in the implementation process. There is much to be said for the participation of development workers in the daily life of the community they intend to work with. The perspective of end-beneficiaries is a critical input for successful development planning. End-beneficiaries often have information about their social and economic environment, which if ignored by planners, may cause difficulties, serious drawbacks and/or failures in project implementation. Typically, a considerable amount of time is spent in talking or lecturing to beneficiaries about a project. Much less time is spent in listening to beneficiaries articulate their needs or in watching attentively (*cf.* Cernea, 1983:vii; Salole, 1991:8-9). As Salmen (1989:2-3) puts it in his very striking book "Listen to the people":

"How can persons of one world effectively plan and manage activities for people of the other without understanding them on their terms? Development projects would be more effective if they better incorporated the point of view of the people who are the intended beneficiaries. Can't professionals go to the people where they live and work and learn to perceive their needs and their own ideas about how they would improve their lives? Wouldn't development professionals themselves benefit from such listening? And might not this listening stance lead to more open, integrated societies where people and professionals are less remote from one another?"

3 There are some cases in history where self-reliance was pursued in a coercive manner. One of the best examples is *Ujaama-Socialism* in Tanzania during the 1960s and 1970s when millions of Tanzanians were forced by government to reside in agricultural villages in order to achieve self-reliance.

When project designers listen to the people, projects can be made to appeal to what people value, to reinforce people's own identity, and to enhance self-respect. When this happens, when the project touches the inner core of beneficiaries, it becomes a catalyst for self-improvement and the development it achieves becomes self-generating.

2.3 Equal roles, no dominance

According to Heunis and Van Rensburg (1995:4) equality of interest should prevail in all actions and structures aimed at facilitating community involvement. In other words, the power matrix in these actions and structures should be balanced. No interest group should dominate the process of deliberation between the development agency, as facilitator of community involvement, and the community. Development professionals, fieldworkers and researchers should also see themselves as enablers and facilitators to an indigenous process. In this regard Dudley (1993:14) indicates that the best an intervener can do is to assist and broaden the choice-process of the intended beneficiaries, while the proponents of 'consciousness raising' techniques as developed by Paulo Freire, argue that the intervener can do nothing more than help the beneficiaries to recognise the true nature of their circumstances.

2.4 Good communication

In many cases inadequate communication by the implementing unit of a development agency can lead to the misunderstanding and, ultimately, rejection of the project by the community. According to Salmen (1989:49) the potential for poor communication between project implementation personnel and community residents is great:

"One is middle class, the one is generally poor; one is professional, the other most often untrained beyond primary school; one is an outsider, the other lives in the area being affected by the project."

For good communication to take place, the community should be sufficiently organised and confident to speak for themselves. Mutual understanding between the community people and development workers is the basis for the kind of communication that fosters a successful project. In this respect it is imperative that one looks at the role of opinion-leaders in a community because effective communication is very difficult to deliver *en-masse*. You need spokes-persons and this aspect can on its own determine the success or failure of a project and will be elaborated in section 2.10.

There are some important questions regarding communication and information-sharing:

- Does the information reach the entire community in the correct form?
- Does the community understand the information?
- Can a community take a decision on the basis of this information?
- Does the decision reflect the opinion of at least the majority of the population?

2.5 Increasing legitimacy through inclusiveness

Community participation in development should always strive to increase the legitimacy of both the development process and its outcome. If processes initiated by developers cannot truly identify community priorities, local community structures and forums (consisting of various interest

groups and community structures) offer an opportunity to negotiate and agree on the options that are to be put to beneficiaries. Inclusiveness is about identifying and involving as many interest groups relevant to the intended development initiative as possible. Once options reach the end-beneficiaries, they will then enjoy greater legitimacy since they will clearly be seen to be the product of agreement by a range of groups; developers will then not be acting as sole designers of development and identifiers of priorities. The development of inclusive approaches specifically refers to special attempts to include the poor and the marginalised in conceptualising, planning, implementing and evaluating development efforts (Friedman, 1993:50-51; Lipton & Van der Gaag, 1993:36).

2.6 Commitment and patience

The establishment of community relations is a difficult, slow and gradual process. Development professionals should win the trust of the communities they serve, and identify and work closely with existing community-based structures to facilitate community participation. If necessary, they should also endeavour to establish new structures for facilitating community involvement, and maintain good communication links with and feedback to these structures. The attitudes of both policy makers and target groups are crucial to the success or failure of a participatory development strategy (Heunis & Van Rensburg, 1995:4-6; Keeton, 1987:149; Van Rensburg, 1997:35).

2.7 Empowerment and capacity-building

In his study of fifty World Bank projects, Paul (1987:v,13) criticised the World Bank for not focussing enough on empowerment and capacity building. Attempts to achieve community involvement should strive to empower the marginalised and the deprived by strengthening their leverage over implementing agencies, to bargain better, to know their rights and obligations, and to increase the control over the resources and decisions affecting their lives and their participation in the benefits produced by the society in which they live (Cernea, 1983:43; Kok & Gelderblom, 1994:58). Community empowerment strategies will pull community members together to face an environment that is unsympathetic to the poor. Empowerment is much more than merely transmitting information to participants; it is a process whereby people, organisations and communities gain mastery over their affairs and find their own solutions without being patronised. This should be done through ongoing training and capacity building in administrative, leadership and decision-making competencies. The well-known proverb once again appears to be useful in understanding empowerment: 'Give people fish and they eat today, teach them how to fish and they can eat every day'. However, Thomas, as quoted by Taylor (1994:119), makes the distinction that it is important to look at 'who owns the fish'. It is clear from the development literature that empowerment epitomises the interface between participation and power.

Capacity building generally means the strengthening or transfer of skills and knowledge rather than resources, which in the end will enable organisations to broaden both their organised support base and their ability to represent the concerns of their members. Capacity building refers *inter alia* to the development of competence, management skills, leadership, teamwork, decision-making, groupwork, bookkeeping skills, etc. When people's capacities to conceive development ideas, plan, implement and manage development actions have improved, then their capacity has been built.

2.8 Support systems and mechanisms

Because community involvement requires systems of support at the national, the provincial, the local and the community level, community participation initiatives without these support mechanisms are doomed. Factors of critical importance in the support of community involvement include commitment to community involvement; and a re-orientation of the bureaucracy in favour of both community involvement and the development of capacity for self-development (Heunis & Van Rensburg, 1995: 4-6).

2.9 Decentralised decision-making

Both Cobbett (1987:327,333) and Gaigher *et al.* (1995:230-231) emphasise that the central thrust of participatory development revolves around the decentralisation of power and the decision-making responsibilities to the target communities. In terms of this principle, ordinary people should have as much control as possible over the design, implementation and evaluation of development - but one should also guard against 'off-loading' of government responsibilities. Decentralisation does not always equal democratisation.

2.10 Inclusive problem-solving

Any claim that development is being negotiated with the community cannot be taken at face value. It could mean that it is being negotiated only with a section, or that it is being discussed with individuals or organisations that purport to speak for communities but in reality are mandated by a small minority within them. Two issues are therefore paramount: inclusiveness and representativeness. The first refers to the extent to which all interests are included, while the second refers to the extent to which beneficiaries of development are represented or merely spoken for (though not on behalf of) (Friedman, 1993:2).

Both the principles of inclusivity and representativeness relate to the issue of who is participating in negotiated development. This has important implications for the nature of development itself. It is reasonable to assume that the identity of the parties will exert an important influence on development policies and approaches, both generally and within specific projects. Development inevitably requires choices about whose needs are to enjoy priority; often, some interests can be entertained only at the expense of others.

According to Friedman (1993:2) it is trite to point out that those who participate in negotiation or decision-making are likely to want first place in the queue for the interests of those on whose behalf they speak. True participation cannot merely be equated to "leadership participation". Although some leaders and those claiming to represent the community inevitably have to participate, a big effort has to be made to ensure and secure that the principles and interests of ordinary beneficiaries guide or strongly influence the development outcome.

The existence of a community-based organisation does not guarantee that it represents the entire community. One must be careful in assuming that a single organisation or group of people can indeed represent the full spectrum of community concerns and interests (Sheng, 1990:61). To avoid the dangers of selective participation it is important to facilitate multi-faceted representativeness through as many relevant interest groups as possible, as well as representatives of the end-beneficiary community. Negotiated development should also be the

broader context for participation to take place. This assumes that development be negotiated with the "community" and with its "real/legitimate leaders", rather than with those leaders the members of the "establishment" have chosen. Mechanisms must also be put in place to ensure that the benefits of development are shared equally and as widely as possible.

2.11 Interactive decision-making

Although the ideal of authentic participation is probably not possible under the direction of the state or another formal development agency, there are nevertheless ways in which the degree of popular involvement during all the phases of project planning and implementation can be increased. One suggestion concerns the adoption of a 'process' approach to planning, in contrast to a 'blueprint/readymade' style which predominated until the late 1980s (*cf.* Bhatnagar, 1992:7 and Rahman, 1993:4). Korten (1991a:7) highlights the limitations of a blueprint approach to decision-making, stating that:

"In blueprint project designs the key decisions regarding services, facilities, inputs, schedules and outcomes were all centrally determined by planning experts. The planners lacked the inclination, time, and means to obtain meaningful inputs from unorganised, poorly educated and widely dispersed beneficiaries in the design of multi-million dollar projects. So they not only planned the project, they planned how the poor should participate in its implementation as well".

The process approach rejects the assumption that projects are simply vehicles for the application of preconceived plans by outsiders (*i.e.* the state or other development agencies). It demands a redefinition of the task, planner, bureaucrat and technician from that of making decisions for people, to assisting people in making better decisions for themselves (Korten, 1991a:13). Heald (1991:30) and Max-Neef *et al.* (1991) call this process approach 'interactive planning' where all the relevant stakeholders jointly define their development problems and seek solutions in an interactive way with a multi-directional flow of ideas and communication. This usually results in a broadening of vision through the interaction of creative processes. Creating spaces for development thinking and participation is one of the cornerstones of participatory development.

2.12 Networks, joint ventures and partnerships

An international trend towards collaboration in development has evolved. It is quite evident that community participation in development projects needs to be viewed as an integral part of a collaborative process comprising various actors and organisations (Taylor, 1994:196-197). Owing to the numerous possibilities for competition, duplications, tensions, and conflicts it is proposed that networking, joint ventures and partnerships be used as ways of solving these problems. Through networking between community-based initiatives and other stakeholders in development, so it is believed, many of the problems of unco-ordinated action will be prevented. The establishment of coalitions or partnerships among community-based organisations may also result in a pooling of fields of experience and an enhanced learning experience.

People will participate only when they see the benefits of doing so. According to Gilbert (1987:56) the failure of community participation programmes is related to people's distrust of the

organiser or development worker. Deprived communities are very sensitive to new people entering the community. It is vitally important to attempt development initiatives - as partners in a combined way - that can create trust between an end-beneficiary community and the personnel of a development agency or government department. A key issue remains how developers can form partnerships with community organisations without submerging these organisations' own identities. Dialogue needs to be at the heart of each development relationship to encourage exchange, agreement and partnership (Slim,1995:146). Genuine partnerships imply that community-based structures and professionals are accountable both to their donors and to the community at large.

3. Stakeholders in community participation: their roles and interests

In any study of community participation in development it is important to identify and understand clearly the roles of the different stakeholders. This is to ensure transparency and accountability to the community through jointly-developed, known, and respected mechanisms. The term "stakeholder" refers to any group, organisation or individual that may have an interest or claim in a development initiative. Stakeholders include members of the benefiting community, as well as

- the private commercial sector
- private donor and aid agencies
- government and/or local authorities
- NGOs and service organisations
- civic and resident organisations
- community-based organisations
- church groups
- labour organisations
- community groups
- women's groups
- neighbouring towns or communities
- individual households
- planners, professionals and consultants

Development projects usually require the involvement of a variety of stakeholders, because the involvement of different stakeholders remains one of the best ways of responding to the limitations of knowledge in decision-making.⁴ The roles of these stakeholders are usually closely interwoven. The stakeholders or partners that are vital to programme or project management are the community, the leadership and the funding agency. Each stakeholder has its own understanding of what community participation entails and has its own reason for being involved in the project.

4 Lund (1987) also raises critical questions regarding participation in the town-planning process. Among these are, who is likely to participate? How much participation is possible and desirable, according to whose definition of participation? Who becomes elected into decision-making processes, and who not? What weight should be given to the views of organised interest groups as opposed to the less articulate, unorganised majority? The Kasa mother-child health-nutrition project in Maharashtra, India, and the Serabu Hospital village health project, Sierra Leone, illustrate the importance of distinguishing between involving only the leaders and the participation of the wider community. Since these projects were built on a hierarchical structure, the approval and co-operation of the leaders were first sought and thereafter wider community participation was sought, involving community members from the design to the implementation of the project (Hardiman,1986:58-65).

Reasons for involvement could include: improving the quality of life in a community; promoting a particular political agenda; making requests for community agreement to the use of a particular technology; transferring skills to the community; earning money from a project and sharing project costs (Independent Development Trust, 1993:18-19). Stakeholder roles in an initiative could include the following: initiating an idea for the project; providing funding; providing technical assistance; providing physical labour; taking key policy decisions; designing action plans and time-frames; ensuring that the implementation occurs according to policy directives; mobilising and co-ordinating the community's commitment.

Individual role-players such as professionals, managers, development workers, etc., should possess the following characteristics or people-centred skills: cultural sensitivity, negotiating skills, vision, perseverance, conviction, and practical work experience in development (Bhatnagar, 1992:20). However, it is neither the skill nor knowledge, but the attitudes and commitments of people that are really important. Development workers should believe in participation, have faith in the capacity of people and believe in democratic methods.

In any development process, all stakeholders have their own interests and agendas. As far as possible, these agendas should be open. Successful development depends on the degree to which all of these agendas can be merged. Merging may be tough but is an essential requirement which creates its own problems and trade-offs. In cases where the agenda of only one party is met, the project is likely to fail. Some stakeholder agendas can either threaten or enhance community ownership of a project. It is important for community-based organisations to be aware of the different roles other parties can play so that these organisations can try to drive the projects themselves.

Ideally, community-based organisations should try to identify the desired relationship with each stakeholder and shape that relationship so that it will benefit the community. Where a number of stakeholders are involved in a project, time has to be allowed to create trust between the partners (Independent Development Trust, 1993:19-20). In many instances the state-community or development agency-community interaction should be seen as 'an instance of antagonistic co-operation' (Taylor, 1994:189). The need for collaborative development, therefore, remains very important and demands almost supernatural efforts of those who facilitate participation.

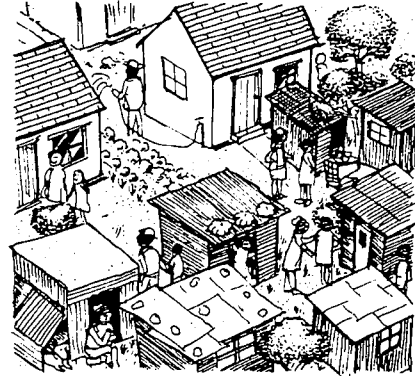
4. Conclusion

This overview of principles and preconditions of community participation presupposes that whoever is involved in development initiatives should have a vision for creating a better society through participatory development. Many of these principles derive from democratic principles and policies such as inclusiveness, representativeness, transparency and accountability. The underlying development ethic is one of co-operation rather than of prescription. This in turn implies that an appropriate process has to accompany every development product and attempt.

The next chapter (Chapter 5) will focus on the organisational and institutional dynamics of community participation. The participatory development roles of government, international and national development agencies, NGOs and CBOs will be analysed.

5

Community participation in development: organisational and institutional dynamics



This chapter is an attempt to give an overview of the organisational dynamics related to participatory development. It will become clearer as the chapter unfolds that the nature of community participation depends largely on the way in which development is institutionalised on the ground. The importance of appropriate organisational structures for community participation in projects needs to be stressed. As Carroll puts it:

“Joint or collaborative involvement is a hallmark of popular participation. Participation tends to be ineffective outside of an organisational context. Participation needs group structures” (Carroll, 1992:109).

A major element in most discussions on the promotion of community participation is the notion of institution-building, also referred to as the establishment of efficient social compacts, which can function as local level organisations of involvement or community-based decision-making bodies. Institution-building usually refers to the establishment of decision-making bodies that are fully representative, democratically elected, accountable and effective in their long-term functioning.

Effective community participation is impossible without a kind of organisation or social compact (steering committee, executive or board) empowered to take decisions on their own. Because one could regard organisations as sense-making contexts, it is generally accepted that the question of community participation in development is largely an organisational one. Some even refer to participation as being the most vital organisational problem of our time (Constantino-David, 1982:190; Taylor, 1994:149). Several authors (Cernea, 1988; Hulme & Turner, 1990:215) indicate the importance of organisations, particularly non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisa-

tions (CBOs) in facilitating community participation. Any overview of community participation should take cognisance of the organisational dynamics of such participation.

1. Community organisation(s) and community participation

Many thinkers such as Gandhi and Nyerere saw the creation of community organisations as ends in themselves, because the successful establishment of an organisation was seen as empowering those who had previously been unable to exert influence on society. The prospects of community participation are related directly to the presence of community-based organisations: The presence of organised groups makes it easier, at least in principle, to achieve people's participation. Some observers view community-based organisations¹ as instruments of participation or vehicles for involvement, while others claim that even an initially antagonistic leadership is a positive sign. In general, it is easier to begin working with existing community-based organisations than to organise the community from scratch (Yeh, 1987:16-17). Effective community-based organisations are a vital factor in contributing to participatory development and enhancing the problem-solving capacity and the design structures of decision-making. To effectuate their functioning, community-based organisations should look very stringently at their own mechanisms of participation, democratic decision-making, accountability, means of interacting with the poorest sections in the community, ways of acquiring financial resources, access to information, networking and linking up with wider social movements. Factors such as mobilisation, training, motivation, organisation and leadership are pivotal to enhancing these dimensions of participation. Effective planning cannot be done to or for an organisation: it should be done by it.

Properly functioning community structures also ensure responsiveness to local needs, give participants ownership of the project and serve as a vehicle for skills training. Community-based development organisations should process and evaluate citizens' opinions and ensure a full understanding of the issues - as well as choose appropriate techniques to facilitate participation (Pieterse & Simone, 1994:46). Esman & Uphoff (as cited in Hulme & Turner, 1990:195) studied the relationships among the performance of 150 rural community-based organisations and their environments and structures. Surprisingly, social heterogeneity and social stratification are found to correlate positively, and at a statistically significant level, with enhanced local organisational performance. This is an important finding as it challenges the commonly-held notion that such organisations operate best in socially homogeneous societies with limited differentiation. Less surprising is the conclusion that local organisations produce better results in communities that already have relatively participatory norms for decision-making. The study also found that the degree of participatory orientation (*i.e.* the extent to which organisations actively promote membership involvement and equity) correlates with good performance and in particular, correlates significantly with an increased ability to raise the incomes of poorer members and to increase the access of the poor to services (Hulme & Turner, 1990:195).

However, community-based structures can also create a few problems: organisations can become self-serving to members, rather than community-orientated and can even cause community divisions. Therefore, community-based organisations should be as representative as possible. Representation can be structurally implemented in different ways. It can, for instance,

1 The Development Resource Centre estimate that South Africa has some 54 000 NGOs. Of these a total of 20 000 are developmental in nature, and approximately 12 000 to 15 000 are community-based organisations (Bernstein, 1993:58).

range from individual-personal membership to institutional membership. Both have advantages and disadvantages that will not be elaborated upon here. Rahman (1993:41) cautions us not to create community-based organisations mechanically before there has been a process through which pre-organisational or informal people's institutions may develop which, in turn, may later crystallise into more formal organisational structures.

Regarding community participation, community groups and organisations operate on a continuum. The first is one of harmonious co-operation, following traditional community development lines, with an emphasis on request to authorities for provision of services. The other is one of conflict-confrontation-negotiation where issues are raised more in terms of demands than as requests. In the confrontational approach, the result does not always lead to peaceful solutions and violence does sometimes result. In both styles the principle of self-help is involved, but there is a different degree of self-help. The harmonious co-operation style can be found in both top-down and bottom-up modes, but the confrontational is more characteristic of the bottom-up approach (Yeh,1987:16).

According to Uphoff (1993:608), grass-root organisations or local organisations mainly operate at the local level of decision-making. Ten such levels of decision-making were identified ranging from international to the individual level. These are shown in Figure 5.1, with the three commonly regarded as "local" grouped together in a box. The basic characteristic of what is "local" or "community-based" from a socio-economic perspective is that most people in a locality, community or group have regular face-to-face relationships and are likely to have multi-stranded relationships - as members of a residents organisation, members of a church, buyers at the same shops, etc. While households and individuals are found at local levels, they do not present the same problematic issues of "collective" action found in groups, communities and localities. However, some scholars also view households and individuals as the smallest units of development and participation, because the community, as the fundamental unit for development, is made up of households comprised of individuals with an array of roles and responsibilities, which have evolved in a way that allows the community to function (Fussell,1996:47; Hart,1993:3). It goes without saying that those development initiatives that do not have as premise the community as a collective entity, are doomed to failure. Community development efforts will thus not only have to include the broader community as represented by its leaders and structures, but will also have to ensure that the household and individual end-beneficiaries, as the smallest units of the end-beneficiary community, are included (*cf.* Figure 5.1)

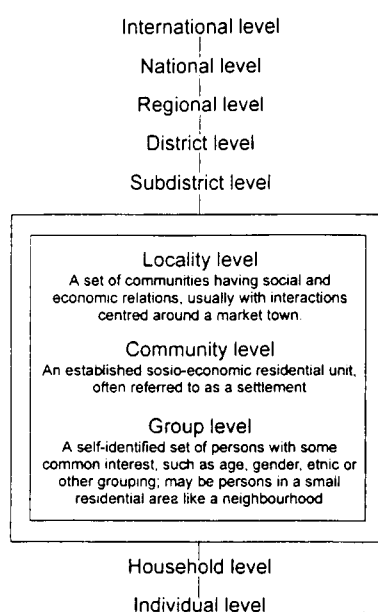


Figure 5.1 Levels of decision-making and activity for development (Uphoff, 1988:11)

In analysing the concept of community participation it is important to consider global relations, the role of international development agencies, the role of the state and also local community dynamics. Researchers have too often neglected the dynamic interplay among these different levels of community participation. International development literature² contains numerous evaluations of community participation programmes, many of which centre on the administrative or cultural impediments to effective participation. Many researchers have assumed that the main hurdles to participation can be found at the community level, e.g. example in the psychological characteristics or charismatic appeals of individuals, the organisational leadership structures, and styles of specific communities, etc. (Marsden & Moser, 1990:7; Morgan, 1993; Pan American Health Organisation, 1984). In this study some case studies will be used, well knowing that such "micro" community-focussed examples can easily miss the larger context of what guides development policy decisions. However, community participation will be analysed by taking into account the relations among international, domestic and local groups.

2. Community participation and development aid

A major problem facing the nature of community participation is finance. When governments or donor agencies work with local organisations, their manner of giving or withholding funds is likely to create a psychology of dependency, which is the antithesis of development and a barrier to participatory development. True decentralisation of decision-making and participation occurs only when local community-based structures have control over financial resources. Since they are usually unable to raise sufficient revenues to meet their own needs, they are dependent on external funds from the government or donor agencies and thus subject to external control. Morgan (1993:160) notes:

² USAID database.

"The strings attached to aid moneys limit the ability of recipients to devise their own development agendas and priorities, or to build local capacity for identifying and solving local problems. Ultimately, foreign moneys often finance "technical" (rather than socio-political) solutions to development problems, thereby avoiding (and even obfuscating) the underlying structural causes of poverty and social inequality."

Often donors are not prepared to grant funds for unquantifiable social objectives such as community participation in development. Another complaint sometimes heard from them is that "participation does not move money" therefore the reluctance to invest resources in the complex of participation activities at the design and implementation phases of projects (Swanepoel & De Beer, 1983:103; Uphoff, 1985:380). Most development agencies tend to limit the participation of the members of the target groups they are supposed to sponsor. They are reluctant to design and implement a development initiative in a truly community-driven way unless they are compelled by external and internal pressures to do so. This is based on the assumption that they know the needs and problems of the people better than the people themselves. Participation frequently becomes contingent on the availability of external resources and hence dependent on such deliveries from outside. Due to this situation of dependency, communities are also deprived of the prerogative to define what constitutes participation. A very important aspect in terms of financing (*i.e.* donor) is that it to a large extent inhibits rather than encourage marketing or entrepreneurial skills of local communities - something that is imperative for a step-by-step improving of skills. The provision of development aid is often a means by which the donors extend their ideological power base at the expense of the beneficiaries, concealing their real motives by claiming to be the only bearers of liberation, salvation and relief. In such cases donor aid is nothing more than a form of power over communities, which strongly influences the nature and direction of development initiatives. This may easily lead to the loss of control by local communities - especially loss of control over certain aspects of their livelihoods. These are some of the reasons why some view donor funding, grants and relief money as the main threats to participatory development. To many international donor and development institutions, local participation is fine as long as it comes up with agendas and programmes that work according to Western standards of efficacy² (Pieterse & Simone, 1994:43).

2.1 Community participation and the state

According to Midgley et al. (1986:145-146), few systematic attempts have been made during the last twenty years to examine the relationship between state and community initiatives in social development. This is partly because many community participation theorists have rejected state involvement out of hand and refused to consider the issues. In their opinion state involvement will simply perpetuate the old 'top-down' approach to social development, which imposes programmes and services on a passive population, stifles community participation initiatives, weakens local self-reliance, leads to a decrease in local ability to perform locally determined projects and undermines community solidarity. People's self-mobilisation for participatory development does not take place if the state assumes the primary responsibility for initiating and implementing development, for then two negative things happen. Firstly, the people wait for state agencies

3 In this regard Boomi Sena, a community-based movement in India, is highly selective and only accepts unconditional contributions from external sources of funding.

to deliver development, they waste resources, time and energy in lobbying and waiting for such deliveries instead of mobilising their own resources and taking initiatives of their own. Secondly, the state usually fails to deliver, because the state neither has sufficient resources to deliver on a national scale, nor the capacity to manage the increasing number of development projects and programmes effectively (Asthana, 1994:59-60, Gopal & Marc, 1994:20; Rahman, 1993:118-119)

While these views are popular, they ignore the fact that the role of the state in modern society has expanded enormously during the past century. Today, the state is a major provider of social development services and, as a prime policy-maker, it largely determines how social development programmes will evolve. The state also has the power to shape and determine the nature of community participation activities in many Third World countries. To ignore the role of the state in any discussion on community participation would, therefore, be a serious omission. Whatever the disappointments with the role of the state in the past, there are many arguments for the importance of greater dialogue between the public and voluntary/NGO sectors, between state and civil society, and for the identification of linkages between local organisations and government agencies.

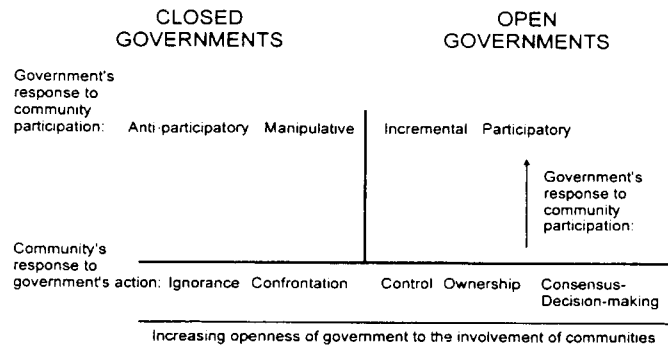
There is a delicate relationship between state and community organisations. On the one hand, the state is anxious to reduce its costs by promoting participatory development and self-help schemes, which often results in increased advocacy by community groups. On the other hand, government structures are generally unwilling to allow this advocacy to reach a point where it challenges their decision-making power. Thus, participation is often defined in government terms rather than community terms. (This issue will be explained in greater detail in Chapter 6.)

The view that government support for community participation in development results not in an increase, but in a diminution of community involvement, is a paradox that is not often recognised. In this regard Morgan (1993:6) indicates that state-sponsored community participation is an oxymoron, because state sponsorship implies an inevitable degree of control and manipulation, and Korten (1991a:8) notes that participation and bureaucracy are fundamentally opposing forces; seeking participation through bureaucratic⁴ structures is a contradiction. On the other hand, some proponents of community participation argue that state involvement is not only necessary, but also desirable and that community development programmes are often ineffective without government support. Governmental organisations are much larger than NGOs and have access to a wide range of technical, managerial and planning skills and to funding. They are good at large-scale infrastructural projects like roads, electricity networks, school-building and water reticulation, which require less sensitive people-management (Graaff & Louw, 1992: 13).⁵ A compromise position is that state support is helpful, but that local people should be assisted and taught how to resist the efforts of bureaucrats and politicians to subvert their authority.

4 Max Weber is widely recognised as the father of the modern idea of bureaucracy for his role in defining bureaucracy as an ideal organisational type and in articulating a theory of bureaucratic organisation. To Weber the most perfectly developed bureaucracy would eliminate all personal, irrational and emotional elements. He explicitly rejects any form of fellowship and people's participation in decision-making. The critical point here is that the suppression of participation within a bureaucratic organisation is not a malfunction. It is rather the organisational designer's intention (Korten, 1991b:8-9).

5 However, if one reads reports of large scale community-intensive infrastructural projects like the Orangi Pilot Project in Karachi, Pakistan, even large-scale infrastructural projects require many people-sensitive skills.

According to Gaigher (1992:49), the problem is that governments are, more often than not, only interested in concrete objectives, which fit in with their national planning and have very little concern for abstract human needs like organisational development, institutional capacity-building, i.e. the improvement of leadership and decision-making skills.



(Designed by author)

Figure 5.2 Community participation and the role of the state

The state can react on community involvement in social development projects in a variety of ways (*cf.* Figure 5.2). States can support, manipulate, reject or neglect the demands of the poor. Therefore, the attitude of the state is essential in determining the potential results of community participation. The following four ideal-typical modes serve as an example of state responses to community participation:

(1) The anti-participatory mode

The first mode is congruent with Marxist and élite theories, which hold that the state is not interested in the poor and that it supports neither community participation nor social development. Instead, the state acts on behalf of the ruling class. Efforts to mobilise the masses for participation will be viewed as a threat and will be suppressed. The state will oppose *de facto* any form of popular participation in its attempt to monopolise all forms of collective action. This leaves little space for autonomous, creative and participatory expression of popular aspirations. This mode can occur in any non-free or authoritarian society, both capitalist and socialist (Midgley *et al.*, 1986:39).

(2) The manipulative mode

The state supports community participation, but does so for ulterior motives. Among these are a desire to use community participation for purposes of political and social control, the recognition that community participation can reduce the costs of social development programmes and also to facilitate implementation. Selective participation will also take place where the state chooses to support only those participatory ventures which it regards as legitimate, satisfactory and of advantageous to the ruling party. If one analyses the Ethiopian peasant association movement, the Chinese rural communes, participation in the Primary Health Care drive in Costa Rica and the Tanzanian Ujamaa village policy, they are all examples of the manipulative participatory mode where participation is not valued as an end in itself. Participation is only useful as

long as it serves to help achieve national economic and political objectives. In other words, participation seems to mean getting people to do what outsiders think is good for them (Hall, 1986:99; Wanyande, 1987:95).

Another form of manipulative participation occurs when the state sponsors community participation for instrumental reasons. Many governments employ the rhetoric of participation to recruit labour for development projects, without involving the people in decision-making. In this mode of participation, development is still overwhelmingly characterised by a 'blue-print approach', which does not allow for effective popular participation. The responsibility for taking the initiative in determining what form of development should take rests firmly in the hands of central planners. Local people are consulted only in so far as such contacts allow the preconceived strategy to be finely tuned and made more efficient on the ground, along the instrumentalist and utilitarian lines already discussed. The local community is the subordinate partner in this regard, is occasionally allowed to voice an opinion, but should not protest too vehemently (Hall, 1986:99-100). Participation here is to be defined, labelled and managed by the state - sometimes according to guidelines set by international agencies. This circumscribed vision of participation rules out a range of autonomous or informal community actions not condoned by government, including everything from indigenous development to confrontations and protests against state policies (Morgan, 1993:13). In this regard Stiefel & Wolfe (1994) note that governments often refrain from considering participation in terms of class and power. The proponents of community participation condemn the practice of "manipulation" not only because it is undemocratic and suppresses local initiative, but also because it often leads to abuse.

(3) The incremental mode

The incremental mode of participation is characterised by official support for community participation ideas, but also by an ambivalent approach to implementation that fails to support local activities properly or to ensure that participatory institutions function effectively. While these governments do not oppose community participation, they fail to provide the necessary backing to ensure the implementation of community participation. A far more common cause of incremental community participation is policy and administrative ineffectiveness and bureaucratic inefficiency, inflexibility and remoteness (Midgley *et al.*, 1986:42-43).

(4) The participatory mode

In the participatory mode the state fully approves of community participation and responds by creating mechanisms for the effective involvement of local communities in all aspects of development. Inspired by various social and political theories including (but not exclusively) populism, anarchism and pluralism, the participatory mode involves a real devolution and decentralisation of power. Besides creating genuine community-level development and political institutions, the state sponsors participatory activities through training and deployment of community workers. An effort is made to enfranchise the poorest sections of the community and recognition and support are provided for all kinds of voluntary organisations. Local decision-making bodies are given specific rights and functions, and real control over budgets. Steps are taken to ensure that civil servants are sensitised to the needs of ordinary people and that participation becomes institutionalised in the administrative procedures of the government (Midgley *et al.*, 1986:43-44).

It should be borne in mind that even if these four ideal-typical modes of participation may not fit the situation in all countries, combinations or variations of these responses may occur. Hulme & Turner (1990) criticises Midgley's typology adding that it is:

"[O]f limited utility when applied to empirical materials. Only a small number of instances of the anti-participatory mode can be identified. The participatory mode is found to be a pure ideal with no evidence that it reflects a real-world experience. In consequence, almost all cases fall into the second and third categories, but, as it is virtually impossible to define a boundary between the manipulative and incremental modes, and as the information on which to allocate specific country experiences is often largely subjective, the typology is of little use for analysing empirical evidence. As an analytical framework Midgley's approach can also be criticised for treating the state as a monolithic entity rather than an arena for continuous conflict in which different major actors and agencies may be operating in different modes at any specific time."

Groenewald (1989:256-271) is a little more optimistic about the utility value of Midgley's classification when it is used with the criteria for true community participation and the willingness to devolve power.

It is, of course, the hope of proponents of community participation that their efforts will result in Third World governments adopting the participatory stance. From the above-mentioned it is evident how the state and the government of the day play a pivotal role in enabling a conducive environment for true community participation to emerge or to be maintained. Governments who promote participation, assume the obligation to listen and respond to the citizenry, to accept criticism, to communicate and negotiate, to share decision-making power with ordinary people, and to work toward substantive socio-political change (Morgan, 1993:159). Put differently: governments who promote community participation should be responsive to the needs and wishes of the people. The transition from bureaucracy to participation implies a genuine cultural revolution in development thinking and doing, something which necessitates a re-orientation and re-training of community leaders and bureaucrats towards joint or participatory planning and action.

2.2 Community participation and alternatives to state support

If one examines the literature, there is little evidence to demonstrate that state support and community initiatives have been effectively combined to promote genuine participation. Protagonists of the participatory paradigm point out that state sponsorship of community participation has been largely of the incremental and manipulative variety which exploits particular programmes for ulterior ends, stifles authentic community responses, defeats the ideals of genuine people's participation in social development, and fosters paternalism whereby complacent citizens rely on the state, instead of on their own initiative, to acquire goods and services. With few exceptions, there is general acceptance that African governments, for instance, have been unable to meet their development goals (Midgley et al., 1986:150-151).

If state sponsorship of community participation in social development neutralises authentic participation, what then are the alternatives? One option is to abandon the concept of authentic participation and to accept a more limited definition, which recognises the realities of statism in modern society and also the difficulties involved in achieving both absolute popular control and the total involvement of all members of the community.

A second option is to do away with state involvement entirely, instead of sacrificing the ideals of community participation. However, given the current role of the state, this is totally unrealistic.

A third option is to support spontaneous 'bottom-up' participation, where local people organise themselves for social development. There are, however, also several conceptual and practical difficulties with the notion of spontaneous participation. On the conceptual side, if spontaneous participation is so highly prized, why do proponents of community participation continue to advocate its promotion by interventionist strategies? Another problem with the notion of spontaneous participation is the way certain forms of community organisation are classified as authentic, while others are not (Midgley *et al.*, 1986:151-152). On the practical side there are a number of problems with the notion of spontaneous development (*cf.* also Chapter 6). It ignores the need for external resources, and it is doubtful whether spontaneous forms of community participation are as independent of external aid as is often pretended. The Boomi Sena movement in India (which is often cited as an ideal example of spontaneous participation) and community development projects in Sierra Leone made as much use as possible of external resources, such as public and NGO forms of assistance, as long as they did not enforce conditions on the receiving communities (Midgley *et al.*, 1986:153).

A last option is to place faith in the role of NGOs in promoting participatory activities. The assumption is made that these organisations are more likely to promote authentic forms of participation (*cf.* Mayo & Craig, 1995:2). Traditionally, NGOs are less bound by "red-tape" and bureaucratic procedure. Unlike the state, these organisations are claimed to be dynamic, flexible, socially concerned, innovative, adaptable, politically progressive, and these organisations are more likely to identify with the oppressed, they enjoy a greater deal of community support, and they readily test new ideas and reformulate existing approaches. NGOs are also able to mobilise resources for social development projects, and more financial aid than is often appreciated has been channelled through non-governmental channels. Although NGOs cannot fill all the 'development space' that is left by the state, they can often supply development support in a much more promising way than the state. However, NGOs as engines for participatory development are not without problems, something which will be discussed in section 2.2.2 of this chapter.

2.2.1 Community participation and international development agencies

There exists quite a range of opinions within the international development establishment concerning the meaning and function of community participation in development. According to Morgan (1993:71), one common feature characterises these diverse definitions: in the process of hammering out what constitutes community participation, the international establishment has left little room for active citizen involvement. The agencies redefine participation as a specific, bounded feature of state-citizen interaction, rather than as the continuation of an indefinite process which has always been practised by self-reliant communities and community-based organisations. This has set the scene for international agencies, governments and foreign advisers to decide what does constitute community participation and what does not. Citizens are to participate only by obeying the directives prescribed by authorities and by participating in initiatives initiated by officials. Too much dependence on outside donors, orientates the accountability of community leaders towards the donors, rather than towards the people. There are also many examples of development agencies which are very bureaucratic and inflexible in their procedures and thus unresponsive to community requirements. This creates weak leadership and

eventually contributes to denying deprived communities the right and privilege of self-determination (Rahman,1993:129,130,159). On the other hand, various international agencies (*i.e.* WHO,UNICEF) do play a role in promoting community participation in a way which transcends narrow national concerns and which appeals internationally.

Commissioned studies by some international development agencies during the 1980s on the correlation between project success, sustainability, local institution-building and beneficiary participation, delivered increasing empirical evidence that past failures of development projects were linked to the absence of participation (Stiefel & Wolfe,1994:221).

What follows next is an attempt to systematise the role of some specific international development agencies and their views on the suitability/unsuitability of state-driven participatory development.

Community participation according to the Alma Ata Declaration

At the now well-known Alma Ata conference participation was viewed as part of the primary health care drive. Morgan (1993:68) shares the essence of the Alma Ata declaration in respect of participation:

“The community must first be involved in the assessment of the situation, the definition of problems and the setting of priorities. Then it helps to plan primary health care activities and subsequently it co-operates fully when these activities are carried out.”

This emphasis on community participation shifts the focus away from existing methods of health care delivery in which medical professionals defined and dominated the health care system. Primary health care means that ordinary community people will become involved in both decisions about health and health services, and in health service delivery. This shift places greater responsibility on individuals and communities to cater for their own health - also referred to as self-care. The utilitarian aspects of participation in this declaration are inescapable which imply that community participation is thus defined as a tool of government: communities are to cooperate with government initiatives, and will be urged to practise health, thereby minimising the need for governmental health interventions (Morgan 1993:68 - 69). (*Cf.* Chapter 2, section 3, on the role of the WHO in the emergence of the participatory development paradigm).

Community participation according to the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO)

PAHO defined genuine participation as much more than a contribution of labour and material resources:

“Participation is perfected as it is practised. In the course of its development, participation becomes active, when the people take part in the various stages; conscious, when they fully understand the problems, translate them into felt needs, and work to solve them; responsible when they commit themselves and decide to move ahead in full awareness of the consequences and their obligations; deliberate, when they express their voluntary resolution; organised, when they perceive the need to pool their efforts to attain the common objective; and sustained, when they band together permanently to solve the various problems of the community” (Morgan,1993:68) (emphasis added).

This definition relegates government to a subsidiary role, allowing greater autonomy and self-determination to the Latin American communities themselves. According to Morgan (1993:68) it is a much more empowering, progressive definition than that which emerges in the Alma Ata declaration, where government is given a pivotal role in channelling community participation in health.

Community participation according to the World Bank

In the World Bank's documentation during the 1970s and the early 1980s the definition of community participation is notable for its utilitarian, unidirectional bias: communities are subordinate to governments and should cooperate by relieving governments of financial burdens. There is no mention of community involvement in planning or decision-making (Morgan, 1993:69-71).

One of the World Bank's later dissertations on community participation continues to view community participation as a means for ensuring that Third World development projects reach the poorest in the most efficient and cost-effective way, sharing costs as well as benefits, through the promotion of self-help (this is sometimes referred to as the utilitarian view of community participation).

Paul, in a discussion paper on the role of community participation in World Bank projects in the 1970s and 1980s, basis his evaluation on 50 projects in the fields of urban housing, health and irrigation (cf. Paul 1987). Paul details five potential objectives of participatory initiatives: empowerment, building beneficiary capacity, increasing project effectiveness, improving project efficiency and project cost sharing. The main findings Paul's study criticise the World Bank for not focussing enough on empowerment and capacity building; participation has been seen merely as a means of increasing project efficiency, effectiveness and sharing costs, rather than as a means of building beneficiary capacity or empowerment; the degree of participation has been relatively low, often confined to information sharing or consultation (Paul, 1987:v,13). The question posed in Isham et al., (1995) is whether participation does improve performance. After an analysis of 121 diverse rural water projects, the statistical findings suggest that increasing beneficiary participation directly fosters better project outcomes.

Morgan (1993:70) criticises the dissertation of Paul and the World Bank stating that it is full of development jargon, complete with a "nearly useless chart detailing the 'mix of instruments' and 'mix of intensity' that might, theoretically, characterise different types of community participation". The major failing in Paul's arguments "is his Bank-centredness, as though the decisions over whether, when, and how to promote participation can, should and will be made unilaterally by Bank employees rather than by beneficiaries."

Convers & Hawker (1989:468-469) also elaborate on the main weaknesses in Paul's study stating that

"[i]t does not confront the issues underlying the relatively low level of importance attached to community participation by the Bank. It fails to recognise that ... Bank projects ... require[s] a totally different approach to participation. It requires a 'bottom-up' approach in which participation is seen from the beneficiaries point of view and the beneficiaries play the lead role in the initiation and design of a project, rather than a 'top down' approach demonstrated in the paper [of Paul] ... it requires an approach which sees participation as part of a process of social, political and organisational change and recognises the com-

plexities and constraints which this entails, rather than a technocratic approach, in which participation is something that can be 'bolted on' to a project irrespective of the social, political and organisational context."

In yet other documents of the World Bank, participation has clearly become big business for lining the consultants' pockets. Rahman (1995:32) also criticises the Bank's Structural Adjustment Programmes, indicating that they are non-participatory and non-poverty-augmenting in character.

One of the latest publications (1992) of the World Bank calls "Participatory Development and the World Bank: Potential Directions for Change" reflects the outcome of an international workshop in February 1992 (cf. Bhatnagar & Williams, 1992). This publication is a great improvement on the earlier ones elaborating, as it does, on the dynamics and difficulty of promoting participation.

From the above it is clear that there is a long tradition of community participation within the World Bank, and that participation itself was a learning process within the Bank. Yet, many still believe that the lessons are not taken seriously enough. Community participation remains an optional extra.

Community participation according to the regional development banks

Some of the regional development banks, such as the Inter-American Development Bank, stress that an investment in participatory development practices is an investment in "human capital formation". Human capital formation is a phrase used by economists who propose that investment in people's health, nutritional status, educational status, living conditions, etc. can be justified by an expected increase in their participation and productivity. This sounds like blunt materialism where human beings are regarded as commodities, valued mainly for their contribution (Morgan, 1993:46-51; Paul, 1987:v,13).

Community participation according to agencies of the United Nations

In the 1980s United Nations agencies advocated participation in development projects for three reasons (Rogerson, 1992:117-118):

- Participation is an end in itself as people have a right to participate in the planning, implementation and management of projects which profoundly affect their lives.
- Participation is a means of improving efficiency and of enhancing the results of development work.
- Participation is a means towards 'capacity building' in the sense that it is a learning process in building-up a self-reliant and co-operative spirit in communities.

The Popular Participation Programme of The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) is regarded as a success story for participation. It did not only initiate a creative discourse among hundreds of development thinkers and activists through its newsletter, *Dialogue about Participation*, but also in the 1990s sponsored dozens of studies to relate the theory and practice of participation to global and national contexts. However, these studies focussed on popular participation rather than on project-related or end-beneficiary participation.

Among regional forums of the United Nations, the 1990 Arusha Conference on popular participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Africa issued the African Charter on Popular Participation, a strong call for participatory development.

The Human Development Report of the United Nations (1993) has people's participation as its special focus. The Human Development Report defines participation in terms of people having constant "access to decision-making and power" (UNDP,1993:21). According to the report (UNDP,1993:1,99), people's participation is no longer a vague ideology based on the wishful thinking of a few idealists, but it has become a development paradigm in its own right. This report goes on to state that the challenge for any development venture is to be more people-friendly. People-friendly programmes or projects allow people to participate fully in their operation and share equitably in their benefits.

2.2.2 Community participation and non-governmental organisations

Given the limitations of achieving any degree of true participation under state tutelage, another important channel for pursuing this objective lies outside direct government influence and through non-governmental organisations. According to Hall (1986:102), where development is facilitated by NGOs, the likelihood of authentic participation is far more than with state-guided initiatives. Perhaps the main reason for this is that official policies tend to be built on the assumption that deprived communities are incapable of defining their own development path. NGOs, on the other hand, start rather from the opposite premise, namely that only the beneficiaries themselves know what the most appropriate course of action is.

Community participation initiatives should certainly not exclude local community-based organisations (CBOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) They are more often staffed by the type of people likely to support community involvement. They also tend to work on a smaller scale and to be more closely involved at the localities where local participation is promoted. Voluntary and civic organisations and other NGOs are the non-official expression of civil society and are to be used fully in establishing community involvement in development initiatives. It has been NGOs, to a much larger extent than government agencies, which have looked at poor people and assisted grass-roots organisations in the process of empowerment towards acquiring access to public services (*cf.* Constantino-David,1995:154; Edwards & Hulme,1995; Galjart,1995:14; Heunis & Van Rensburg,1995:6; Mayo & Craig,1995:2; Rahman,1995:25; Sheng,1990:61).

Because of the above-mentioned and other reasons, NGOs have become popular with official donors such as the World Bank. The reasons are, firstly, that state-planned and state-led development activities have been disappointing; and secondly, that NGOs appear to have become less radical or revolutionary (Galjart,1995:16) or have been co-opted by 'development' agencies (Rahman,1995:26).

In the past, most of the successful participatory development programmes were run by NGOs. Governments may pay lip service to the principle, but in practice its implementation by government tends to be weak. There are many reasons for this, quite apart from the usual charges against the bureaucratic machinery. The projects of NGOs are on a smaller scale and therefore community participation is easier to achieve, and it is also easier for NGOs to test small pilot projects in a participatory manner. Since NGOs are more involved at a local level, they ful-

fill a useful role as a "broker" or "third party" in the process. Evidence from development projects indicates that NGOs, being third parties, are better positioned than state or market organisations to carry out the following key tasks:

- assisting local groups and communities to organise and develop their own projects and programmes;
- advising governments on the formulation and implementation of community support policies;
- mediating between the community and the state and other corporate powers;
- raising public consciousness about the under-utilised capacity of CBOs and NGOs;
- From the above it is clear that CBOs and NGOs are seen increasingly as channels for promoting economic and social development, also contributing to the democratisation of the economy, society and polity (Elliott, 1994:59,62; Uphoff, 1993:618).

In their analysis of development initiatives in Africa, Taylor & Mackenzie (1992:253) indicate that the role and significance of NGOs has increased. The fact that the 1980s is regarded by some as the development decade of non-governmental organisations, and by others as the development decade of participation, sets the scene for NGOs as important vehicles of community participation. While it is undoubtedly true that NGOs have played a major role in the promotion of community participation, it cannot be claimed that their involvement has been faultless. Many of these larger organisations also function bureaucratically and also use formal procedures, and are not at all flexible and innovative. Some NGOs, according to Taylor & Mackenzie (1992:255), may even have hidden agendas of their own, which may in turn subvert or dominate the initiatives of local communities. Charismatic leadership, which is unresponsive to new ideas and views innovation as a threat to its authority dominates many voluntary organisations. The assumption that the leaders of voluntary organisations are usually politically progressive also needs to be questioned. Middle-class individuals whose views are paternalistic, rather than radically egalitarian run many NGOs. Sometimes NGOs compete with each other and very often they suffer from a lack of continuity, with the result that communities are left with unfinished projects and unfulfilled promises.

However, even relatively unsuccessful collective grassroots development efforts create a sort of social energy in the participants that may re-emerge in a later initiative. In general, available empirical evidence demonstrates that NGOs have been increasingly supportive of local initiatives. As long as development cannot be planned, and as long as research has not shown that governments do much better at promoting development than NGOs, there is room for the latter. But, like all other actors on the scene, NGOs should remain modest in their aims.

Although donors continuously demand that all expenses be accounted for, the literature contains few evaluations of project costs and benefits. Especially NGOs were insufficiently cost-conscious. Lately, NGOs are increasingly being required to fit into non-participatory systems of development administration. To ensure that their priorities and endeavours conform to national development priorities, they are increasingly obliged to have their activities approved through the bureaucratic procedures used by government itself.

3. Conclusion

These historical antecedents to contemporary community participation programmes demonstrated the following:

- the initiative for development programmes often came from outside the community, with the justification that the programme was for the community's own benefit;
- governments and international agencies allocated themselves the prerogative to define what constituted "participation" without input from communities themselves;
- communities often had little choice in whether to participate in government-inspired programmes or not;
- compliance with the government programme was defined as "participation", while refusing to cooperate was a crime.

Participatory programmes, whether sponsored by the state or the voluntary sector, have brought tangible benefits to local people in many parts of the world. But these activities have not generally conformed to the ideals of authentic participation. Participation programmes have not been free of state manipulation or of the imposition of external values and directions by NGOs.

The role of the state, and for that matter of any other development agency, should be to facilitate, co-ordinate, advise and enable, rather than to control, prescribe and restrict. The World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, March 1995, also emphasised the joint role that governments, civil society and NGOs have to play in creating a conducive environment for participatory development, stating that signatory governments should

"... commit themselves to reinforce as appropriate the means and capacities for people to participate in the formulation and implementation of social and economic policies and programmes through decentralisation, open management of public institutions, and strengthening of the abilities and opportunities of civil society and local communities to develop their own organisations, resources and activities".

"... strengthen the ability of local communities and groups with common concerns to develop their own organisations and resources and to propose policies relating to social development, including through the activities of non-governmental organisations."

The next chapter (chapter 6) will attempt to expose the difficulties and dilemmas associated with community participation in development with specific reference to urban upgrading projects.

Community participation in development: difficulties and dilemmas¹



Community participation in development is advocated for various noble reasons and is often rhetorical and permeated with lofty sentiments. To criticise these advantages of community participation would therefore appear to be ungenerous. The flexibility of the phrase “community participation in development” and the rampant enthusiasm with which it is used, makes it resistant to analysis. As a concept, “community participation” is one of the most overused, yet least understood concepts in developing countries, without a serious attempt to analyse critically the different forms that participation could take (*cf.* Gaigher, 1992:11; Nientied *et al.*, 1990:53; Oakley, 1991:269). But, as development scientists, it is our obligation to apply our analytical skills in the examining of any set of beliefs. This obligation applies equally to participatory development as a paradigm. This, in itself, is a difficult endeavour, because it calls for not only a criticism of romantic ideals that have intrinsic appeal, but also for disentangling ethical issues from theoretical and practical considerations (*cf.* Midgley *et al.*, 1986:34). There are many examples of people advocating or applying community participation as uncritical trumpet-blowing exercises. This chapter is therefore an attempt to expose the important impediments or obstacles to community participation with some reference to its application in urban upgrading projects.

1. Impediments or obstacles to community participation

There is a wide range of factors that could hinder and indeed constrain the promotion of participatory development, and these often lead to the emergence of non-participatory approaches. Such obstacles prohibiting

¹ An earlier version of this chapter is approved for publication in the international *Community Development Journal* of 2000.

participation abound, ranging from institutional to socio-cultural, to technical, to logistical, and are spread over a seemingly endless spectrum. Obstacles are moreover external, internal and even a combination of both. "External obstacles" refer to those factors outside the end-beneficiary community that inhibit or prevent true community participation from taking place. External obstacles suggest the role of development professionals, the broader government orientation towards promoting participation, the tendency among development agencies to apply selective participation, and their techno-financial bias. Internal obstacles refer to conflicting interest groups, gate-keeping by local élite, and alleged lack of public interest in becoming involved. Some of the obstacles, such as excessive pressures for immediate results and techno-financial bias, include both internal and external characteristics.

1.1 The paternalistic role of development professionals

The majority of development projects are initiated by outsiders. They are rarely founded spontaneously by the community itself. The paternalistic roles of many 'development experts' during the past four development decades impacted significantly on participatory development approaches. In this regard Cadribo (1994:22) even referred to Africa as a graveyard of development projects due to their failures resulting from externally induced development and from externally managed processes. The following remarks of community members illustrate their discontent with the paternalistic approaches of development professionals:

"They (the developers) arrived already knowing everything. They come here and look around, but they see only what is not here" (Indian Villager.)

"Developers just came overnight, they just arrived. They did not tell the people. They made us think that they were coming to save us" (Informal settler Vryburg, North West Province, South Africa.)

Often professional experts dominate decision-making and manipulate, instead of facilitate, development processes.² The trademark of 'development experts' is often that they always know best and therefore their prime function is to transfer knowledge to communities who by definition "know less". The reason for this is that professionals are predominantly trained in ways that disempower and who tell other people what they should think and do. This has contributed to professionals (unconsciously or consciously) regarding themselves as the sole owners of development wisdom and as having the monopoly of solutions which consistently underrate and undervalue the capacities of local people to make their own decisions as well as to determine their own priorities. Development professionals do not question the limits of their own knowledge, it is therefore difficult for development planners to view community needs and opportunities through "the eyes of end-beneficiaries" (Dudley,1993:150; Heymans,1994:34; Rowlands,1995:105). As so few professionals and politicians yet realise, the real experts on people's own situations, resources and priorities, are community members themselves, the

2 Constantino-David (1982:194) notes that elements of facilitation and manipulation are inevitable in community organisation and mobilisation for development. She uses the term *facipulation* which includes elements of both facilitation and manipulation.

*in*pers, on whose unique local knowledge the external experts depend for constructive contributions – if the latter but new it! (Turner, 1996:343).

Box 6.1 Tau and Kado³ as prototypes of development professionals

Although there are many different types of development professionals operating in and with deprived communities, one can perhaps distinguish between two prototypes of professionals. Let us first ascribe names to these two typical professionals, just for the purpose of the example, and call them "Tau" and "Kado". Tau views community participation as a tool to deliver development products, as soon and as effectively as possible, to the beneficiary community. At the end of a multi-million informal settlement upgrading project, Tau's approach paid off resulting in 4 000 sites that were serviced, with electricity installed in each site (an amenity which had not initially been budgeted for) and savings for the community-based organisation (of which the community leaders were part) of nearly R1 million in the bank. Basically Tau employs a utilitarian idea of participation in development which emphasises the delivery of the development product, come hell or high water! He predominantly applies community participation as a tool for carrying out a task or as a means to an end. Several times during the project the community leaders expressed their dissatisfaction at the lack of consultation and communication of issues important to them. They also complained about not being paid for the time that they had put into organising community meetings and assisting with a range of tasks that contributed to the successful implementation of the project. Tau emphasised that they had been elected as volunteers and therefore had to serve the community. Some of the leaders in the beneficiary community became so frustrated with Tau's approach in this project, that they decided to end their three year long working relationship with Tau on the eve of another R20 million housing project. They objected (rightly or wrongly) to having been mis-used by Tau for the benefit of Tau and the development agency he represents.

Kado, on the other hand, regards community participation as an end in itself. For him continuous communication and dialogue are the key to creating an environment conducive to working as partnership with the community and its leaders. He argues that set objectives and tangible products are not less important but that the process of achieving them is of equal importance. After ending their relationship with Tau, the community leaders opted to work with Kado. Kado facilitated the restructuring of the community based organisation (CBO) in such a way that the community leaders could receive remuneration for what is termed community consultancy work. Kado is also a firm believer and practitioner of interactive decision-making processes.

One wonders what the reasoning of the community leaders is when they have opted to work with Kado, instead of Tau? Perhaps Kado understands the spirit of the community and its leaders better. But before I fall into the trap of judging these two professionals' approaches to participatory development I will try to give history the opportunity of judging the newly found relationship between Kado and the community leaders. Three years from now, at the completion of the second project, it will be interesting to assess how the community leaders responded to Kado's way of managing participation in development, and what the overall results are.

3 The example in Box 6.1 presented itself in one of the informal settlement communities in South Africa in which the author was involved during the past five years. For ethical reasons the fictitious names "Tau" and "Kado" were used.

In some instances, community participation is not a genuine attempt to empower communities to choose development options freely, but rather an attempt to sell preconceived proposals. Participation processes often begin only after projects have already been designed. The process is not an attempt to ascertain the outcomes and priorities, but rather to gain acceptance for an already assembled package. Consultation with the community may simply be to legitimise existing decisions *i.e.* to tell people what is going to happen by asking them what they think about it. Community participation is in these cases nothing more than attempts to convince beneficiaries what is best for them.

If a development professional is the pivot around which development initiatives are built, any community can easily become dependent on the presence and ideas of such a development champion, who in turn, may hinder participatory development by undervaluing the input and experiences of non-professionals. The consultant should be involved with a community only for as long as it takes to identify real needs and to transfer necessary skills and ideas to ensure that the community people can run programmes themselves. In communities where people are not yet aware of their own potential, or have not been allowed to express and develop it, a dependent relationship could often emerge which could impede the release of a community's own initiatives and collective capabilities.

1.2 The inhibiting and prescriptive role of the state

Although Gilbert (1987:56-80) generally agrees with the benefits of popular participation, he believes that its achievements in practice have often been vastly exaggerated and its outcomes have often damaged the interests of the weaker groups in society, mainly because its advocates have often play down the political dimension of community participation. In Latin American societies there are many examples where governments, to maintain existing power relations in society, have used community participation.⁴ He also points out that the benefits to be derived from participation depend primarily on the political interests involved and he concludes that participation can be very dangerous when placed in wrong hands.

To the state it appears that the main aim of community participation programmes is less about improving conditions for the poor or of modifying forms of decision-making, than about maintaining existing power relations in society and ensuring the silence of the poor. Community participation is often used by governments as a means of legitimising the political system and as a form of social control. The level of commitment by many governments to community participation has often been dubious or extremely limited. Formal channels of community participation have not always generated major benefits for local communities (Constantino-David, 1982:191; Gilbert & Ward, 1984:770-780; Morgan, 1993:6; Rahman, 1993:226).

Participation is often constrained at the state level by partisanship, funding limitations, rigidity, the resistance of local and national bureaucrats, and the state's inability to respond effectively to the felt needs of the populace. Government bureaucrats as the instruments of nation states are very much in a hierarchical mode of thinking which inhibits participatory development and

4 The ostensibly non-political, non-partisan character of participation obscures its use as a weapon in the struggle for power. Morgan (1993:7) describes, almost in a cynically ironical way, how participation was used as a resource and object of political struggle by politicians, health professionals and officials in the "noble" field of primary health care in Costa Rica.

undermines the people's own governing abilities. There is a delicate relationship between state and community organisations. On the one hand, the state is anxious to reduce its costs by promoting participatory development and self-help schemes, which often results in increased advocacy by community groups. On the other hand, government-structures are generally unwilling to allow this advocacy to reach a point where it challenges their decision-making power. Thus, participation is often defined in government terms rather than in community terms.

1.3 The over-reporting of development successes

Another problem is that successes related to development initiatives are quantified, documented and communicated to a greater extent than are failures. There is, therefore, a lack of understanding of lessons learned, and of their communication. In theoretical discussion, development experts will readily agree that failures are an important part of the learning process. Yet, when considering their own projects, development experts at all levels in the process have an interest in presenting a picture of success. Success is rewarded while failure, however potentially informative, is not. The result of this is that knowledge of the nature of the failure, the very information which could allow intervention policy to be improved, is lost (Dudley, 1993:11-12; Friedman, 1993:35; Rahman, 1993:153). We need more studies of what went wrong in development initiatives, the reasons why they went wrong and some suggestions as to how the same mistakes may be avoided.

1.4 Selective participation

Very often it is the most visible and vocal, wealthier, more articulated and educated groups that are allowed to be partners in development, without serious and ongoing attempts to identify less obvious partners. Friedman (1993:11-17) and Young (1993:148) have warned against the practice of many development agencies to engage exclusively with particular groups as community representatives, while, Gaigher *et al.* (1995:239) also mention that poor community penetration by NGOs and CBOs is one of the main impediments to community participation. Since many community organisations are not democratically elected, the involvement of local leaders often represents the voice of a group of self-appointed people, and may not accurately reflect the views and perspectives of the broader community. This easily runs the risk of the project being co-opted by certain groups or interests, leaving development workers with a feeling that the beneficiaries consulted were the wrong ones.

This may create problems because the needs and issues at stake are determined by people who do not experience poverty in society. Saïole (1991:10) even refers to these groups as marginal participants. It is a well-known social anthropological principle that often the most outgoing or most easily approachable members of the community tend to be those that are marginal to their own society. It remains one of the most serious challenges to ensure that the people who have neither the capacity, nor the desire to participate, are involved in the development process.

One of the worst manifestations of selective participation occurs when the development agency "buys" the goodwill and support of key interest groups in the community, which is also referred to as 'community-renting'.⁵ This is often the result where community involvement exercises are susceptible to manipulation and misappropriation. The point has been made in Latin American contexts that communities may deliberately buy into co-option to gain access to resources. Other practices that can easily lead to exclusionary or selective development can occur when the developer or donor agency, rather than the community themselves, identifies the community partners. This selective identification usually happens when development workers ask the "best known" members of the community to serve on a committee (*cf.* Morgan, 1993:144-147). Since to the developer participation is largely a matter of convenience, the objective is to find a partner in order to allow the project to continue, and, the screening of the representativeness of the partner is, at most, secondary.

1.5 Hard-issue bias

In many development projects the so-called "hard" issues (technological, financial, physical and material) are perceived as being more important for the successful implementation of these projects than the "soft" issues (such as community involvement, decision making procedures, the establishment of efficient social compacts, organisational development capacity building and empowerment) (*cf.* Moser, 1989; Sowman & Gawith, 1994:567-568). This may be the result of the assumption that social and cultural features (the so called "soft issues") are ephemeral, intangible and unnecessarily time-consuming in comparison with the more easily managed "hard issues". This inevitably results in a technical bias, which neglects the fact that inappropriate social processes can destroy the most noble development endeavour. Cernea thus describes the soft - hard issue dichotomy:

"While many technologies are available for the "hardware" components of development projects, this is not the case for the institutional components and socio-cultural parts of these projects ("software"), which in no way are less important for the projects' ultimate success. Thus, creating and strengthening adequate social organisation - the social capital that sustains, uses and maintains the technology, and involving the users of the technology, is no less important than the technology itself" (Cernea, 1983:13; Cernea, 1994:8).

The majority of professional organisations for development (*i.e.* engineering firms, town and regional planners, quantity surveyors, contractors) involved in urban development are also more oriented towards "product-related hard issues" rather than "process-related soft issues".⁶ Participation is not a value or a norm for these professions, but it is a matter of convenience.

- 5 "Community-renting" refers to examples where the goodwill and support of communities are "bought" in exchange for some promised spin-offs. Since the establishment of Provincial Housing Boards in South Africa in 1994, various reports have been received of developers (*i.e.* town & regional planners, consulting engineers and building contractors) engaging in community-renting practices for the primary reason of obtaining contracts.
- 6 People with a financial, technical, and/or professional background tend to overemphasise the development product, while for people with a social and community based background, development is more a matter of the right approach or process. *Cf.* Box 6.1: Tau has a technical science background whereas Kado has a social science background.

Most of them also lack the attitudes and skills required to elicit community participation, because the 'community' is only a means towards achieving their own development goals.

In this regard Asthana (1994:57) refers to the tensions that exist between hard and soft issues in slum improvement projects in India. In many instances the social dimensions of a project remain largely undefined. It seems to be assumed either that the soft issues of a project are less important, or that everyone knows how to do them.⁷

1.6 Conflicting interest groups within end-beneficiary communities

In the majority of cases development introduces marginalised communities to scarce resources and opportunities. This very often increases the likelihood of development as a divisive force. Development always is the result of decisions which require choices about whose needs are to enjoy priority; often some interests can be accommodated only at the expense of others. A logical consequence of this is the likelihood that conflict can develop among different interest groups or segments of the community. Conflict also arises in situations where some groups may feel neglected in decisions affecting their lives. This in turn may enhance the possibility of different interest groups within a single community opposing each other.

Competition among community based organisations and other popular movements for access to scarce development resources and power is a major constraint preventing proper participation. Most civic and political movements are well aware that development, for which they can claim responsibility, will boost their support base; they, therefore, have an incentive to discourage processes for which they cannot claim sole credit. In the South African urban development scene there are various examples of how development initiatives are being sabotaged, undermined or hi-jacked, because a specific interest group believes that it was allocated an insufficient role. (cf. Box 6.2)

Box 6.2 Conflict in places of peace

In Tswaragano, which literally means "Let us get together and do something", a small informal settlement of 270 households in Kimberley (Northern Cape Province - South Africa), rivalry between two community organisations and their leadership was so severe that a housing proposal was delayed for approximately 18 months. Only after four mediation attempts, 10 meetings and many harsh words did the two organisations agree to support a housing proposal jointly. In another community called Boikhutsong "Place of peace" comprising 780 households, (also in Kimberley) tension between two community groups was so severe that the community centre (in which a community-based organisation also occupied an office) was believed to have been deliberately set on fire and two community members killed. Four attempts to arrange an Annual General Meeting failed due to disruptions by members of the opposing community group.

7 Due to limited time, two housing proposals in South Africa [one in Tswaragano-Kimberley (Northern Cape Province), the other in Freedom Square-Bloemfontein (Free State Province) - 1995] only clarified the hard-technical issues and did not devote enough time to creating a suitable social compact as engine for effective community participation. Both projects were delayed for several months due to this technological bias and underplay of community-related issues.

Another reason why different stakeholders in a development initiative may find themselves at loggerheads, is because they can be in the same development drive for various reasons: In this regard Stiefel & Wolfe (1994:17) refer to as a "difference in rationalities". Because interest groups engage in encounters and development projects for different reasons, they very often do not share either a common vision nor objectives regarding the future development of their community, which is almost a guaranteed recipe for conflict. In reflecting about the pros and cons of participatory development what is perceived as negative by one interest group can very often have a positive connotation for another.

From the above it is clear that each community consists of a variety of social groups with differing interests and different perceptions of their actual and desired roles in society. A critical factor influencing the motivation to participate is often the composition of a community. In informal settlements, for instance, besides political and cultural differentiation, there are also: the new arrivals versus the old-timers, the tenants versus the owners, the old versus the young, male versus female, unemployed versus employed, formally employed versus informally employed, etc..

1.7 Gate-keeping by local élite

It is a well-known fact that in cases where the community leadership favours a project the chances of success are far greater than where leaders are opposed to it. However, often a particular organisation, the dominant one in a target area, may interpose itself between the development agency and the beneficiaries, resisting all attempts to engage with the latter. Thus local élite may be able to effectively thwart attempts to engage directly with beneficiaries, because this threatens their control.⁸

There is always the danger that decision-making at community-level may fall into the hands of a small and self-perpetuating clique, which may act in its own interests with a total disregard for the community at large. This is even more problematic in cases where there are different organisations claiming to represent "the community" and the matter even becomes more dubious where a specific interest group or community is seen to be gaining at the expense of other

8 For example, Cernea (1983:95) indicates how village élite tend to control the contacts between the poorest village groups and planners from the Integrated Programme for Rural Development (PIDER) in Mexico. Kaseje (1992:1-9) also shares his experiences of how the roles of local élite lead to mismanagement and almost destruction of a rural health programme in Kenya. There are reports of serious problems in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, that arise in cases where one strong interest group like the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO) attempt to act as development agency (a role in which they seldom have any capacity or competence); and in the process interfere with the activities of established community-based development organisations (CBDOs). This problem is compounded when Civics attempt to extend their "watchdog of the people" role to one which assumes a gate-keeping function with respect to funding for development projects formulated by the people in consultation with competent CBDOs. At the local level, this has led to conflict and interference with project implementation, often to the extent that initiatives are abandoned or turn out to be only partially successful.

parties. In this regard Friedman (1993:29) has used the term "positioning for patronage".⁹ In developing countries, South Africa included, the peculiar dynamics of informal settlements often lend themselves to an autocratic style of leadership based on patronage, which reinforces the prevailing inequality of the existing social structure (*cf.* Nientied *et al.* 1990:45).

Many residents in informal settlements are engaged in a struggle for survival in a context of absolute or relative poverty which result in competition for scarce resources. This is obviously not favourable for community organisation. Leaders in informal settlements appear to adapt well in these circumstances, and they frequently monopolise the information channels between the slum residents and the agencies. In this way, and in spite of their sometimes useful role as mediators for the urban poor, they limit the direct and active participation of low income people in general. This behaviour by the more dominant groups has often deprived the weaker and more vulnerable social segments of participation in community affairs. This may also lead to self-centredness and selfish development decisions. Experience has shown that it is often very difficult to reach the poorest and that initiatives and leadership will often come from people with higher social status. In the case of shelter provision projects, women are often under-represented and as a result women's concerns receive low priority. In the South African context Roodt (1996:312) expresses his concern for the way in which certain groups and individuals monopolise power and development resources at the local level, and in the process exclude, or prevent, or limit other groups and individuals from participation.

1.8 Excessive pressures for immediate results: the accentuation of product at the expense of process

There is always a tension between the imperatives of delivery (product) and community participation (process), between the cost of time and the value of debate and agreement. Excessive pressures for immediate results, accruing from the products and services delivered, often undermine attention to institution-building and make it difficult not to address poverty and poverty reduction from a relief and welfare approach. Any pressure on development workers to show results may force them to take matters out of the hands of community people and complete these themselves. For example, the distribution of food is much more quickly achieved than teaching people how to grow it themselves (Gaigher, 1992:49; Galjart, 1981:148). Anticipated results in an often too short term, have also been the cause of many of the world's most inappropriate development initiatives. In many instances an overemphasis on the development product is often unacceptable to community people as illustrated in the words of a community leader in an informal settlement in Huhudi/Vryburg - North-West Province, South Africa:

"What we resent is the high-handed way the planners go about ramming proposals down our throats. This is our community and we want to be part of decisions affecting us."

9 Asthana (1994:64) discusses the role of political patronage in his analysis of slum improvement in Visakhapatnam, India. He indicates how slum leaders actively sought vertical links with local politicians, who promised their dwellers' votes in return for resource provision. According to a 1988 survey of slum leaders in Visakhapatnam, 27% believed that political affiliation was a prerequisite to receiving a housing scheme. De Vries (1995) indicates how bureaucrats in Mexico often tried to transform gatekeepers into ideal beneficiaries resulting in an unholy alliance between local power élite and informal settlers.

Friedman (1993:11) has indicated that development progress is often measured, not only by developers themselves but also by public opinion-makers and politicians, by the speed with which tangible results are delivered. However, pressure to deliver is not simply a result of impatience from hasty technocrats: potential beneficiaries are often also impatient at endless discussions without any sign of delivery. Lengthy periods spent on process issues are regarded with impatience because action is required rather than social niceties. For many, participatory development is too time-consuming and not cost-effective, because participation in practice is always a slow and uncertain process and is likely to involve more paperwork and soul-searching (*cf.* Alihonou *et al.*, 1993:13; Kaya, 1989:42; Paul, 1987:10-11).

However, the assumption that participatory planning is necessarily a costly, time-consuming or drawn-out process, is not always valid. In the first place, evidence suggests that some kinds of projects can be formulated with participatory inputs within a reasonably short period of time. When the complaint is made that participation does not work, most often participation has not seriously been tried, or else has been wrongly facilitated. Most failures are unfairly blamed on the beneficiaries, when in fact officials are more responsible for shortcomings in design and implementation. Secondly, although true participation involves greater costs in the identification, design and planning phases, it may actually be able to save more time and money during the implementation and evaluation phases, because it ensures that people take ownership of a project (Bamberger, 1986:10; Bhatnagar, 1992:13; Kok & Gelderblom, 1994:54-55; Kottak, 1985:325-351; Uphoff, 1992:144).

Process versus product	Decision-making dynamics	Underlying assumptions	Emphasis
Process less important than product	Developer-centred approach: characterised by top-down decisions taken by development élite	Rely on formal know-how and expertise to resolve development problems in the shortest possible time	Time and product
Process more important than product	People-centred approach: characterised by bottom-up decisions taken by community members or their legitimate leaders	The immediate resolution of a development problem is less important than the way in which the process of problem-solving is taking place - even if it requires a longer time. Build on the saying "it is the approach rather than the outcome of the message that spells success"	Time and process

Figure 6.1 Process versus product in community participation

Two main lines of thinking are mapped out in Figure 6.1 with regard to the process/product debate. Some people and organisations tend to emphasise process and fail to deliver product,

whilst other are so product-driven that they neglect community processes. Both are dangerous: process without product leaves communities feeling that nothing is really happening other than a lot of talking, and that time, money and social energy are lost. Product without process runs the risk of doing something communities do not want or need, or cannot sustain.

1.9 The lack of public interest in becoming involved

One of the major impediments to community participation is the allegation that members of the public are not really interested in becoming involved. According to Kok & Gelderblom (1994:50-51) there is evidence supporting the universality of the problem when they state that:

“The question whether people really know what they want and what is likely to be in their best interest is another area of concern that is frequently cited. It is often said that people need to be protected against themselves. This notion implies that people are ignorant and need to be steered in the right direction by those who ‘know better’, presumably the professional experts.”

A lack of willingness to participate may also result from past experiences of involvement where expectations were not fulfilled. Because of years of neglect by governments and professionals for instance, communities may have become lethargic in their attitude to projects and it may be problematic to muster enthusiasm for these initiatives. They may also distrust initiatives by governments due to past experiences. Paul (1987) says that the World Bank has learned the difficulties for beneficiaries to be active in community participation when the country does not have a social tradition supportive of participation; when inadequate technology inhibits proper service delivery; when the government is perceived by beneficiaries to be a satisfactory medium; and when governments are reluctant to build participation into their project designs.

2. Conclusion

Community participation in development projects often assumes the notion of “common purpose and common good”. This perspective romanticises the people or the community, a position that is analysed and refuted in this chapter. The obstacles to participatory development highlight the social and power relations between the stakeholders in a development planning process: professional planners and technicians, the beneficiary population, and the concerned agencies and institutions. A re-negotiation of the relationship between those who control resources and the recipients of those resources is needed. Involving people can be expensive in various ways and, in some instances, can paralyse decision-making, holding development investments hostage to unproductive activism and reinforcing local power structures and power struggles. Community participation can use enormous amounts of time, endlessly delay and circularise decision-making, may have to deal with a constantly changing cadre of decision-makers and can every now and then evoke the new charge of lack of mandate. The challenge for those involved in participation is to recognise these obstacles related to development, and also how these obstacles might impede community participation.

This chapter has exposed some of the obstacles and impediments facing attempts to initiate participatory development. Some of the obstacles have an external influence on the end-beneficiary community (from outside), while others are endemic or internal to the community. How these internal and external obstacles inter-relate or interact with one another, is of vital impor-

tance in obtaining a clear picture on all the different factors and processes impacting upon promoting and facilitating community participation.

Community dynamics in the developing world occur in heterogeneous, divided and complex societies. All attempts to initiate grassroots development should deal with far more than visible conflicts between competing values and interests. Sometimes even authentic community participation is not a guarantee that a development intervention will be without serious conflict or will be successful. In some instances all the relevant stakeholders may agree upon the contents, form, process and product of development, and yet conflict may arise during the implementation phase of a development project.

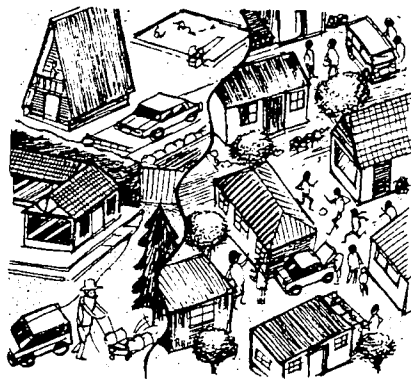
Perhaps Gilbert (1987:75) summarises the essence of problems and controversies in community participation best by stating that:

"The only valid conclusion that can be drawn is one of tempered enthusiasm for the idea of community participation, and then always subject to local circumstances. Community participation is worthwhile and can help improve the living conditions of low-income communities. But, since it can also be used to their disadvantage the poor are often well-advised to limit their involvement."

However, in spite of the numerous and well-documented cases illustrating the problematic nature of participatory development in the developing world and particularly in Africa, there is still general optimism and support for community participation in development. This optimism is also very much apparent in South Africa today. Development in the full sense of the word is impossible without appropriate community participation.

The next chapter (Chapter 7) will pay attention to the different dimensions of community participation in low-income housing and to urban upgrading as important means of addressing urban shelter poverty.

Low-income housing policies and community participation: urban South Africa in retrospect



As this study deals with “community participation in the upgrading of informal settlements” it is appropriate and necessary in this chapter to pay some attention to the different dimensions and aspects of urban shelter poverty in relation to community participation. In the next chapter (Chapter 8) a selected upgrading project (Freedom & Namibia, Bloemfontein, South Africa) will be presented as case study in order to explore these aspects of community participation in practise.

In the past 20 years the theme of urban policies to ameliorate shelter poverty has generated a considerable body of scholarly writing. This chapter first discusses the global nature of shelter poverty specifically in urban environments. It then elaborates on the extent of shelter poverty with a focus on low-income urban areas in South Africa. Low-income housing policies are analysed and themes such as progressive housing, conventional housing, public housing provision, sites-and-services initiatives, in-situ upgrading initiatives and self-help housing deserve attention. An historical overview of South African low-income housing policies is also provided, with some attention to urban control measures, the emergence of participatory urban development and the role of the Reconstruction and Development Programme in low-income housing delivery.

1. The global context and growing challenge of shelter poverty in urban areas

During the past decade (1987-1997), globalisation and the complex interdependence it represents, have become established as the context for the understanding of housing, and urban and socio-economic development. In the past 40 years the pace of urbanisation in less-developed countries has been truly dramatic. In 1950 less than 300 million people in developing

countries lived in urban areas. Between 1950 and 1988 the proportion of the Third World's population living in cities more than doubled from 17% to 43%. In the Third World in 1990, some 1.3 billion people lived in urban centres and within the next 20 years this figure is expected to reach more than 2 billion (Choguill, 1995:403; De Volkskrant, 1996:5; UNCED, 1993:181).

The population of urban areas in developing countries currently grows at the rate of at least 3.6 per cent annually, about four times faster than in rural areas. In low income countries the urbanisation rate may attain even 8.8% per annum (Davey, 1996:1). This is mainly the result of migration to urban areas and not in fertility rates. Each year the urban population of the developing countries is increasing by 50 million. The rapid growth in cities has been accompanied by a rapid growth in the number of people living in sub-standard, overcrowded and desperate conditions. More than one-third of the population in cities of developing countries live in slums, informal settlements or sub-standard housing, while 600 million people in cities or towns throughout the world are homeless or live in life and health threatening situations (Naiker, 1993; UNCHS, 1996:xxi). There is a global crisis of shelter poverty¹ in the Third World. Provision of housing to the urban poor remains one of the main problems facing both planners and politicians in cities of developing countries (Gelderblom & Kok, 1994; Narine, 1986). It is currently estimated that an average of 50% of the world's urban population live at a level of extreme poverty, with the figure rising as high as 79% in some cities (Asthana, 1994:58). The major characteristics of urban and housing poverty are an absence or inadequacy of municipal infrastructure and basic services such as water supply, roads and street lighting, garbage collection and disposal, drainage and flood protection, and social services such as primary health care and primary education. Pezzoli (1995:160) has indicated that, over the next few years, the developing world must increase its capacity by 65% to produce and manage its urban infrastructure, services and shelter merely to maintain today's often inadequate conditions.

In Asian and African cities inadequate housing is characteristic of 25% to 90% of the population (Aldrich & Sandhu, 1995:18). In the low-income countries an average of only 5.6% of central government expenditure in 1991 was allocated for housing, amenities, social security and welfare.² Conversely, in high income industrialised countries, during the same year, the percentage of central government expenditure on housing, amenities, social security and welfare was an average of 39% (UNCED, 1993:182).

Despite the scale of urban poverty, much of the literature on participation and development has focussed on rural problems, as was also the case with the first World Housing Conference, Habitat I, in Vancouver in 1976. Few were thinking about urban housing. It is only in the past seven years that aid and development analysts have really woken up to the time bomb that is called urban poverty and that the majority of NGOs have shifted their attention and activities to urban poverty. Urban poverty figured prominently on the agenda of the Rio Earth Summit (1992) and it was **the agenda** for the Second World Housing Conference, Habitat II, in Istanbul in May 1996. This is an indication of the globalisation of the issue - a global community of organisations, institutions and individuals concerned with the issue of housing poverty but also global in

- 1 The concepts "housing poverty" and "shelter poverty" are used interchangeably. These terms refer to people that live in sub-standard houses or forms of shelter that are threatening to their quality of life and well-being in general.
- 2 Expenditure by international support and financial organisations is equally low. For example, only 1% of the United Nation's total grant-financed expenditures in 1988 went to human settlements, while in 1991, loans from the World Bank for urban development, water supply and sewerage amounted to 5.5% of their total lending (UNCED, 1993:181).

terms of the sheer international extent of shelter poverty.

2. Low-income housing policies in urban areas

2.1 Introduction

At the core of the debate on informal settlements is the issue as to whether people in these settlements are part of the problem or part of the solution. Inadequate sanitation, overcrowding and poor health facilities provide ample arguments to those who see slum settlements as comprising the 'dregs of humanity' and a threat to public health conditions. Informal settlements often carry the stigma of being centres of crime, hooliganism, unemployment, vandalism, etc. Almost all countries initially introduced slum clearance programmes during the 1960s. The initial strategy of governments was to relocate or control the urban population rather than to improve their living conditions. The main aims behind this strategy were political, health and social. Views of 'over-urbanisation' (where there were more urban workers than formal urban jobs) supported regimes in their efforts to limit the migration/influx to cities (Aldrich & Sandhu, 1995:20).

Until recently, conventional wisdom with Lipton as the main protagonist, held that there was an "urban bias", with the cities of the Third World benefiting from a disproportionate share of their nation's resources to the detriment of the rural poor. The main reason for this is that the state is urban-based, and central governments usually rely for their political support primarily on urban areas. This resulted in development agencies explicitly directing their efforts at rural populations. By contrast, the plight of the urban poor received relatively little attention from these same agencies (Asthana, 1994:58; Lipton & Van der Gaag, 1993).

In the past decade the relevance of the urban bias concept has been called into question. Biases in the allocation of resources, it is argued, work not so much against rural areas as against the poor. Thus, although urban dwellers appear to enjoy higher living standards than their rural counterparts, official statistics mask enormous intra-urban inequalities in socio-economic status, environmental conditions and health.³ It is now widely accepted that the vast majority of urban inhabitants hardly benefit from government investment in industrial development and public services (Asthana, 1994:58). The quality of life of the urban poor is threatened by factors such as overcrowding, poor housing, crime, pollution and inadequate water and sanitation. The majority of urban people in developing countries could therefore be regarded as suffering from shelter poverty. Unable to afford 'legal' housing, many urban inhabitants have no option but to squat illegally on land or invade crowded and deteriorating tenements in city-centre slums. As urban bias has neither lessened poverty nor increased basic service provision in low-income areas, poor city dwellers do not enjoy better living standards than their rural counterparts. Indeed, in several countries, higher rates of malnutrition and infectious disease have been recorded in urban slums and squatter settlements than in rural villages. At least rural poor have cleaner air and in addition have some natural resources (clay, grass, trees) to build their own houses and thus an improved shelter-related fall back position. In many developing countries, the urban poor now outnumber those in rural areas where such conditions are traditionally higher (*cf.* Mugisha, 1994:18). Urban poverty is often the consequence of higher living costs

3 A household survey in the Free State Province of South Africa indicated that the housing, electricity and sewerage needs were for the same proportion of the urban community considered to be important as for the rural farmworker communities (Van Rensburg *et al.*, 1996:6-7). This emphasises the fact that housing-related needs in South Africa are probably, equally important to rural and urban communities.

in the city, restricted employment opportunities, no fallback position to subsistence agriculture and lack of support of the extended family as in rural areas.

Another attempt to distinguish between urban and rural development projects is the assumption that these projects are different in nature. Urban projects, including health, housing, streets, sewerage, electricity and water, are more infrastructure and consumption-orientated and can be undertaken without the participation of consumers, while rural projects (*i.e.* agriculture, credit, inputs and planting practices) are production-orientated and cannot be undertaken without the participation of consumers. Moser (1989:93-94) correctly criticises this stereotypical division between production and consumption and between rural and urban as having no empirical basis. There are, for instance, many examples across the globe where urban housing projects have been one of the most important points of entry into production and where they have been used as a leading economic growth sector. Housing now has to be studied for production and income/resource generation as well as for consumption and reproduction concerns (Ferguson-Brown, 1995:202; Pezzolli, 1995:160). A greater understanding of the linkages between urban and rural, and between production and consumption is required in order to reveal the significant potential for participatory development.

There are many different typologies of informal settlements including "slums of hope" versus "slums of despair", "open-end" versus "dead-end" slums, "the very low-income bridgeheads", the "low-income consolidators" and the "middle-income status seekers", and "spontaneous" versus "planned informal settlements" (Yeh, 1987). However, typologies are usually simplistic in that they are based on a very small number of variables and thus cannot be expected to thoroughly describe and analyse slums, squatter areas or other low-income informal settlements. Yeh (1987:19) indicates that there is no linear relationship between typologies of urban informal settlements and improvement strategies. He states that it is an illusion to believe that there is a solution to housing problems which are conceived and treated independently of other social, economic and political problems. Therefore, strategies to improve low-income informal settlements will be inadequate unless there are concomitant social and economic policy changes at both the national and the provincial level. Poverty therefore constitutes the context of housing problems. In a critical comment on Yeh's typologies, Conner (1987:24-26) pleads, besides a typology of informal settlements, that government attitudes towards low-income housing should also be analysed. On a continuum this could probably range from intolerance, through benign neglect, to support (*cf.* Figure 7.1).

Prior to the 1960s a fairly low priority was given to housing issues in national development strategies, because it was considered an unproductive sector. Other sectors, such as industry, energy generation and transport, were considered better sectors for urban cost recovery. Turner and Mangin were some of the pioneers who promoted the productive potential of housing initiatives. Turner (1976) argued strongly that if the poor could be given security of tenure and a plot of land in a favourable location, progressive improvement would transform the squatter shack into a respectable house.⁴ Informal settlements are the evidence of people taking responsibility for their

4 However, Turner's ideas have been fiercely criticised by Burgess. Turner's starting point was the use value of a house, while Burgess emphasised the exchange value. Houses, however built, could and would be sold, and so be incorporated into the housing markets. This would expose the poor to commodification processes to which they were previously inured which would lead to heavy burdens for the poor as far as repayments were concerned and to possible displacement when they sold out to better-off groups. Turner was also accused of de-politicising the housing problem.

own future. The view that households could be valuable resource systems for improving housing poverty, represented an important shift in international housing policies. It also resulted in a changed perception of viewing informal houses as an asset instead of treating these as a waste and a burden. The challenge, to authorities, NGOs and private developers was to tap into the informal housing drive in innovative ways that would ensure the creation of sustainable settlements.

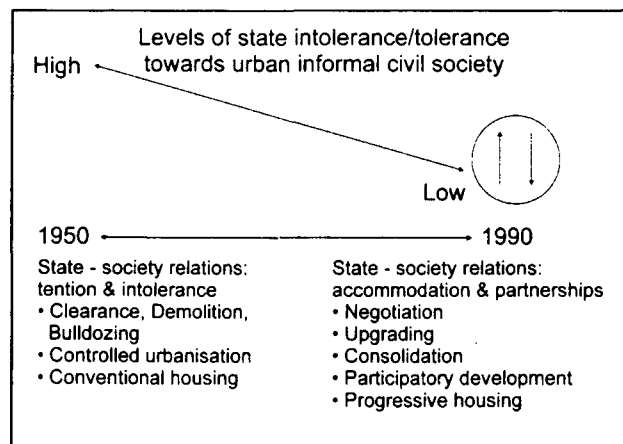
2.2 Relations between government and community in connection with low-income housing policies

National governmental policies towards urban development and informal settlements evolved through several phases.⁵ The **first phase (1950-1970)** could be described as one of **severe tension between state and society relations** (cf. Figure 7.1). During this phase governments demonstrated very hostile attitudes towards informal settlements. Reactive urban policies such as evictions, forced removals and controlled urbanisation were commonplace in dealing with the problems of over-urbanisation. These government actions were also typical of societies with closed governments.

The **second phase (1970-1980)** was characterised by changing state-society relations. As illustrated in Figure 7.1, **governments now had greater tolerance towards informal settlements** due to the growing recognition of the futility of demolishing informal housing without viable alternatives. Governments now also became involved in a limited way, by addressing the shelter needs of the urban poor. These governments were also more open to community participation. Although the emphasis was on costly and unsustainable conventional housing drives, international organisations and governments realised that they had failed to reach the poorest of the urban population.

The **third phase (1980-1990)** was the era when **informal settlers** were regarded as **part of the urban solution**. Governments began to engage in addressing urban housing poverty with progressive housing approaches such as sites-and-services programmes and upgrading initiatives. Housing delivery projects in a participatory manner also became more important.

From the three phases depicted above it is evident that in time the state's role moved consistently from active control, to passive support, to active enablement of low-income housing initiatives. This is illustrated in Figure 7.1.



(Designed by the author)

Figure 7.1 Government policies towards informal settlements

5 As with all historical events, these phases are not watertight compartments.

The circle in Figure 7.1 represents the contradictions between the decreasing trend of intolerance and coercive measures by the state and the development of urban informal civil society. Government attitudes towards low-income housing policy have changed markedly during the past two to three decades: from bulldozing and relocating to negotiating, upgrading and consolidating. In many developing countries, city planners are moving away from models of control and prohibition and towards models of facilitation and working with local communities. Although there is an inclination towards greater tolerance and pro-active management of the affairs of the urban poor, there are still sporadic manifestations of the state's intolerance towards less formal urban neighbourhoods. Although informal settlements are not completely blameless for this intolerance, these levels of tolerance by national governments depend largely on global, national and local political and developmental forces. Often after the election of a new government,⁶ or at the hosting of a major international event,⁷ or during a visit of a dignitary⁸ (especially from the First World), acts of government intolerance of the urban poor re-emerge in the form of forced removals and relocations.

2.3 Trends in public housing provision

In countries with high levels of human development such as South Korea, Costa Rica and Mexico the attempts of governments to address housing poverty were, historically more successful than in countries with medium levels of human development (Anglophone Caribbean, Brazil, Cuba, Colombia, China) and countries with low levels of human development (Egypt, Zambia, Tanzania, Ghana, Pakistan, India) (*cf.* Aldrich & Sandhu, 1995). The reasons for this will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Over the past 30 years, shelter has frequently been viewed as the primary weapon in the Third World's fight to improve overall living conditions. As a result, a wide range of housing policies have been initiated as means of improving the size of housing stock, almost all with disappointing results. Many of these initiatives failed due to budgetary constraints aggravated by structural adjustment and a bias towards conventional housing approaches which generally tend to favour upper-income groups over the poorest of the poor. Recent urban development efforts therefore emphasise the provision of low cost infrastructural schemes. Choguill (1995:410-411) refers to the emerging importance of infrastructure in reducing morbidity, improving health, providing a basis for environmental improvement, and reducing the drudgery of living in low-income communities.

The two international conferences on human settlements at Vancouver (Habitat I) and Istanbul (Habitat II), did much to emphasise the vision of "housing for all by 2000". However, international and national policies and initiatives to ameliorate housing poverty were largely unsuccessful. State urban development and public housing delivery generally had a bad track record during the first three development decades. Some of the reasons are the following:

- 6 Colombia and Zambia were examples where the approach of governments was one of clearance, then acceptance and then again clearance, due to a change in political élite.
- 7 In the run-up to the Istanbul Habitat II Conference the city was "cleaned up" (*sic*) for the conference. This involved the poisoning of street cats and dogs, removing most of the street children from the centre of the city, and arresting members of a transvestite community who lived near the conference valley. Street children were also removed prior to the Rio Earth Summit.
- 8 During Queen Elizabeth's visit to Zimbabwe in the early eighties, informal dwellings were removed by the Mugabe government from the main road next to the Harare airport.

Firstly, vast sums of money were spent on preparing master plans which were hoped to produce a well-structured pattern of urban growth. Foreign consultancy firms were widely used to prepare these plans and to assist in their implementation. But, in spite of the enormous effort, urban planning has not lived up to the expectations of politicians, bureaucrats, professionals and communities at large. Rapid urban growth rendered plans obsolete even before they were completed, and confounded those who believed that urban planning would transform developing cities into well-designed and orderly places (Marsden & Moser, 1990:5; Narine, 1986:111).

Secondly, a record of bad governance of shelter programmes prevails, which includes a lack of management capacity and lack of proper planning. Urban planning has been insensitive to social conditions (such as the poverty problem) in Third World cities, because bureaucracies often continue to adopt an unresponsive position. An architectural and engineering bias in the planning process has emphasised infrastructure at the expense of human needs and has been naively unaware of the nature and extent of urban poverty. This often reduces participation in planning to a paper exercise. Shelter is nowadays recognised as much more than just the provision of physical infrastructure. Shelter policies involve the entire environment or surroundings in which projects are undertaken, requiring not only an integrated approach in the designing stage, but also an increasing focus on implementation and post-project evaluation.

Thirdly, state urban housing policies have sometimes been brutal in their effects. There are vivid examples in the housing literature where the state employs a policy of clearance, demolition and bulldozing to erase urban eye-sores or so-called slums in Africa, Asia and Latin America, as a solution to the housing problem. Sophiatown, District Six and Crossroads are but a few examples of the mass demolition of poor housing neighbourhoods in South Africa. It is now widely recognised that shelter policies which advocate the destruction of urban slums and the resettlement of local populations are no longer appropriate or acceptable (Marsden & Moser, 1990:5). The brutality of state housing policies can also be found in urban control policies. In some Asian and African societies the movement from countryside to cities was strictly controlled. But as these countries shifted to freer markets and more open systems, the social engineering of communities decreased, and consequently the numbers moving to cities increased equally rapidly (Narine, 1986:112-113).

Fourthly, housing schemes do not always address local needs and are usually priced out of reach for the poorest of the poor⁹ due to the application of sophisticated and costly technology, thus discouraging the development of community participation skills among urban planners and professionals.

Fifthly, other reasons for the bad track record of public housing provision are a lack of political will, lengthy negotiation processes, inadequate cost recovery, unsuitability of site location with respect to job opportunities and social services, and finally, incorrect implementation.

In cities as diverse as Lima, Bangkok, Lagos and Ankara the failure of public housing programmes has resulted in low-income people taking responsibility for their own shelter provision, acting both individually and in highly organised groups through land invasions and squatting. It is because of the above-mentioned failures of public housing policies that greater emphasis is today being placed on the upgrading of slums or informal settlements in a people-centred and

9 In 1986 1.8 million (17%) of Egypt's housing stock was vacant. The rent was so high that the majority of poor house-seekers could not afford it (De Volkskrant, 1996:5).

participatory way where the active role of the citizen in self-provisioning is essential. This means that informal settlers construct their own housing with their own resources and at their own pace. The role and responsibility of governments in the housing arena has therefore shifted from provision to enablement.

The initial response was to label invaded land as illegal squatter settlements and to bulldoze such settlements in the mistaken belief that, if they were physically eradicated, the problem would disappear, yet by the 1970s many Third World governments, together with international donor agencies, slowly began to recognise the potential of utilising squatter settlements and the resources of the poor more efficiently. Therefore, the radical changes in shelter policy, resulting in both sites-and-services and upgrading as the two dominant forms of progressive housing in urban areas, were built on the principles of do-it-yourself and of community participation. However, both sites-and-services and upgrading projects could still be contractor-driven, therefore people's housing or self-help housing is a more recent form of progressive housing delivery, with even higher levels of community participation. According to Betancur (1995:225) informal settlements today stand as a testimony to the ability of the poor to find their own solutions - no matter how incipient - for their problems, and the inability of both governments and the private sector to contribute meaningfully to these monumental efforts. In the next two sections (2.4, 2.5) four distinct approaches to low-income housing delivery and their relation to participatory development will be discussed briefly.

2.4 Incremental and progressive housing¹⁰ versus conventional housing

Major areas of contention in the debate on appropriate low-income housing policies remain the nature of the product to be supplied and the process to be followed. On the one hand there are those who advocate supplying a smaller number of complete houses - the conventional approach. On the other there are those who argue for mass provision of basic starter homes which owners can expand over time - the progressive approach. Given the magnitude of housing problems in many countries, the progressive approach (squatter upgrading and sites-and-services schemes) is as a more suitable strategy than conventional housing provision to facilitate community participation in housing delivery.

The bulk of international literature illustrates how incremental or progressive housing contributes towards urban upgrading in a more participatory manner. Conversely, conventional housing strategies have a bad reputation for neglecting the power of people's self-development. For the following reasons progressive housing policies are more able to facilitate authentic community participation than conventional housing attempts:

10 Low-income housing initiatives are a process rather than a snap-shot, instant development product. This is necessarily so, because poor households cannot be expected to invest large sums in their dwelling structures or environment all at once. Therefore, one principle is to leave room for future development (Yeh,1987:14). Many households also revert to self-help housing construction which means that houses have been planned and built by the occupants, or informal paid labour from the community is employed to assist in house-building. Incremental housing starts with access to a well-located site with secure tenure and basic services, followed by rudimentary shelter which can be improved over time. For the purposes of this study the concepts "incremental housing" and "progressive housing" are used interchangeably.

- In reality there are more opportunities for active community participation in progressive or incremental housing than in conventional housing. In conventional housing delivery the state and para-statal development agencies become the sole or dominant partners in housing provision. The target community's function is often largely reduced to that of a passive recipient of instant houses.
- The nature of self-built housing or starter homes (which could be regarded as part of incremental housing) enhances the involvement of local (small scale) contractors and builders from the community. Conventional housing projects, on the other hand, tend to be more developer-driven.
- Many homeowners become involved in the self-improvement of their own dwellings in incremental housing drives.
- The underlying principle of progressive housing is the gradual improvement of people's own shelter environment through their own efforts and those of the immediate community, but at their own pace.

There are, however, examples where conventional housing provision initiatives also effectively involve the poor. Perhaps it is no longer a question of incremental/progressive housing versus conventional housing, but seeking local conditions and levels of financial assistance that will prevail for the specific housing strategy, or a combination of both. Often the call for progressive housing meets fierce resistance from groups with vested interests, such as politicians or developers. In the South African housing sector politicians and bureaucrats frequently favour conventional housing.¹¹

2.5 Sites-and-services¹² versus in-situ upgrading¹³

Government-initiated housing drives are characterised by building houses for the poor. The houses produced are often inappropriate to the needs of the target population and do little to promote the active involvement of the poor in improving their own living conditions. Since the early 1970s there has, due to lower costs, been a gradual withdrawal of government involvement in housing provision in favour of self-help principles.

When reviewing the existing literature on strategies to alleviate housing poverty, in-situ upgrading of informal settlements demonstrates greater potential compared to green-field¹⁴ and sites-and-services development, because urban upgrading basically preserves more than what

11 There is a difference of support among the nine provincial Ministers of Housing in South Africa with regard to their support for the specific housing policy in each province. Half of the ministers are against progressive housing policies while it was a well-known fact that the late Joe Slovo, South Africa's first national Minister of Housing, favoured progressive or incremental housing.

12 The provision of plots of land provided with basic supporting services. Basic services refer to piped water, sanitation, refuse removal, legalisation of tenure, roads and sometimes electricity. Normally the land is still vacant where people relocate.

13 Upgrading is sometimes confused with sites-and-services schemes. However, upgrading usually refers to the upgrading of an existing informal settlement and may include making fully-serviced land and core housing available to poor households. Upgrading is a housing process where the main emphasis is on the improvement of the housing stock through house construction, technical assistance, secure tenure, the reduction of densities, bringing in better sanitation, better infrastructure and social facilities without relocating the community at stake.

14 Green-field development refers to a situation where land is earmarked for residential development and potential residents are identified. Only after the installation of basic services are residents assisted to move to the developed land.

it destroys or disrupts. Ironically, upgrading has received little attention in academic literature on housing and planning (Choguill, 1995:409). Further reasons why upgrading is preferred to sites-and-service include:

- The World Bank's¹⁵ experience is that upgrading schemes were more successful in reaching the poor, mainly because they were directed at areas where the poor already lived whereas sites-and-services plots were allocated to selected households which could repay the costs (Pugh, 1995:63).
- In many instances settlements identified for upgrading have the highest concentrations of income poverty and housing poverty.
- Upgrading preserves existing economic opportunities for the urban poor.
- Upgrading preserves the low cost housing stock already in existence at its present location and it avoids the waste of hard-earned personal assets.
- Upgrading preserves the community structure.
- Resettlement to less favourable locations is often socially disruptive, involves high community costs, and reduces access to informal employment (Choguill, 1995:409).
- Sites-and-services schemes often struggle to recover the cost of the investment over a limited period of time.

Sites-and-services schemes often fail to encourage self-help and community participation, and some stakeholders, especially community activists and political leaders, complain that these schemes are inferior and unacceptable.¹⁶

Although some of these reasons have not been empirically tested, they emphasise the idea that when policy makers have to choose between funding a green-field sites-and-services project or an upgrading project it is probably better to consider funding the latter.

2.6 Low-income housing provision in urban areas: conclusions

The following conclusions may be drawn when analysing the nature of international low-income housing policies (*cf.* Aldrich & Sandhu, 1995; Sapire & Beall, 1995; Uduku, 1994.):

- The formation of informal settlements is intentionally or unintentionally shaped by state policy and the strategies selected to ameliorate the related problems. Policy has consequently been dominated by efforts to prevent, manipulate and, most recently, legalise informal settlements.
- The World Bank and several national governments are shifting their involvement in addressing housing poverty from conventional housing provision to sites-and-services and upgrading initiatives with an emphasis on the role of urban infrastructure in urban development.

15 The World Bank became deeply involved in supporting sites-and-service schemes and by 1983 had funded more than 70 such projects in the developing world.

16 In South Africa there were also hostile attitudes towards sites-and-services schemes which culminated in these projects being labelled "toilets in the veld". At a Free State Housing Summit (South Africa) in August 1995 many negative attitudes about incremental housing and self-help housing schemes were expressed. It was stated that those in middle or high-income neighbourhoods did receive significant state support and that promoting the ideals of self-help housing could therefore divert potential government assistance away from the poorest of the poor. Many of the reasons behind this sentiment were politically motivated, assuming that any housing delivery process other than conventional delivery is inferior as it promotes inequality and white domination.

The intention is to make housing more affordable to low-income households without the payment of subsidies or rents.

- Governments have not been particularly successful in meeting the shelter requirements of the urban populations of developing countries. It is clear that governments everywhere are suffering from a crisis of confidence, because they are no longer able to meet the rising expectations. In some instances the involvement of governments impedes rather than promotes shelter programmes.
- Housing is increasingly being recognised as only one part of urban development. A comprehensive process of consolidation and human-scale development linked with income generation and job creation for the poor is needed.
- Urban planners and professionals need to possess more than technical knowledge and knowledge of the general planning principles of their country. These would involve the skills to promote and co-ordinate community development and community participation in planning efforts. Successful planners need the skills of a diplomat, a development economist and a sociologist.
- Understanding the relationships of households and housing to society at large is therefore of vital importance. Self-help housing and the use of own labour in housing construction are strongly being considered.
- The majority of governments in developing countries initiate different levels of infrastructure and service provision simultaneously, which means that sites-and-services, upgrading and conventional housing provision are promoted together.
- More governments act as enablers instead of providers. Because funds are limited in developing countries, governments provide the essentials required by the urban poor rather than things the latter can provide for themselves.
- In periods of economical difficulty governments usually cut their budgets for social expenditure. Structural adjustment programmes originating with the World Bank and the IMF which result in the escalation of "new urban poverty" exacerbate this trend. Housing as a high volume, long-term investment tends to be affected sooner than other sectors of the economy by such measures.

The essence of these trends, in terms of low-income housing policies, is a greater emphasis on the social (non-material) dimensions of housing, the role of people in their own housing delivery (people's housing processes) and a re-definition of the limited role of the state as the enabler.

3. The South African urban low-income housing scene

3.1 Urbanisation and housing poverty in South Africa

In 1990 an estimated 22 million of South Africa's 37 million people or 59% of the population were urbanised.¹⁷ South African cities are growing at an enormous rate (in the order of 3 to 5 percent per year). By the year 2000 it will probably grow to a projected 75%, making South Africa the most urbanised Sub-Saharan African country and one of the most urbanised countries in all of Africa (Sapire & Beall, 1995:3; Van Rensburg, 1996:376). Forty nine per cent of the population

17 Statistics with regard to the urbanisation rate in South Africa differ substantially and also according to the definitions of what is considered as "urban". In the South African context "urban" is defined as any populated area with some form of local authority.

are living in settlements with more than 100 000 residents. In comparison, the rate for Africa as a whole is 31,4% (UNCHS,1996:85). South Africa's cities are growing at an estimated 300 000 households a year, with an average of five people per household. Despite the many advantages urbanisation holds for the South African population, the scope and rate at which urbanisation is at present taking place, especially among the black population, present several problems and disadvantages for the health and social security of the population (Van Rensburg 1996:376). Although 75% of the rural population are poor, 41% of the urban and 20% of the metropolitan population could be considered to be poor (Pillay,1996:39). Of these 41% black urban poor, 60% could be regarded as relatively poor while 30% are absolutely poor. This statistics justify attention to the urban poor, since the migration process (rural to peri-urban to urban) is not yet complete in South Africa.

As the South African housing crisis has intensified, so too the phenomenon of informal settlements¹⁸ and land invasion has grown. Informal housing is a major element of South Africa's urban landscape that can no longer be ignored or wished away. More than 8 million South Africans are currently living in informally constructed shelters. To give some perspective, the total number of urban people for the whole of South Africa in informal housing currently exceeds the total population of Gauteng (the former Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging area - one of the nine provinces of South Africa). Approximately 29% of the South African population or 2,5 million households, live as informal settlers, squatters or backyard dwellers (South Africa Survey, 1997:756). [Official estimates in 1992 were 1,5 million households or 17% (South Africa Survey,1993:206,212)]. More than five million of individuals in informal urban housing are situated in South Africa's six major metropolitan areas. Strikingly, more than half of the black metropolitan population are resident in informal housing.

During 1995 a national survey was conducted in eight informal settlements - comprising 200 000 South African inhabitants. The most important characteristics of these settlements are depicted in Box 7.1, which gives a picture of the socio-economic profile of South African informal settlements.

Box 7.1 Profile of informal settlements in South Africa

- **MORE THAN HALF THOSE INTERVIEWED HAVE HOUSEHOLD INCOMES OF LESS THAN R800 P.M. (\$190)**
- **AVERAGE EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF HOUSEHOLD HEADS IS 7 YEARS**
- **ABOUT 20% ARE UNEMPLOYED**
- **THOSE WITH JOBS ARE BLUE-COLLAR WORKERS**
- **AVERAGE LENGTH OF RESIDENCE IN THE NEIGHBOURHOODS IS 12 YEARS**
- **AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE IS 4.75**

McCarthy *et al.*, 1995

South African informal settlements symbolise many things simultaneously. Firstly, they are symbolic of misplaced urbanisation as a result of apartheid planning and regulation. When coercive measures of urban control were recalled, this resulted in noticeable land invasions on a

18 Informal settlements refer to urban neighbourhoods consisting of less formal houses. These houses are usually built with unconventional building material such as corrugated iron, plastic, wood, etc.

national scale. Secondly, they are a reminder of the previous government's failure to provide successfully in the shelter-related needs of low-income communities. Thirdly, they provide a daunting challenge for the new government to facilitate an acceptable participatory housing delivery process. However, any attempt by any post-apartheid government to provide formal houses for everyone could crush that government and bankrupt the country. These different contexts of interpretation will be clarified in the course of the argumentation.

Inadequate housing is still a major social deficit in South Africa today and the housing shortage in South Africa has been widely documented (Gelderblom & Kok,1994; Le Roux,1996; Pillay,1996:22). In comparison with other provinces, the Free State has the highest percentage (23%) of households living in shacks, followed by Gauteng (19%) and the Western Cape (12%). The South African Living Standards Survey (1994) also indicated that more than one third of all households, and more than half of the urban and metropolitan households deemed the provision of housing to be one of the three most important tasks a government could fulfil. Other important basic needs constitute water and electricity provision (Le Roux,1996:57). The current housing backlog could grow if a minimum of 200 000 units are not built every year. In 1994 and 1995 the central government's budget allocation for housing in South Africa was less than 2% compared with the international average of 3,5%. Due to budgetary constraints the lack of funding for housing delivery aggravated. In the 1996/97 national budget the allocation for housing was a mere 0,9% while the general view is that an effective housing programme requires between 4% and 5% of the national budget (Davidson,1994; South Africa Survey, 1997:691). The housing budget did however increase to 2,2% for 1997/1998 budget, but can still be regarded as well below an acceptable percentage needed to alleviate shelter poverty in South Africa.

3.2 Urban control and low-income housing policies in South Africa: past and present situations

Any discussion of South African urban policy will inevitably tend to centre on the element of control. That is not surprising, because numerous measures and mechanisms have been devised and implemented to control the black, dominated classes in South African urban areas (Maylam,1995:31-32). Many South African scholars, especially geographers, highlight the present implications of the spatiality of apartheid. Vestiges of apartheid persist in confounding post-apartheid urban managers in their attempts to repair the damages of the past. One can refer to the spatial technology of power which simply means that 'space is fundamental in any exercise of power'. This post-modern view of space and power is used to describe how the need to achieve urban control in South Africa, through different laws and influx controls, have impacted upon the urban landscape (Robinson,1996:5-29). Urban racial segregation has created starkly divided landscapes with sprawling, infrastructurally poor black townships. This resulted in the creation of settlements of surveillance to ensure that residents conform to the requirements of the apartheid regime. The resurgence of a nation-wide political movement [first the United Democratic Front (UDF) which was followed by the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO)] contesting the legitimacy of the apartheid state in the 1980s, was grounded in numerous urban communities and their struggles over the living conditions which apartheid planning and the government had imposed on them. Most of the struggles against apartheid policies and urban control were fought in urban settlements. The crisis of urban governance was compoun-

ded by the evident failure of state machinery to control the movement of African people to the cities (Robinson, 1996:205).

The dawn of the new political dispensation in South Africa, and the political promises made in the run-up to the election of April 27 1994, have unleashed a number of new demands which are beginning to impact - positively and negatively - on the process of housing delivery. Many of the expectations are not new and some of them can be traced to the Freedom Charter, but they have never previously been verbalised or transformed into electioneering promises (and subsequently into demands by the electorate) like "four-room houses" and "reclaiming the land". These expectations (and demands) are undoubtedly affecting and will continue to affect housing, one of the most politicised aspects of the South African society. To cope with the housing shortage of 1,2 million structures, whilst dealing with the annual demand for extra units, the African National Congress indicated in its Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) that it was aiming at securing the delivery of 1 million units within 5 years (ANC, 1994:22). This promise should be seen against the fact that the delivery sector could, at best, deliver only 50 000 units per annum over the past decade. Although there are indications that this hollow promise has been practically dropped from the political rhetoric of the day, some key policy-makers and opinion leaders in the housing sector are still striving to achieve the target by the next elections in 1999. This clearly sets the scene for conflict in housing development.

Add to this the legacy which apartheid has left on housing: group areas and forced removals; influx control until the mid 1980s; limited ownership for Africans outside the homelands until 1977 and inequitable per capita state expenditure based on racial categories. These are major hurdles which housing development in South Africa have to overcome. The mentioned historical obstacles in housing delivery have been exacerbated by the fact that the anti-apartheid forces chose the issue of housing as a prime target zone in their fight against the system. The country-wide boycott of service charges (water, electricity and sanitation) until 1994 resulted in shortages in the income budgets of local authorities and massive amounts of the housing budget have had to be channelled into meeting these deficits. Add to this the concerted campaign of bond boycotts which scared financial institutions and the magnitude of the problem becomes clearer (Botes *et al.*, 1996). The land question is a pivotal and emotive issue when urban development and low-income housing development are discussed. However, for the purposes of this chapter, land issues and how these influenced the South African landscape will not be discussed in detail. In some places land issues, only insofar as they relate to low-income urban housing, will receive attention.

Table 7.1 presents an overview of the evolution of low-income housing policy and legislation in South Africa. When one analyses the table, the dominance of state-driven conventional housing schemes in low-income housing provision is evident. Several phases can be identified in the evolution of South African state interventions in the urban arena.

The first phase [(1900-1920) (cf. Table 7.1)] is associated with **public health and disease control**. Legislation in favour of slum control was an outgrowth of rising concern amongst public health officials and urban managers that unsegregated, overcrowded and unsanitary African neighbourhoods posed a threat to white health and safety.¹⁹ According to the aims of this

19 There were many cases in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Durban and Johannesburg where the outbreak of epidemics in slum neighbourhoods was used as motivation for racial removals and resettlement. The term 'sanitation syndrome' is even used for the association made by whites between 'the black urban presence' and 'squalor, disease and crime' (Maylam, 1995:24-25).

approach housing could be declared 'unfit for human habitation', the occupants removed and the buildings demolished.

Table 7.1 Phases in the low income urban housing policies and practices in South Africa

(Designed by the author)

Phase:	Legislative and institutional framework	Housing delivery: policy and approach	Housing delivery: practice and actions
1900-1920	Legislation in favour of slum control motivated by health and disease control	Slum-clearance programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulldozing and forced removals
1920-1950	First legislation of urban African control and urban segregation motivated by racism	Limited state provided conventional housing schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulldozing and forced removals • Resettling and segregating the urban poor in racially-mixed inner-city suburbs • Accommodating African migrant workers on the mines in single sex hostels
1950-1986	Apartheid planning with a multitude of urban policy controls	Major conventional housing schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulldozing and forced removals • Institutionalisation of racially segregated cities and neighbourhoods
1986-1990	"Orderly urbanisation" and Neo-apartheid	Combination of conventional and progressive housing schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abolition of influx control • Acceptance of presence of "urban blacks" • Major efforts to develop "black South Africa" • Establishment of National Housing Forum
1990-1994	Informal processes to create legitimate institutional frameworks for housing delivery	Emphasis on progressive housing schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDT capital Subsidy Scheme of servicing 100 000 sites • National Building Commission – sites-and-service funding • Establishment of National Housing Forum
1994-	Institutionalisation of housing development and delivery on a non-racial basis	Conventional housing schemes as well as progressive housing delivery Recognition of people's housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of National Ministry of Housing and nine provincial Ministries • Establishment of National Housing Board and nine provincial Housing Boards • Approval and implementation of Housing Subsidy Scheme • Establishment of National Housing Finance Corporation • Launching of a People's Housing Process

The second phase of legislation (1920-1950) was more directly concerned with **achieving urban control**. Africans had to live in declared 'locations'. This was difficult to achieve and enforce due to lack of available alternative accommodation for those they wished to remove. Besides racist motivations, policies of urban segregation and forced removals also served capitalist interests with the intention of creating space for business development. Urban control measures were thus borne into the class struggle.

The third phase (1950 to 1986) can generally be described as the **apartheid phase**, which was in many respects a consolidation and streamlining of previous urban policies. Until the abolition of influx control and spatial apartheid laws such as the Group Areas Act, the South African urban landscape was enormously transformed on the basis of racially segregated cities and the application of a multitude of urban policy controls.²⁰ These forms of urban policy controls were aimed at preventing the settling of black people in white urban South Africa or at de-blackening some of the existing white urban areas by forcing Africans to relocate in so-called homelands. Although the different phases are useful for understanding the historical evolution of urban policies in South Africa one can also distinguish between two further phases to frame the more contemporary urban development history.

The period 1986 to 1990 can be regarded as the **neo-apartheid** phase. During this and the post-1990 phase housing was central to the problems of social and political order. The Urban Foundation (an NGO formed by big business) lobbied extensively for influx control to be lifted. This centrepiece of apartheid was abandoned in 1986. However, there were still several attempts to legislate for what they called 'orderly urbanisation' which made urban residence dependent upon housing availability. According to Robinson (1996:208) this was not effectively implemented but remind us that the problems of urban governance have been associated with housing provision. The Urban Foundation once again played a pioneering role in trying to resolve the housing crisis. The minimal provision of shelter was considered sufficient for the urban poor. This resulted in sites-and-services schemes and informal settlement upgrading. During this period, attention was given to tenure and access to housing for low-income households while the futility of eradicating informal settlements was also acknowledged.²¹ It was acknowledged, at least in some government circles, that households and owners will feel secure in making housing investments only when they are safe from eviction and various forms of harassment. Various researchers²² have indicated that ownership plays the most important role in giving people the confidence to upgrade their houses.

20 South Africa is one country where control measures have been clear and specific. With the so-called influx control legislation, black people were not allowed (for almost 40 years) to migrate to settlements of their choice unless they had permanent jobs. The motive behind this was apartheid planning to keep cities "white" and de-blacken the so-called "black spots" in 'White South Africa'. Needless to say, these measures of urban control carried high financial and social costs, embittering relations between sections of the community.

21 A squatter leader spelled out the failure of mass removals of informal settlers: "The Government was like a man who has a cornfield which is invaded by birds. He chases the birds from one part of the field and they alight in another part ... we squatters are the birds ... we will see whether it is the farmer or the birds who get tired first" (Harrison, 1992:15).

22 In two separate surveys (1990 and 1993) in Freedom Square (one of the largest informal settlements in South Africa), the most positive aspect as perceived by end-beneficiaries in the upgrading of Freedom Square was ownership of the site they resided on. This supports the assumption that legalised tenure enhances both social security and the social value of the individual household (cf. Botes *et al.*, 1991; Labuschagne, 1993; Marais, 1993:9).

Until the mid 1980s the international experience of housing had little influence on housing policies in South Africa because the state focused on planning for apartheid. The South African government's approaches towards informal housing shifted from coercive measures and anti-urbanisation policies to allowing informal urbanisation to take place. After 1990 the government also adopted a supportive role in which the upgrading of informal settlements through conventional and progressive housing were and still are promoted.

The post-1990 phase can also be divided into two different phases. **1990-1994:** the gradual **dismantling of apartheid** urban policies and the creation of new more legitimate ways and processes to **negotiate urban policies**. Organisations like the newly created National Housing Forum,²³ Planact²⁴ and the Independent Development Trust²⁵ played an important role in this regard.

The **post-apartheid phase (from 1994 onwards)** is characterised by the institutionalisation of a non-racial legitimate institutional framework to design and implement new housing policies. This was demonstrated by the creation of a formal structure called the National Housing Board, and the creation of a Ministry of Housing (with the late Joe Slovo as first Housing minister) at the central government level, nine Provincial Housing Boards and nine Provincial Housing Ministries. Of all the basic needs in South Africa, housing is probably the most controversial. In the RDP base-document the principle is emphasised that "all South Africans have the right²⁶ to a secure place in which to live in peace and dignity" (ANC, 1994: 23). Though it is argued that housing should be affordable²⁷ to even the "poorest of South Africans", this approach will still have to take account of funding and resource constraints. Fiscal discipline necessitates cost recovery, leading to the risk that subsidies in this area will again benefit the relatively better off, and not the poorest of the poor. If poverty alleviation should in fact be the first priority, housing

23 Among the nineteen members were the African National Congress, South African National Civic Organisation, Inkhata, Association of Mortgage Lenders, Material Manufacture and Supply Sector, Construction Consortium, The Congress of SA Trade Unions, Urban Foundation, SA Housing Trust and the non-profit Housing Delivery Sector.

24 This development NGO was launched in Johannesburg in 1985, by a group of development professionals working in the University of Witwatersrand and in private practice. The main aim was to provide expertise in planning, engineering and architecture which would enable communities to set the development agenda for their own areas and demand a say in planning decisions (Abbott, 1996:200-201).

25 A South African Trust was established independent of government but funded by government, comprising prominent business and academic people, to oversee a budget of R750 million for urban infrastructure provision in a scheme whereby the sum of R7 500 would be allocated as a capital subsidy for a serviced site for 100 000 households. This resulted in the improvement of the living conditions of about half a million people. To ensure the money was made available to low income families, an income ceiling of R1 000 per month was placed on the main breadwinner.

26 The issue of housing as a human right was the most debated issue at the Habitat II Conference in Istanbul. Due to the influence of the American bloc a compromise was reached that housing is a progressive right and not a fundamental right. In South Africa, housing is considered as a second-generation human right. According to Gelderblom & Kok (1994:99) the constitutions of over 30 countries also recognise the right to housing.

27 The issue of affordability of housing or the ability of households to repay loans used for the construction and purchase of houses is very important in the South African housing scene. Gelderblom & Kok (1994:107) indicate that nearly 45% of African households are not financially able to make any contribution to their housing. Some people suggest that there is in fact no housing problem - only an income and employment problem in South Africa. This has resulted in criticism of the ANC government's social development drive of embarking on a national housing delivery process. According to this critique the government should rather focus on job creation and economic development in order to enable the poor to provide for their own social development needs, including housing.

provision should therefore, at this stage, not be such a high priority. In terms of costs, the poor could gain more and have benefits more broadly spread - from water and electricity provision and the extension of primary health care - than they could from housing alone (Le Roux, 1996:58). In April 1996 the National Housing Finance Corporation, which focussed on the mobilisation of alternative forms of finance for low-income earners, was established. May 1996 saw the launching of the People's Housing Process which focussed on supporting self-help housing through the establishment of housing support centres throughout South Africa. The main objectives of this government-driven programme are to give the poor access to subsidies, serviced land, skills training, advice, building materials and technical assistance (South Africa Survey, 1997:738-739). Other low-income housing policy matters during 1996 which merit attention include:

- Utilisation of the R525 million RDP Fund to promote **public-private partnerships** in housing delivery;
- Since **local level delivery capacity** is regarded as critical to the success of a low-income housing programme, delivery responsibility was devolved to the local municipal level. This meant that local authorities could also act as private developers. This move, however, was severely criticised by organisations in the private sector who argued that these actions jeopardised private sector interests and undermined private sector participation in the low-income housing market.
- The application of institutional subsidies to support a **rental housing approach** (South Africa Survey, 1997:740-744).

3.3 The emergence of participatory urban development in South Africa

South Africa's rapid urbanisation and the associated problems of housing and infrastructure provision have been well documented. What have been less well covered are the role of community participation and civil society in urban development and the factors influencing the effectiveness of community participation in urban renewal. Over the past couple of years development in South Africa has undergone a virtual paradigm shift: a shift from imposed, prescribed or selective development²⁸ to what Friedman (1993) and Abbott (1996) call "negotiated development". From the mid-1970s, urban conflict awoke white élite to the need to redress the material circumstances of black city-dwellers: development was either imposed in a top-down manner by the white "establishment" (also referred to by some as the "betterment approach") or it was negotiated with selected leaders from homeland or black local authorities. Social movements such as the United Democratic Front (UDF - early 1980s) and the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO late 1980s and early 1990s) which operated outside official structures, were rarely consulted on housing projects. Less were they invited to become full partners in the planning and execution of development projects. However, these urban movements did become a major force influencing urban policy, albeit by and large at local levels.

28 The majority of development projects in South Africa prior to 1990 were generally ideology-driven. In these cases the government, para-statal and even private developers undertook development ventures primarily for the promotion of their own image and power base. These development projects were largely extensions/confirmations of existing separate development policies and could at best be labelled examples of "betterment approaches".

According to Abbott (1996:201) the lack of community participation was one of the main historical weaknesses in the low-income housing policy and urban management field in South Africa. According to Friedman (1993:1) there is now general agreement that the approach of imposed development has failed: in its place is a virtual consensus, at least in theory, that development must be negotiated with the "community" and with its "real/legitimate leaders", rather than with those leaders the "establishment" has chosen.

The idea of negotiated development is, therefore, new to South Africa since it emerged only during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Perhaps one can also regard the emergence of negotiated development as part of a broader sensitivity to democracy and the demand for a growing process of democratisation.

Prior to the 1970s, apartheid itself was of course referred to as "separate development". During the 1970s and early 1980s development was not an agreed upon goal for black urbanites; neither was it part of the political vocabulary as it still carried apartheid connotations. The government had initially insisted that development was something which happened separately in the homelands only - it was not needed in the cities since black residents were regarded only as temporary inhabitants of white urban South Africa. Even after this ideology began to erode, there was no official commitment to urban development: township residents were expected to rely on the efforts of self-financing separate local authorities whose resources did not stretch far enough to finance basic services, let alone to initiate "development" (Friedman,1993:4). In some cases government and semi-government organisations defined community development as a process whereby communities are motivated to participate in and to cooperate with the activities of development agents. This inevitably leads to only lip-service being paid to concepts like participation, self-reliance, empowerment, bottom-up decision-making, etc. resulting in the use and abuse of terms such as participation and development as essential components of apartheid politics in South Africa.

This separate development approach changed only in the mid-1980s. In reaction to urban conflict the establishment of the Regional Services Councils in 1985 for the first time committed a statutory institution to allocating resources to infrastructural development in the townships. During the late 1980s the motives for and mode of development changed dramatically - the National Security Management System used development in a manipulative manner to win the hearts and minds of township people in order to neutralise the militancy in townships and to regain control (Friedman,1993:4). This was a final retreat from the principle that development should be focussed on homeland development only. The Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA), which until then had concerned itself with homeland development only, funded its first urban programme in Alexandra township in 1987. Although this change in approach sanctioned urban development, it insisted that it be either imposed from the top, or negotiated with selective partners such as Black Local Authorities. This strategy was a response to resistance politics from the township civic associations, most of them initially affiliated to the UDF and later to SANCO.

A detailed analysis of SANCO or related organisations is, however, beyond the the scope of this study, but for the purposes of this chapter two points are relevant. Firstly, civic organisations were *de facto* local arms of the liberation movement in South Africa and their main goal was to challenge the imposition of urban neo-apartheid and, in particular, the Black Local Authority system. Secondly, local "bread and butter" grievances (*i.e.* lack of services, payment of services,

need for serviced land, etc.) were potent mobilising issues. The first point implied that civics, unlike interest-based local pressure groups, claimed to represent the community (usually black and deprived) as a whole. On the one hand, their undoubted success in mobilising resistance lent credibility to the claim; while, on the other hand, there was marked absence of agreed tests of representativeness. The latter also had important effects, since the role and function of the civics had changed from protest or activist organisations to community facilitators in development initiatives. Friedman (1993:4-5) points out that this background has set the context for negotiated development in South Africa in the 1990s.

Along with national-level negotiations, which gave rise to the transfer of power from white minority government to a Government of National Unity in May 1994, negotiations for a new form of local government were held during the course of 1993-1994. These took the form of the Local Government Negotiating Forum (LGNF). The delegates to the LGNF agreed to divide into statutory and non-statutory delegations. The non-statutory alliance consisted of SANCO (who initiated the national rent boycott which had brought the authorities to the negotiating table), the ANC and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). The statutory forces included representatives from different levels of government, officials, professional institutes, councillors and practitioners (Robinson, 1996:209-210). These local government negotiations are yet another example of the politicisation of urban services and government in South Africa during the 1980s and 1990s operating in an environment of consensus-seeking and negotiated development.

Abbott (1996:51-63) identifies four components of the South African local authority management system as being central to the successful provision and maintenance of physical infrastructure, namely: legitimacy, affordability, institutional capacity and user-convenience. Due to the lack of meaningful and effective community participation, all four areas were simultaneously placed under severe stress. Understanding political transition in South Africa is very important to understanding the relationship between community participation and urban upgrading.

From this concise overview it becomes clear that the urge for participatory development in the South African urban scene is very much the result of a paradigm shift in development thinking, a shift in favour of negotiated development. Negotiated development presupposes that development agencies form partnerships with the urban poor to collaborate with them on the solution of their problems, rather than trying to force them into generic schemes they cannot afford.

3.4 The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and urban low-income housing delivery

The South African Government of National Unity, which was established after the April 1994 elections was strongly committed to addressing the problems of poverty and inequality. Its framework for the alleviation and reduction of poverty revolves around the RDP which was formulated by the ANC and its associates before the election and which was adopted as the policy framework of the then Government of National Unity (Tjønneland, 1996:5). The RDP was regarded by many as a panacea for South Africa's wide range of development problems. The RDP had two major and related objectives; to combat poverty and to reconstruct the economy. Five broad programmes were defined to promote this: meeting basic needs; upgrading human rights; strengthening the economy; democratising the state and society; and making the state and public sector more efficient (ANC, 1994).

The RDP holds a strong people-centred view of development which recognises the fact that the poor should be given control over their own lives, and that their ability to mobilise sufficient resources should be increased. The RDP reflects a commitment to grass-roots, bottom-up development which is owned and driven by communities and their own representative organisations. Its central aim is to improve the quality of life of all South Africans and particularly of the neglected sectors of society. The RDP pertinently embraces the principles of participatory development, holding that development is not about the delivery of goods to a passive citizenry, but rather about active involvement and growing empowerment. The RDP endeavours to integrate growth, development, reconstruction and redistribution into a unified programme (ANC, 1994: 6,15).

There are however some criticisms against the RDP which also impact on the debates concerning urban development and community participation. Van Zyl (1995:14-16) asks a critical question about the scope of the people-centred vision of the RDP. Needs mentioned in the RDP are defined in conventional and materialistic terms as a desire for economic goods and services. Such a narrow interpretation of needs renders it difficult to address both material and non-material needs in a systematic and integrated manner. This leaves the government wide open to popular demands to simply hand out goods and services to the poor. Concerning endogenous development, the RDP can be said to have originated inside South Africa, and not for example from outside institutions such as the World Bank or the United Nations. Irrespective of the diverse and multi-cultural nature of South Africa, one could safely conclude that the majority of the principles and ideals reflected in the RDP have the support of the vast majority of South Africans.

The RDP's strong emphasis on democratisation, people-driven processes, active involvement and the growing empowerment of communities clearly demonstrates that it regards the promotion of greater self-reliance of communities as an important component of its development vision. Since fundamental needs and their appropriate satisfiers can only be articulated from within a community, there is the danger that the delivery of economic goods and services can, and often are planned and controlled by government officials under pressure to deliver on political promises. If so, development degenerates into the quick-fix of delivering very visible material commodities from the top down, rather than focussing on bottom-up delivery which enables people to develop themselves.

Although some achievements in the areas of primary health care, nutrition, water supply and electricity provision were reached during the government's first 500 days, in terms of housing delivery the RDP fell short of what both the ANC and most South Africans had hoped for. For example, the building of low-cost houses hardly got off the ground with only 11 000 houses built during the first 500 days instead of the national aim to build 200 000 units per annum. Until the end of June 1996, the RDP delivered less than 15 000 houses - a far cry from the two-year benchmark of 400 000. Notwithstanding considerable concern regarding the slow pace of delivery, 1996 saw the rate of delivery increase substantially. Between March 1994, (when the housing subsidy scheme was implemented), and August 1995, the average monthly delivery was 536 subsidies. However, between September 1995 and September 1996 delivery averaged 6 952 per month. After the first 1 000 days housing delivery improved to 135 087 houses built (South Africa Survey, 1997:747-748) and by January 1999 approximately 700 000 houses had been built (Marais, 1999; Moses, 1999). Many accuse the RDP of creating bureaucratic bottle-

necks which not only slow the pace of government delivery even further, but threatens the survival of NGOs already engaged in development work. The RDP Ministry has not even been able to allocate all the funds at its disposal (only 55 % of the 1994-95 RDP Fund had been allocated, and only a small fraction of this amount was actually spent). In May 1996 the RDP Fund had an embarrassing surplus of approximately R2 billion of unused RDP funds (Caliguire, 1996:5-6,20; Tjønneland, 1996:5-6).

Several conclusions can be drawn from this lack of development performance. It could well be a lack of appropriate institutional capacity to deliver. With hindsight, one could conclude that the RDP was a programme without a plan, a development credo without the capacity to deliver, a popular manifesto without the potential to mobilise. According to Tjønneland (1996:6) the successful RDP projects are mainly in the areas where the existing capacity to deliver has long existed, such as the Department of Water Affairs and in ESCOM, a main electricity supplier. Some may argue that the problem hinges with the current Provincial Housing Board policies and practices²⁹ which are conventional rather than incremental or progressively orientated. Another argument is that successful housing delivery depends on the consent and participation of communities, on an efficient public service and - in many instances - on partnerships with the private sector and NGOs. These take time to develop (often more than a couple of hundred days) and require skilful negotiations.

Some have criticised the RDP for not being an integrated plan of action, but rather a pre-election shopping list of goals the ANC had hoped to attain once it took over government, and, in the event, containing too many promises and too few priorities. Although the RDP had originally been the icon of the New South Africa, it soon turned into a scapegoat (*cf.* Blumenfeld, 1996). However, its symbolic importance cannot be underestimated. The RDP was at least a starting point for putting forward the development problems of South Africa and the issue of inequality as the priority items on the agenda, and for providing a set of values, goals and strategies to remedy these.

After 730 days the ANC-led government dismantled the RDP Office due to lack of delivery. The RDP was replaced by the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) initiative. Was this a signal that the ANC was abandoning its pre-election vision of reconstruction and development initiatives? This raises serious questions about the government's future commitment to development (Caliguire, 1996:5-6,20). The failure of the new Government to deliver on development promises could lead to a resurgence of the South African NGO and CBO sector. These segments of civil society will resurrect and transform themselves and may in future have agendas and priorities which conflict with those of the government. The closing down of the RDP Office could also be viewed in terms of the larger ideological debate of "economic growth versus redistribution", which is stirring within government. Control over the programmatic and strategic aspects of the RDP has been given to the Office of the Deputy State President. For some, the dismantling of the RDP Office symbolises that economic growth, rather than redistribution, has won the day as the primary tool for change. Nowadays, fostering the aims of human development seem more unlikely.

29 The Free State Housing Board did not approve a single housing subsidy for the 1997 financial year due to management and administrative problems as well as a lack of capacity of both the National and Provincial Housing Departments. At least two housing boards of other provinces (Mpumalanga and Northern Cape) almost stopped functioning during 1997.

3.5 A future scenario for community participation in South African low-income housing delivery

The priorities for low-income housing in South Africa will, for years to come, emphasise the following:

- The shelter related needs of the poor
- Communities should be meaningfully involved in housing development that affects them
- All stakeholders in low-income housing delivery should be meaningfully involved
- The potential of people to fulfil their own housing needs should be encouraged and supported.

In the new South Africa one has to be cautious of professionals, officials, politicians, even those that present themselves as so-called community leaders, who use participatory development for their own personal gain or to serve political ends and to maximise power. Even the RDP, which was designed with good intentions, is not above the dirty business of politics. What better combination of symbols than a government that has committed itself to participatory development through the RDP? Yet, politicians may at the same time use their concern for development to political advantage. Although this may sound like overemphasising the conspirational aspects of social development initiatives in South Africa, one cannot deny the political-ideological agenda implicit in the development establishment's promotion of participatory development.

Perhaps we have reached the climax of community participation in South Africa. During the years of oppression and lack of legitimised and democratised institutions there was the biggest urge for large-scale popular participation in the struggles for freedom. During the transitional years from a Neo-apartheid to a Post-apartheid era (1986 - 1994), especially, the shift towards participatory development approaches was significant in South Africa. Now that democratically elected government structures and their development programmes have gained more legitimacy, practising community participation may decrease. The State's involvement to provide in the socio-economic needs of the majority in South Africa through the RDP may also lead to the demise of community participation in development projects. In this regard Morgan (1993:74-77) indicates that :

"Effective bottom-up community participation seems to decrease in proportion to increasing state involvement in development".³⁰

Applying this idea, people are more likely to want to participate where the established order offers them fewer opportunities to participate; in other words participation and the demand for participation will be greater where and when there is a more urgent and immediate need for social change. Conversely, participation is less apparent in contexts where the government provides more basic services. Greater participation is quite simply unnecessary where the relations between the state and citizenry are more co-operative and mutually respectful.

Theoretically, the outcry for participation will decline if the current government can deliver. However, if the ANC-led government cannot sufficiently and speedily provide in the expectations of those who voted them into power, only then will civil society again embark on true spontaneous participatory development initiatives. Community participation will also be influenced every five years when it is General Election time. Usually, for a short period after such elections the state will emphasise the process-related nature of housing delivery. However, come the next

30 Morgan illustrates this argument with case studies from Cuba and Tanzania.

election, tangible delivery will dominate at the expense of people participating in housing delivery initiatives to live up to the election promises. One should not argue that participation is by definition only viable if it is driven by political objectives. The fact that we have a democratically elected government in South Africa is no guarantee that they are sensitive enough to community needs. When many of the hastily created housing projects (rows upon rows of pink and blue houses) are considered it really does not seem to be the case. The more government tries to speak for people (even in delivery) the more it will be questioned.

4. Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the emergence and evolution of participatory housing processes in urban low-income communities both internationally and in South Africa. It analysed the different manifestations of reactionary government policies aimed at managing cities. Acts of intolerance towards over-urbanisation, such as forced removals and controlled urbanisation, were discussed. The forced removals of squatters is not a solution of the housing problems. Formal conventional housing programmes have failed to deliver housing at the rate and scale required, and they have frequently proved to be unaffordable to the poor. Factors that may lead to a major shift in policies to address housing poverty also received attention. These include not only financial realities and public budgetary constraints but also acknowledgements of the human and economic value of informal housing stock and processes of self-help housing drives. Community participation in urban projects should be a two-way process and state programmes need to be linked to the efforts of local people to improve their urban environment. Many case studies in urban upgrading also show that it is both possible and desirable to involve ordinary people in addressing housing poverty.

Much of the dynamics of the recent transformation of South African society have been acted out in the urban arena. The urban crisis and subsequently the housing challenge has been at the centre of the crisis of apartheid. The effective management of cities and initiatives to improve the shelter environment of many people will be essential to the success of the new government. Informal housing processes and formal processes will have to be harnessed together by means of mixed and pragmatic low-income housing policies. The chances of success of a state-centred, public, conventional housing approach in relation to the scale of need in low-income communities is small compared to the prospects offered by an incremental housing approach. According to McCarthy *et al.* (1995) if we fail to satisfy the needs of the urban poor, the consequences for our cities will be continuing land invasions, a proliferation of unserviced informal housing, increasingly impossible urban management, and a general decline in local and international investor confidence.

What is needed, while approaching the year 2000, is a shift from urban crisis management and reactive planning to pro-active urban development and a fervour to assist the urban poor in creating their own sustainable human settlements. In South Africa, as is already the case in other developing countries, we should not only aim at increasing our housing stock, but also at improving it. In many countries where the aim was predominantly to increase the size of the housing stock, delivery could not be sustained due to budgetary constraints, and this resulted in

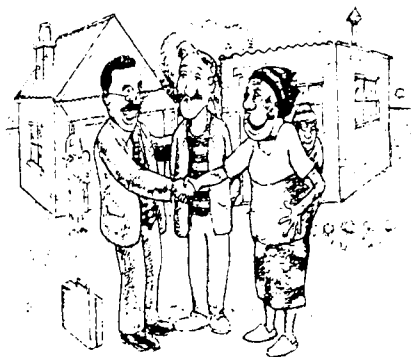
a bias towards the upper-lower income groups, while negating the poorest segments of society. Perhaps Joubert as quoted by Harrison (1992:20) best summarises the challenge of community participation in low-income housing policies:

"How we respond to the needs of low-income urban communities is one of the major challenges facing South Africa. We could bulldoze the shacks in the hopes that their occupants will disappear, but they will simply spring up somewhere else - more dilapidated, more desperate, more hostile. We could ignore them, and they will slowly become a health threat and an economic burden on our formal cities. Or we could use our resources and expertise to turn this massive wave of human energy into a positive component of urban development".

The next chapter (Chapter 8) will discuss community participation in the upgrading of Freedom Square as a case study. The purpose is to highlight various aspects of community participation and to test the "theory" of participatory development in practice.

8

Community participation in the upgrading of Freedom Square: a case study



In this chapter community participation in development is cast into an applied geographical and local context. For this purpose Freedom Square (an informal settlement on the outskirts of Bloemfontein, the capital of the Free State Province in South Africa) (*cf.* Map 8.2) has been selected as a case study community in order to explore and illuminate different aspects and various dimensions of community participation in practice. There are three reasons for the decision to focus on this selected case study. A first reason is to unravel the processes and dynamics of community participation in a specific informal settlement-upgrading context. Such an in-depth analysis of the participatory-related values, beliefs and attitudes of the end-beneficiaries and other role players from the case study community will deliver a more contextualised and therefore a deeper understanding of community participation. This will also add a practical and applied dimension to this study.

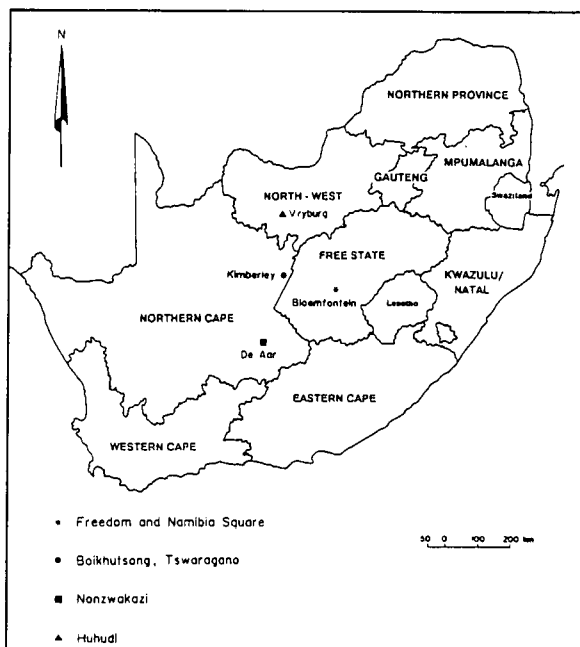
A *second reason* for selecting Freedom Square is due to the researcher's involvement in this community from August 1990 (six months after the land invasions and the release of President Mandela) until 1998. The researcher has had the advantage of having nine years of direct exposure to the group dynamics in this community (*cf.* Map 8.1).

A *third reason* is linked to one of the important contributions that the dependency theory made towards the study of underdeveloped communities, namely that poverty can only be truly discovered through a detailed socio-historic analysis. By looking at the past, one gains perspective on the future. This serves as an important reason why the researcher decided to analyse the participatory aspects of the socio-his-

torical transition in the upgrading of Freedom Square. The history of Freedom Square epitomises the history of South African in-situ upgrading.

A *fourth* reason – once again to challenge and test the “theory” of community participation as accumulated in numerous experiences all over the globe, and in this sense to contribute to the richness of knowledge and experience.

This chapter is an attempt to do three things: Firstly to maintain that the nature, quality and intensity of community participation in a development project are due to their complexity, difficult to measure. Secondly that the researcher opted for a combination of detailed descriptions and analyses of participatory dynamics among key stakeholders and selections of measurements via surveys in the selected community. And thirdly to draw conclusions about community participation in a selected case study of informal settlement upgrading.



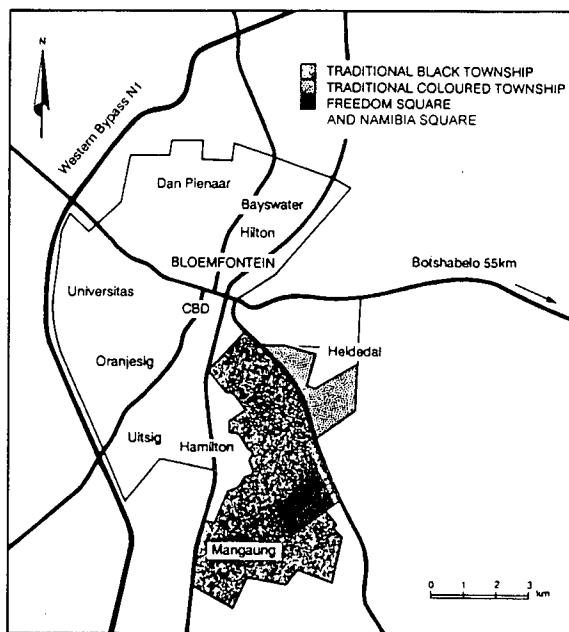
Map 8.1 South African upgrading projects where the researcher was involved (1990-1996)

1. The establishment and development of Freedom Square

Owing to apartheid, land for African housing in South Africa was for many years a scarce resource. In all towns and cities restrictions existed to prevent the expansion of African townships. This resulted in illegal backyard squatting, as well as in a high incidence of lodger families. The abolition of influx control in 1986, without a pre-emptive development thrust to make serviced stands available, resulted in even worse overcrowding and squatting. This started to spill over into illegal land invasions [encouraged by the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO)] mainly of unused land within townships or of vacant land adjacent to townships (Botes *et al.*, 1991:9-10).

Shortly after the historic speech delivered by the then State President, FW de Klerk, on 2 February 1990 when he announced the unbanning of the ANC, political and social tension began to increase countrywide. This provided the spark that initiated various land-invasion processes.

In the case of Bloemfontein, the Mangaung Civic Association proposed that the land around Mangaung be occupied informally. As a result of over-population, especially in Mangaung, and the accompanying encouragement of the civic association, eight informal settlements had already mushroomed around Bloemfontein by the end of 1990. Eventually, the occupied land at Rodenbeck, situated outside Mangaung was renamed Freedom Square and Namibia Square (*cf.* Map 8.2). The authorities could deduce from this move that very strong political connotations of liberation were attached to these names, and that the Mangaung Civic Association was issuing a strong challenge to the predominantly white authorities. In other words Freedom Square was founded, on the one hand for political reasons, and on the other hand, as a result of the shortcomings in the provision of housing for Africans in Bloemfontein, the latter reason also reflecting political motivation (*cf.* Van Rensburg *et al.*, 1997).



Map 8.2 Freedom Square¹ as selected case study area in relation to Greater Bloemfontein

In March 1991 the Independent Development Trust (IDT)² announced a R750 million Capital Subsidy Scheme to provide approximately 110 000 subsidies of R7 500 each. This enabled households earning less than R1 000 per month to enter the housing market through acquiring registered ownership of a serviced site. At the completion of this scheme in 1996, 113 344 sub-

1. Namibia Square is adjacent to Freedom Square and was simultaneously invaded. Namibia consisted of 1 500 informal dwellings at the time when the upgrading project commenced in 1991. It is, however, important that the whole of Freedom Square was serviced (3 200 sites) while only 800 of the 1 500 sites in Namibia were targeted for services, due to only 4 000 subsidies (because of budgetary allocations for the Free State Province) having been approved by the Independent Development Trust. This explains why many refer only to the Freedom Square Upgrading Project instead of the Freedom Square and Namibia Square Upgrading Project.
2. The IDT was established in 1990 to manage and disburse a fund of R2 000 million. The IDT operated during the democratic transition of South Africa (1991 to 1994) as the biggest national development agency. Although the IDT received its main financial support from the South African Government it could be regarded as an NGO sufficiently removed from Government to allow for broader community-based inputs.

sidies had been provided to 103 different projects located throughout South Africa. With the announcement of the IDT's Capital Subsidy Scheme, the Urban Foundation (an urban development NGO) and the Mangaung Civic Association were some of the first organisations to apply for funds for the upgrading of stands. The upgrading project of Freedom Square was one of the largest in South Africa, involving 4 132 stands and funds to the amount of R31 million. Immediately after it became known that the IDT would indeed have funds available, a community trust (the Upgrade Community Trust) was established to act as developer, while the Urban Foundation and later the New Housing Company (NewHCo) were assigned the roles of project managers. After two years' work, the project was officially launched in June 1992, and this implied that the city gates for housing to poor blacks were thrown wide open for the first time (*cf.* Marais, 1994:146,156). The site-and-service component of the project was completed in 1995, and in October of the same year, the Free State Housing Board approved a housing proposal to the amount of R29 million. The construction of formal state-subsidised houses started on 3 June 1996 and was completed in November 1998.

This case study of Freedom therefore covers three time periods, namely that of large scale occupation of land in 1990 and 1991, the implementation of a site-and-service scheme in 1992 to 1995, and finally, the implementation of a low-income housing project from 1996 to 1998. The current population of Freedom Square is 17 200 people which results in an average household size of 4.2 people.

2. The Independent Development Trust (IDT), community participation and urban upgrading

Compared with other similar low-income housing or service-delivery projects within South Africa, the IDT has achieved a much higher degree of participation (*cf.* Robinson *et al.*, 1994). Far more consultation and community participation took place around the Capital Subsidy Scheme than had ever occurred before in South African low-income housing initiatives. From the findings of a national assessment of the Scheme it appears that the consultation and participation objectives were only partially successful. Most notable was the effective and transparent way in which community structures took responsibility for site allocation. On the whole, beneficiaries and their leaders were unaware of the projects until the implementation of the projects; they were hardly involved in decisions concerning standards and cost; they were not generally trained in technical choice nor were they involved from the very beginning in planning for service maintenance (*cf.* Robinson *et al.*, 1994:vii-viii).

In a national postal survey launched in February 1993, 709 questionnaires were sent to all role-players involved in the 103 IDT Capital Subsidy projects. Although a response rate of only 21% materialised, it is significant that the single most-mentioned aspect of the project identified as having worked well was that "community participation facilitated the implementation of the project" (Robinson *et al.*, 1994:190). However, there were also two community participation-related aspects which were highlighted by respondents as the main problems encountered in the informal settlement upgrading initiatives: too many role players involved which made decision-making difficult and a lack of development knowledge by the community.

Thus, despite the large-scale efforts and undeniable achievements of the IDT's Subsidy Scheme in general, focussing on one particular case study and analysing the community partic-

icipation aspects of the Freedom upgrading could generate some important experiences and reveal some sobering lessons.

3. Methodological considerations in analysing community participation in Freedom Square

It is sometimes said that the way to truth is as important as the truth itself. Paraphrasing this old adage, we may say that the process through which one arrives at a methodology for participation is no less important than the methodology itself. A key question in studying participatory development is how to capture and measure community participation in development programmes or projects. Attempts to measure community participation are still relatively new and meaningful data is not always available. Moreover, benefits like the development of community based organisations, the transference of skills to local levels and consequent benefits to the community, etc. are difficult to assess. The challenge to the researcher in participatory development is to 'listen to the people' (*cf.* Dudley, 1993:57; Salmen, 1989). This practice can be hard to implement, particularly to the outsider. Even when one's professional bias is not acting as a filter to what is heard, there are many other obstacles to successful listening, *i.e.* language, suspicion, the community's pride, the unspoken assumptions of the end-beneficiary and the researcher, the beneficiary's desire to please, the beneficiary's expectations, the perceived role of one's companions, limited time and the dominance of the articulate over the inarticulate.

To assess the effectiveness or success of community participation in any development attempt is perhaps the most problematic of all aspects. How people and interest groups respond to a particular form of participation will depend largely on their viewpoint. Effectiveness for what and for whom is largely a political question that can hardly be answered objectively. It is no easy task to evaluate the impact and outcome of community participation in relation to set objectives. First of all, it is easier to measure the achievement of some objectives than of others. For example, the outcome in respect of cost sharing can be quantified, whereas contribution to project effectiveness or capacity building is more difficult to determine and may have to be viewed from a longer-term perspective. Second, interpreting the outcome of community participation is not easy, as it depends also on the role played by other complementary elements in the project. The problem is that some objectives of community participation cannot be disentangled from those of the project itself.

Conventionally the social sciences and development studies have had an overwhelming bias towards quantitative indicators for assessing development progress and initiatives. This has been unfortunate and has generally given a distorted approach to development policy and actions. In an attempt to overcome problems of this nature, qualitative techniques have been devised which are now frequently grouped under rapid appraisal methods also labelled participatory (action) research. Rapid appraisal techniques emerged in the late 1970s and were first used in the field of rural development. This research method seeks to stimulate and assist disadvantaged people to undertake their own collective investigations into their living conditions and environment. From this they can develop their own systematic thinking - their own 'science'. Uneducated or semi-educated people thus have the ability to develop "systematically scientific collective knowledge" through their own research efforts and own praxis (Rahman, 1993:5; 1995:24; Varkevisser *et al.*, 1993:13). This participatory research methodology has the same conceptual basis as Paulo Freire's conscientisation of self-reflected learning. In this regard

Varkevisser *et al.* (1993:13) pleads for a learning process approach where development workers and ordinary community people would share their knowledge and resources, creating programmes in which the needs and capacities of beneficiaries would be linked to those of outsiders.

Workshops, semi-structured individual and group interviews and unstructured interviews are but some of a few data-gathering techniques that the researcher can apply to listen to the people and to evaluate the frequency and quality of community involvement in projects. As Chambers (1983) puts it, "it is by talking, travelling, asking, listening, observing and doing things together that development workers can most effectively learn". Dudley (1993:69) says that a researcher, in analysing community participation in development, should pursue the principle of maximum serendipity. In this the researcher should establish opportunities for mutual discoveries, for both beneficiaries and interveners, by doing things together, to understand the context of development, participation and each other's knowledge better. The main aim of participatory research is not to promote a research partnership between experts and ordinary people, but rather to promote people's own research on the basis of self-created knowledge.

It is very important to place any assessment of community participation in the broader socio-political and economic historical context of a country, region and community. One could, for example, ask whether the nature of community participation will now differ from what was practised seven to eight years ago in South Africa, now that a different *realpolitik* prevails where political citizen participation took place at the national, the regional and the local levels. Some may argue that the frequency and intensity of community participation may have diminished because the society has been democratised and the outcry for legitimisation and direct democracy has decreased. This relation between citizen participation and project specific participation will remain an interesting research topic to pursue. With regard to the question as to whether there is a relationship between the form of government and the form of participation, Morgan (1993:6) asserts that spontaneous participation is more acceptable to democratic states than to repressive regimes. Other examples, like for instance the Costa Rican case, dispel the notion that there is a direct, linear relationship between the form of government and the form of participation.

Elaborating a social methodology to analyse community participation requires the multi-disciplinary skills of social researchers, development planners and members of the end-beneficiary community. It furthermore requires a dialogic method of inquiry wherever the perceptions and understandings of the people whose participation is in question are considered to be crucially important in understanding the problematic nature of participation. Some researchers have frequently tried dialogic methods of inquiry such as participatory action research but have often fallen back upon more conventional methods of inquiry, collecting quantitative and human perceptual data by means of surveys, questionnaires and interviews rather than by in-depth dialogues with the people. The problem with conventional research methods is that they often pursue research *upon* the people while participatory research is doing research *with* the people. The reason for this is the basic premise of a conventional research paradigm where some researchers are superior and therefore qualified to guide, control and determine the others' research. The generation of knowledge in this paradigm is by prescribed methods which require observation from a distance as opposed to getting involved (Rahman, 1993:142, 217).

International development agencies have spent millions of dollars in hiring consultants to devise standardised measures of participation, identify their correlates and determine how to

make them more "successful". These development experts, in their attempts to evaluate community participation, tend to focus on whether or not communities are "co-operating" with government-sponsored initiatives. Yet, according to Morgan (1993:5) and Rahman (1993:205), it is pointless to attempt to identify the extent of participation without first spelling out the political motivations and ideologies of those who design the programmes and conduct the evaluations. Who will assess participatory programmes? By whose criteria will "success" be judged? Can there be an objective measure of participation when the concept is so amorphous? Who decides the criteria to be used in determining success or failure? A more useful approach is not only to judge whether or under what conditions participation succeeds or fails, but also to analyse the negotiations and debates among groups competing for ideological, political and economic control. This is the methodological framework against which the selected case study in Freedom Square will be studied.

Since the 1980s, an important body of literature emerged³ regarding research with qualitative processes such as 'participation'. This study will however, not further analyse and discuss the methodological issues pertaining to researching participatory development in a qualitative manner. Albeit considered as important, such an endeavour will fall outside the scope and focus of this study.

In the last part of this section I will attempt to answer two questions:

- Firstly, which research methods were applied in analysing community participation in the upgrading of Freedom Square?
- Secondly, could the research of community participation in the upgrading of Freedom Square be regarded as scientific?

In order to describe and analyse the different dimensions with regard to community participation in Freedom Square, the researcher drew on a broad spectrum of methodologies and a combination of four surveys. These were:

- A household survey in October 1990 just after the first land invasion occurred (*cf.* Botes *et al.*, 1991) to draft a demographic and economic profile, to describe the migration patterns and to determine the living conditions and housing expectations of the residents.
- A household survey in September 1993 to assess end-beneficiaries's satisfaction with the Capital Subsidy Scheme Upgrading Project. (*cf.* Labuschagne, 1993; Marais, 1994).
- A household survey in February 1995 to assess the attitudes of end-beneficiaries with regard to the completed upgrading project and other consolidation efforts (*cf.* Mcarthy *et al.*, 1995)

3 The Evaluation of Social Development continues to be a critical issue of development practice. With the growing importance of concepts such as 'participation', 'capacity building' and 'empowerment', there is an increasing need to know how to monitor and assess the effect and impact of these qualitative processes. Since 1989, the International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC) has organised three International Workshops on the Evaluation of Social Development. The first, held in 1989 at CDS, University of Swansea, focused on exploring the conceptual basis of the evaluation of social development, and the critical issues relating to the qualitative evaluation of social change. INTRAC convened the second workshop, which was held in the Netherlands, in 1992. This focused on the methodological basis of the qualitative evaluation of social development, and was built around the presentation of a number of substantial case studies. In 1996, INTRAC convened the third workshop, which was also held in the Netherlands and took as its theme the 'outcomes' and 'impact' of social development programmes and projects. The discussions and contributions to each of the above workshops were published as books.

- A household survey in September 1997 to explore the social impact of upgrading and low-income housing initiatives in Freedom Square (*cf.* Van Rensburg, 1997)
- Participatory observations of the researcher from 1992 to 1995 and 1997 to 1998 while acting as a consultant for the IDT and adviser for community-based groups in the upgrading project.
- A rapid assessment of "community documentation" such as minutes, letters, agreements, upgrading proposals, etc.
- A rapid assessment of existing documentation on other informal settlement upgrading projects in South Africa.

The above-mentioned methodologies were combined in a triangulative manner in order to analyse this case study. Obviously the four surveys provided information of a more quantitative character while the personal involvement and observations of the researcher and rapid assessments were more qualitative in nature. In other words, these qualitative and quantitative methodologies were not applied as opposing methodologies but as complementary to each other. This combination of methods was used to crosscheck and increase the validity of the findings.⁴

There were several factors that could have made this research less objective (for that matter less "scientific") such as the socio-cultural differences between the researcher and those being researched; the researcher's involvement in a community with a lower status and a different culture – affirming the status of the researcher as a middle class white outsider unable to speak Sesotho or isiXhosa (the dominant first languages in Freedom Square) and the fact that the researcher acted as a consultant for the Independent Development Trust.

One could ask the question whether this research endeavour, due to the factors mentioned in the previous paragraph, does compromise the objectivity and reliability of the findings. However, this research attempt could well be regarded as objective (for that matter "scientific"), *i.e.* in the sense of methodology and product having passed a process of systematic social/collective verification, which was pursued in the following way:⁵

- Agreements were reached between the researcher and the Freedom Square community as to valid methods of investigation, reasoning and regulation of observations. For example, three of the four surveys in the selected case study were constructed in close collaboration with those being researched through meetings with them and approval from their legitimate community leaders. During these contacts community representatives had several opportunities to co-determine the research design and research objectives and to assist in the operationalisation of some research questions. In all four surveys community people were not just objects of research. Through their active involvement in researching their own living contexts, they co-determined the research agenda and the methodology of data-collection and generation of knowledge. Community leaders largely generated and approved the questionnaire items which were included in the surveys.
- The method of sampling in all four surveys was probability sampling and specifically systematic random sampling. The sample sizes of all four survey's were 100 or more respon-

4 Besides the researcher's involvement in Freedom Square, he also acted as development adviser in four other informal settlement upgrading projects (*cf.* Map 8.1 of the researchers's involvement). This had the advantage that the researcher could merge the historical and empirical facts with his own observations and interpretations of community participation in the upgrading of this settlement.

5 Cf. also annexure 1 where products stemming from this study are listed.

dents. The longitudinal dimension (four surveys over a time span of eight years) improved the reliability and generalisability of the research findings.

- In three of the four surveys ordinary community members from similar informal settlements with at least a grade 12 qualification were recruited and trained as fieldworkers in the data-collection phases of the respective surveys. The advantage of this was that they could readily establish rapport with respondents and were knowledgeable about the local dialect and geographical outlay of the survey area. Other advantages of employing local people as fieldworkers is that you build their capacity and also that respondents feel more at ease when they answer the questions because they are interacting with persons that live in, or are at least familiar with similar circumstances.
- Research findings were properly discussed with several community organisations and their representatives at workshops thereby creating an opportunity for modification and validation. These community workshops and public meetings to discuss the research findings were usually well-attended.
- Minutes of all meetings that related to the selected case study and other relevant social artifacts (*i.e.* letters and reports) were analysed. The researcher gained access to the minutes of Upgrade Community Trust meetings and community meetings. These documents served as units of observation and units of analysis because they could be regarded as reproductions or accounts of interactions, discourses and debates which occurred among some of the key stakeholders who were closely involved with the upgrading of Freedom Square from 1990 to 1998. These minutes could, from a methodological point of view, be regarded as the point of convergence of the dialogue between professionals, community leaders and ordinary community members. From these texts it was possible to analyse the specific manner in which the various interest groups conceptualised and operationalised community participation in the Freedom Square Upgrading Project.

From the above it is clear that the verification process in this research was a dialogical process of collective reflection, thus enhancing the objectivity and scientific integrity of this endeavour.

4. Analysing community participation in the upgrading of Freedom Square⁶

Like all the other IDT capital subsidy projects, the upgrading of Freedom-Namibia had a built-in requirement that community consultation should take place at a number of stages: as part of the initial application, around services and standards, in the allocation of sites and in consolidation⁷ (*i.e.* other development efforts in the informal settlement).

The mere fact that poor people decided to mobilise themselves in land invasions and the subsequent occupation of land can be regarded as a very visible and forceful manifestation of community participation. One should therefore guard against the approach of limiting issues with

6 An earlier version of part of this chapter appeared in *Development Southern Africa* 13(3):453-467, 1996. The inputs of co-authors Thomas Stewart and Johannes Wessels are gratefully acknowledged. My apologies for possible unacknowledged traces of their thinking in what I have written.

7 Consolidation refers to the process of upgrading of communities living in informal circumstances leading to the upgrading of shelter and services, provision of community facilities, and the establishment of enterprises for economic opportunities.

regard to community participation only to the upgrade project phase (1992 - onwards) in Freedom and Namibia Squares. Some of the best-known dimensions of community participation such as conscientisation, mobilisation, community control and the urge for community ownership were already occurring two years prior to the formal upgrading initiative funded by the Independent Development Trust. As early as the land invasion ordinary community members, under the auspices of their leadership, decided to claim their piece of land. Land invasions could therefore be regarded as a collective manifestation of community participation in the rapid improvement of their immediate shelter needs. However, some community leaders from Freedom Square did indicate that they did not participate sufficiently during the planning phase of the upgrading project.

4.1 Personal experience and rapid assessment of existing documentation

This section is the result of nine years of exposure and experience in the low-income housing delivery environment. Nine "contexts" of conflict in the upgrading of this large informal settlement (Freedom Square) are discussed. In sharing these experiences, it is the aim to promote a better understanding of the community participation dynamics of development in general and in informal settlement upgrading in particular. Understanding these dynamics is pivotal to, inter alia, ongoing urban development and sustainable housing delivery.

Context 1 - land ownership

The Freedom Square land invasion was organised by the Mangaung Civic Association in 1990. The land that was occupied had been targeted for extending the coloured township of Heidedal. This land was registered in the name of the House of Representatives, who had earmarked it for transfer to the Bloemfontein City Council for housing development. The Council and the Provincial Administration (Orange Free State) were prepared to remove the people, but before that, the Urban Foundation was asked by the civics and by some enlightened officials of the provincial administration to attempt to resolve the conflict. As a result, a comprehensive land exchange arrangement was reached between the House of Representatives and the city councils of both Bloemfontein and Mangaung, thereby securing the land for housing development for the people who had settled there (Wessels, 1993:2-3).

Hart (1992:33) maintains that conflict with authorities is a central problem in informal settlements, owing mainly to attempts, over decades, to demolish these settlements and backyard shacks and label them as "squatter" areas or slums (*cf.* Chapter 7 section 2.2 and Figure 7.1). This point was certainly borne out in Freedom Square. Conflict between the Mangaung Civic Association and the Mangaung City Council was a major stumbling block. Shuttle diplomacy and numerous separate meetings with both parties, were required to get the Council to agree to a land exchange arrangement, whereby land which they had bought to the east of the invaded area (with financial assistance from the provincial administration) was exchanged for the invaded land. A second co-operation and development agreement with the Council was required to allow development in that area.

The Freedom Square community at large seemed unanimous in rejecting the Mangaung City Council. Several councilors had their homes attacked by supporters of the civics, who threatened

to necklace (*i.e.* kill them by burning tyres) them if they did not resign. For its part, the Council was reluctant to enter into agreements that would result in a development which would channel resources towards supporters of the civics, whilst the backlogs in the formal part of Mangaung remained unaddressed. The leadership of a single councilor carried the day. He stated that it was not a choice between development for supporters or antagonists, but a choice between stagnation and progress. The secretary-general of the civics also took a pragmatic approach, arguing that formal agreements were necessary because they would eventually be taken over by legitimate local authorities. The pragmatism of these two men ensured that development could proceed.

Land invasions and illegal occupation of land, which started out as strategies to oppose apartheid structures, have since degenerated into a culture of entitlement and queue-jumping to gain access to development funding. This was acknowledged by the late Joe Slovo, the then Minister of Housing (*The Sunday Times*, 14 August 1994:2). Unless existing property rights are acknowledged and sensitively managed at all levels of government, land invasions that violate existing land rights may become one of the greatest sources of conflict and thus a serious obstacle to development.

Context 2 - responsibility and accountability

Notions such as empowerment, transparency, community participation and capacity building are common in the field of development and often determine the manner in which projects are organised and run. How were these notions embodied in the Freedom Square upgrading project?

The development was funded by the Independent Development Trust, who required a community-based organisation or partner in the project. The Mangaung Civic Association wanted civic leaders from the Freedom Square area to be significantly involved. This led to the formation of the Upgrade Bloemfontein East Community Trust which was constituted as follows: one member each from the Bloemfontein City Council, the Mangaung City Council, the Mangaung Civic Association; two members each from the Regional Board of the Urban Foundation and the Freedom Square Building Centre ("Clinic"); four resident representatives from the Freedom and Namibia Square areas. It was agreed to that neither the city councils nor the Civic Association would be represented by elected people, but rather by officials.

The funder's involvement was subject to an agreement between the Community Trust and a development agency appointed to manage the project. The Urban Foundation was formally contracted as the project management and also provided a secretarial service to the Upgrade Community Trust, which had no direct employees. This project management function was later transferred to the New Housing Company (NewHCo), when that body merged with the Urban Foundation's Informal Settlement Unit. Project management was responsible for co-ordinating the activities of the various consultants – civil engineers and contractors, the Freedom Square Builders Association (a local subcontractor), surveyors, town planners, etc. – and for providing financial management services. Although the consultants were commissioned by the Upgrade Community Trust to perform their particular professional tasks, they reported to project management.

Monthly meetings were held at which thorough project management reports were presented to the trustees for scrutiny, discussion and approval. All decisions were based on motivated re-

commendations. Nevertheless, the resident trustees – those drawn directly from the community – were reluctant to take certain crucial decisions on the sale of business sites, electrification and approval of the budget. This was probably because of capacity deficiencies: people may have felt unable to defend decisions, or may have failed to understand the technical and financial complexities and their implications. There were delays, which led to cash-flow problems, additional expenses and a loss of income to the Upgrade Community Trust. Subsequently, a Problem Solving Committee was established to deal with problems related to the project experienced at grassroots level. This committee consisted of one resident trustee, one representative each from Freedom Square and Namibia Square Civic Associations, and one representative from project management.

Absentee shack-owners soon became a problem that the Problem Solving Committee had to deal with. A number of shacks, apparently deserted or at least temporarily abandoned, posed a financial threat to the development because the capital subsidy guaranteed by the IDT would only be paid once ownership of the land had been transferred. Consequently, the Upgrade Community Trust decided on a strategy of letters, visits, and notices to these shacks, cautioning the owners that their stands might be reallocated if they did not come forward to sign their documents within a reasonable time. Although the Problem Solving Committee supported this strategy, community leaders apparently did not execute the task, and instead asked project management to handle it. A small number of disputes arose when some of the absentees eventually returned to their shacks. Project management was blamed for reallocating the sites and had to resolve the disputes.

In this community, the same people who were trustees were also civic leaders, leaders of various sub-committees, and members of the Problem Solving Committee. They were therefore somewhat overburdened with responsibility. Their standing in the community apparently also varied directly according to the progress of the project. When the initial delivery process came to a halt, the community leaders at once began to have difficulties in arranging mass meetings, and at next annual election new civic leaders were elected.

The community leaders seldom dealt with the problems effectively, but referred them instead to someone who could take the blame if the solutions proved unpopular. People were eager to be associated with pleasant prospects, such as announcing the level of services to be installed, or the date when construction would commence; but they were reluctant to perform painful tasks, such as informing people to pay for sites and services. One can perhaps conclude that having responsibility does not necessarily bring about capacity and accountability, and that having status does not necessarily bring about responsibility.

Context 3 - site size and shape

The size and shape of residential sites is a common cause of friction in low-cost housing. Those who initially invaded the land at Freedom Square demarcated their own sites, but shortly afterwards the Mangaung Civic Association established teams to perform this task. Sites varied from 180 to 2 000 square metres and were arranged in irregular patterns, with several single-row sites and even some that did not front onto a street or public space at all (*cf.* Map 8.3). This inefficient settlement pattern was characterised by an excess of roads and inappropriately wide road reserves and site dimensions that would make it extremely costly to install infrastructure and maintain services.



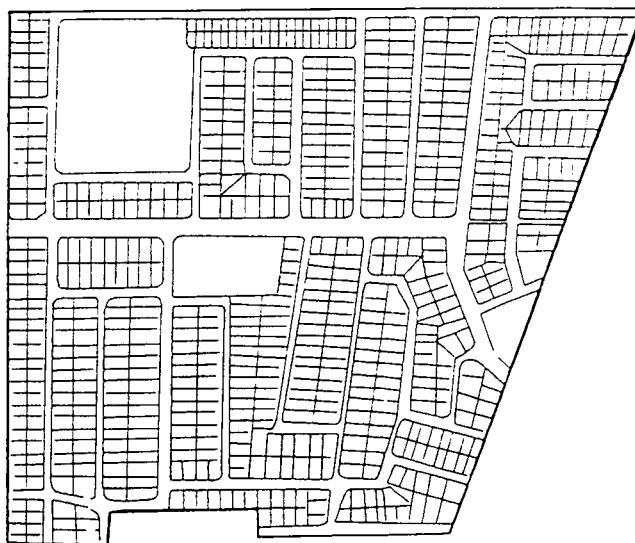
Map 8.3 Initial settlement pattern in Freedom Square

The civics asked the Urban Foundation to obtain initial estimates on the cost of installing infrastructure. From these estimates, it was evident that the physical layout would have to be adjusted to make upgrading affordable. Project management and the civics began discussing a more cost-effective layout. At first there was vehement opposition to the idea of smaller sites. However, the civics accepted the planning principle of back-to-back rather than single row sites and eventually decided that residential sites would vary from 240 to 400 square metres. They were of the opinion that any person having a site larger than this should make an individual contribution to the development.

The civics had now accepted a design which would make the installation and maintenance of water-borne sewerage more feasible. But the wider community remained unconvinced. Arguments pointing out that water was a scarce resource had no effect. Eventually, one planning principle at least was established: water-borne sewerage with mid-block sewer lines required regular mid-block lines and so the staggered mid-block lines would have to be straightened.

Several workshops and meetings were held with the civics to determine the level of services. The size of sites caused lengthy discussions which were complicated by the fact that most residents (and committee members) did not understand the use of the square metre in measuring sites. The notion that the settlement has to be dense because of the cost of infrastructure, rather than the cost of land, was also difficult to convey to people who had no concept of water reticulation or water-borne sanitation.

Several practical information sessions were organised, during which the project management team illustrated how a six-roomed house of 76 square metres could be positioned on a site of 240 square metres. But that was not the only hurdle. Many people who accepted the idea of smaller sites, still insisted on a street frontage of 20 metres. Time and again it had to be explained that cost-effective planning required a frontage of no more than 12 metres per site (*cf.* Map 8.4).



Map 8.4 Redesigned settlement pattern in Freedom Square

After three months and 17 meetings and workshops, sufficient consensus was reached to commission the land surveyor. An area of 217 ha (compared to the 250 ha at the preliminary design phase) was identified as the project area. It then transpired that some residents had not been informed of agreements reached by their civics and the land surveying was delayed for eight weeks. Other individuals were opposed to the carving up of their large sites into smaller residential sites. A survey in 1993 also indicated that 64% of the residents were dissatisfied with the size of their sites (Labuschagne, 1993). The land surveying was nevertheless successfully completed and all of the general plans were approved. In the end, the total length of sewer lines could be limited to 38 040 metres compared to 42 965 metres in the preliminary design. The lengths of roads and waterlines were also at least 15% shorter than in the preliminary design (Wessels, 1993:5).

The size and shape of sites is an extremely critical issue. In Freedom Square, the people settled for smaller sites in order to gain a higher level of infrastructure. But in some later land invasions in Bloemfontein such compromises were not possible; people believed that the new Government would even provide them with houses and felt no need to compromise on the size of their sites. It is of critical importance that a strategy be devised to break the community perception that a large stand with a house in the middle of it is the solution. However, innovative layout schemes to optimise the size of sites by using courtyards, etc. (as at Gracelands on the East Rand) have not met with success. The limitations of development resources and how these impact on stand sizes should be spelt out clearly, or this issue will remain a bone of contention and contribute to urban sprawl.

Context 4 - voluntary participation versus remunerated participation

When the Upgrade Community Trust had been functioning for 18 months, the resident trustees (all but one of whom were unemployed) made a formal request for substantial remuneration from the Upgrade Community Trust. Project management, who was jointly responsible for managing

the Upgrade Community Trust's financial affairs, spelt out the consequences of meeting their request. Apart from the precedent that would be set, remuneration would contravene the Deed of Trust, and the community might accuse the trustees of misusing resources. None of these arguments were accepted. The resident trustees countered that project management was being paid, while they were unemployed.

An opinion was sought from the funder's legal consultants. They indicated that it was an unprecedented request and preferred not to give an opinion, recommending that the matter be resolved locally. A local legal opinion was therefore obtained. This indicated that, in terms of the Deed of Trust, trusteeship was a voluntary service and trustees could only be compensated for direct expenditure and tasks assigned to them directly by the Upgrade Community Trust. This last point then became the questionable basis for trustees' claims. When the Upgrade Community Trust decided to remunerate the trustees, the relationship between project management and the Upgrade Community Trust, which had been extremely tense, was immediately restored.

After this incident, project management submitted a claim for work that it had performed over and above its usual tasks, as defined in the project management agreement. This claim was rejected by the resident trustees and referred to the funders, the Independent Development Trust, for comment. Again the funders recommended that the matter be resolved locally, and legal opinion was sought. Meanwhile, a representative of the funders visited the project to discuss the relationships among the bodies involved in the development with the trustees and others, including the project manager. This helped to bring about a better general understanding, and the two parties settled on an amount between the original claim and the amount recommended by legal opinion.

It is clear from both these incidents that the roles and responsibilities of the various parties in the project were not properly understood. These should be clarified constantly.

Context 5 - contractors versus local labour

Whereas conventional contractors have mechanised their construction methods for economic reasons and have usually built up their own construction teams over time, communities, and especially those in which there is a high rate of unemployment, favour or even insist on local labour being used in construction projects. This demand can be dealt with through subcontracts to small community-based contractors, through joint ventures or through labour-based construction, all involving local labour.

Both the main contractor and the community generally lack experience in dealing with one another. In informal settlements, there tends to be less expertise, a higher rate of unemployment and a stronger sense of community cohesion (*cf* Table 8.3) than in formal neighbourhoods. This seems to result in a greater insistence on taking control of a project (*cf* Table 8.2) and in particular those parts of it which are perceived as being easily understood, such as the building of structures above ground level, the digging of trenches or the laying of pipes.

In Freedom Square, the main contractor employed a local sub-contractor, Freedom Square Builders Association (Fresba), to build the toilets and do the plumbing. It took about three months for Fresba to learn to do the construction according to specifications. During this period the main

contractor had to employ additional staff to complete the work, and the resulting claims for extra expenses caused tension between the main contractor and the developer.

Fresba's attendance of site meetings was generally poor, despite a formal sub-contracting agreement that spelt out roles and responsibilities. The main contractor also had to help with much of Fresba's administration, concerning material supplies, expenditures and wages, although this was not his responsibility. Even though most of Fresba's members had completed a building management course at the University of the Orange Free State, in which they were taught how to administer a contract, their management and administrative skills were inadequate.

It could be argued that the insistence on using local labour might result in a reduction in the capacity (so vitally important to the construction industry at large) of the formal contractors. Labour-based construction need not cost much more than conventional construction, but the cost of the training and the potential for conflict, especially in the area of quality control, should not be underestimated. It is also easy for main contractors to use sub-contractors as scapegoats for poor quality work or for slow progress. However, it should be noted that the trade skills were acquired a lot quicker than were management and administrative skills. The failure of Fresba's members to perform in the latter area raises important questions: Was the training appropriate in content and methodology and the support adequate? Did both parties properly manage the interface between the main contractor and Fresba? Did the leadership of Fresba have the entrepreneurial and managerial capacity to create a viable concern? Did Fresba have the long-term interests of their organisation at heart or did they view the project as a one-off opportunity?

Context 6 – 'outsiders'

Defining a project area for development creates opportunities for people and brings about community cohesion. This cohesion can have a negative, exclusive side to it. In Freedom Square, Fresba refused to admit other sub-contractors to the area, claiming that they themselves were poor and unemployed and should be given preference when it came to employment opportunities. There was therefore no competition, with the result that both productivity and quality of work were very uneven. Fresba also acquired a stranglehold on the project by threatening to disrupt construction whenever their demands were not met. When other construction opportunities arose in Mangaung, residents of those areas retaliated by excluding Fresba.

There were similar problems with business sites in Freedom Square. Under the co-operation and services agreement with the Mangaung City Council, the business sites in Freedom Square were to be disposed of by means of public tender. But the resident trustees demanded preferential treatment for tenders from Freedom Square. In an Upgrade Community Trust meeting on the tenders received, they insisted that business sites be given to the residents of Freedom Square free of charge and that "outside" people be kept out. However, they could not decide what should be done if demand for business sites exceeded supply. The trustees then undertook to dispose of the sites themselves. Two years passed without any progress being made, while the community was deprived of development and employment opportunities, and the Upgrade Community Trust lost potential income. Eventually, under pressure from businessmen wanting sites, the tendering process had to be repeated all over again.

Context 7 - professionals

The designs for all the services in Freedom Square were completed by professional consulting engineers, then checked by an external consultant, and finally approved by the local authority's city engineer. But, this did not prevent the community from believing that they were being provided with poorly designed services. The sewer blockages that occurred were blamed mainly on inferior designs, despite the number of foreign objects discovered in the system, ranging from teaspoons to axes, tin cans to shirts and bricks to bottles.

Community participation, crucial as it is, does not mean that ordinary people have the expertise to evaluate professional work. It may be that the poor municipal services people have had to put up in the past, have made them suspicious and apt to question highly technical matters. Professionals, on the other hand, are neither accustomed to having their integrity questioned nor equipped to convey specialist knowledge to laymen in terms they understand.

Context 8 - the problem of free delivery

When people believe they are entitled to certain things, it is almost impossible to recover costs on any kind of development or to get people to contribute towards it themselves. In Freedom Square serviced sites and ownership were provided to individuals free of charge, through the Independent Development Trust's Capital Subsidy scheme. To receive the subsidy, the stand had to be registered in the name of the beneficiary and provided with services. Proper sales administration, including the signing of a deed of sale for registration purposes, was therefore essential. But the mere signing of the deed proved to be problematic, as some residents had to be individually transported to the attorneys for this purpose.

Because delivery was free, some registered owners later simply abandoned their stands and vanished without trace. These stands could only be transferred to new owners with the consent of the registered owners or after expropriation. This caused a great deal of tension between the developer, community leaders and people in need of housing wanting to occupy these vacant stands. In state-funded or subsidised housing it should perhaps be possible for the authorities to expropriate automatically and reallocate housing stock that has been underutilised for an extended period.

The local authority required a water connection deposit of R50 per stand. Despite promises to the contrary, very few people paid their deposits and in the end the Upgrade Community Trust had to do so. Water was supposed to be paid for according to usage, but getting people to meet their commitments became a major problem. Countless arguments were advanced to justify non-payment, including the fact that the locations for payment were inaccessible, that people received accounts only after an initial three months of usage, that neighbours without water were also using the water points, and that people in neighbouring Mangaung paid a 'flat rate' for services.

Getting people to contribute something themselves generally makes for healthy development. But it is almost impossible to do this once people have already occupied their stands, as the most effective way of securing contributions is through the allocation of land. If people had paid even a nominal amount for their stands, they would have made more of an effort to sell them when they moved away. Re-establishing a 'culture of payment' will probably require a great deal of sensitivity of approach, on the one hand, and firm discipline and law enforcement on the other.

Context 9 - inclusion and exclusion

Developers, financiers and politicians often have to confront the harsh reality that the demand for scarce resources exceeds the supply. In 1991, the Urban Foundation helped the Community Trust representing Freedom Square and Namibia Square to apply to the Independent Development Trust for funds under their Capital Subsidy Scheme. An application was submitted for 4 800 sites, covering the entire Freedom and Namibia Squares, which at that stage consisted of only 3 200 households (the larger number of sites was to allow for densification). Only 4 000 subsidies were approved, and so a sparsely populated section of Namibia Square was excluded. This decision eventually led to conflict. The community and its representatives were divided to the extent that very little meaningful co-operation and interaction were possible. The desirability of the project was drawn into question, with the result that the entire development often teetered on the brink of crisis. Tensions led to faction fighting and two people were killed. When some additional subsidies were obtained, but did not cover the whole of the excluded area, these were rejected outright by community leaders.

In a country like South Africa where large numbers of people are in need, development can be a divisive force, especially as resources will probably not be sufficient to meet the existing backlogs nor the needs of a rapidly growing population. Ways need to be found to determine in advance who will benefit from a particular project and who not. Perhaps only those who are willing to forfeit their newly-acquired property rights in favour of the local authority the moment their accounts for water, sanitation, and property tax fall into arrears, should qualify to benefit from a project. Such a step which could also help to restore the culture of payment.

4.2 Surveys and survey findings

As indicated in section 3.1 of this chapter, the main purpose of the four surveys was not to measure the perceptions of the residents of Freedom Square towards aspects of community participation in the upgrading of their community. Yet, certain questions provided some insight on how ordinary community members perceived the processes and outcomes of community participation in this upgrading project. The selected questions will therefore aim at answering one main research question, namely: To what extent has true community participation been realised in the upgrading of Freedom Square? However, in answering this question one has to take into account the nature and initial purpose of the four mentioned surveys. This section will therefore be more explorative and descriptive and less evaluative. It is however important to note that this section focus predominantly on the 1993 survey and to a lesser extent on the 1995 survey. With regard to the 1990 surveys and the 1997 surveys community participation *per se* was not included in the questionnaires.

The following figures and tables could be regarded as operationalising different aspects of community participation in the upgrading of Freedom Square:

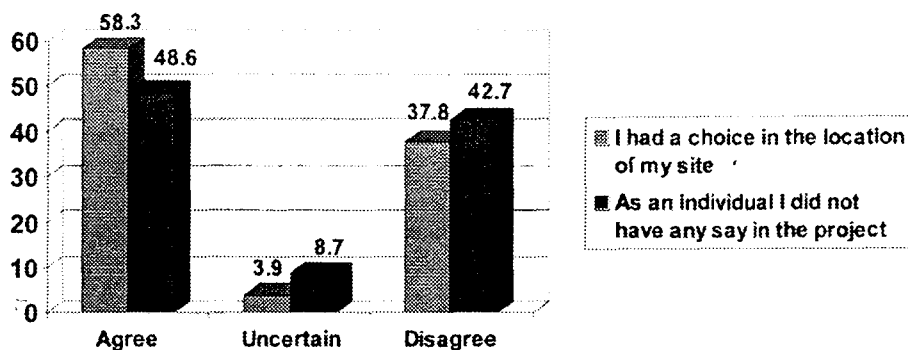


Figure 8.1 Share in decision-making

In terms of practicality as to whether respondents did participate in locating their sites, the majority (58,3%) indicated that they had a say, while almost a third (37,8%) did not participate in the location of their sites (cf. Figure 8.1). Almost even proportions of respondents indicated that they did or that they did not as an individual, have a say in the project.

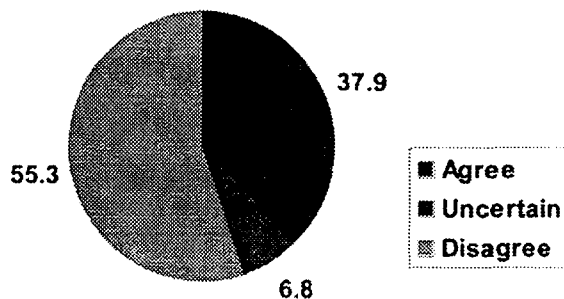


Figure 8.2 Information shared about the project

Although the vast majority of respondents indicated that they had attended meetings where the project was discussed (cf. Table 8.1) it is quite interesting to note that still 55,3% of the Freedom Square population did not know exactly how the upgrading was going to be done (cf. Figure 8.2). It would make more sense to compare the findings of Figure 8.2 with Figure 8.1 than with Table 8.1 and Figure 8.3, since these responses may reflect the opinions of people who feel they were adequately informed about the project.

Table 8.1 The way in which community members were informed about the project (1993)

	N	%
Mass meetings	55	53,4
Local leaders	10	9,7
Block meetings	3	2,9
Neighbours/Friends	1	1,0
Fresba members	5	4,9
Was not informed	1	1
Other	20	28,1
Total	95	100

Sowman & Gawith (1994:563-564) also emphasise general or public meetings, small group discussions and house meetings as methods of communication and participation. Small discussion groups are perhaps the most appropriate and effective form of promoting community participation, because there is probably a relationship between the size and cohesiveness of a community and the kind of participation that can be mobilised and sustained.⁸ Such methods are particularly useful in exploring ideas and assessing people's perceptions and level of understanding of the issues. It is reasonable to suggest that small, close-knit units of association have a better chance of achieving and maintaining high levels of internal participation. For example, households manage their destinies to a great extent, whilst whole societies are much more removed from the decisions that influence them.

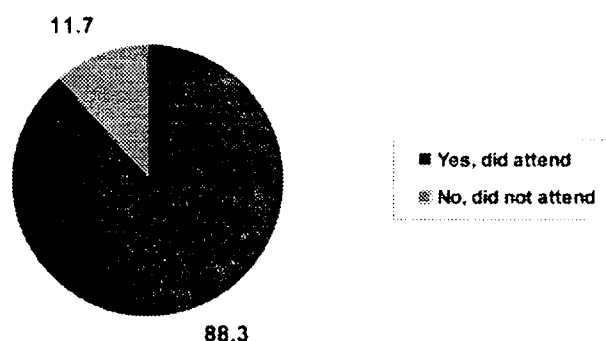


Figure 8.3 Attendance of meetings where the project was discussed (1993)

Given the fact that there are approximately 4 100 households in Freedom Square, it is quite remarkable that 88,3% of the respondents indicated that they attended community meetings where the upgrading project was discussed (*cf.* Figure 8.3). Mass meetings or public meetings are an essential element in the promotion of community participation. These meetings permit the discussion of local issues and help to foster group solidarity. However, experience in the South African context reveals that the attendance of these meetings is sometimes problematic. Attendance not only fluctuates a lot but community leaders often find it difficult to have quorums. Sometimes community members did not get proper advance notice of the meetings; the majority of meetings were held in the evening when many women were busy preparing food and performing other household tasks; others worked night shifts or others were tired, having just returned from work. Such conditions obstruct effective decision-making and make it very difficult to judge whether the actual number of community members present are representative enough of an entire community.

8 Experience in the informal communities of Hout Bay indicated that smaller meetings consisting of 8 to 20 people were more successful in terms of the dissemination and gathering of information than the general meetings, where people did not have adequate opportunity to express their views and where stronger community members dominated the events (Sowman & Gawith, 1994:563-564).

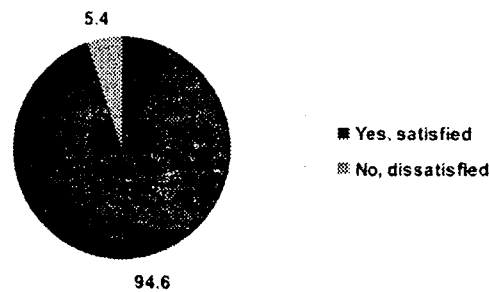


Figure 8.4 Satisfaction with information shared at meetings (1993)

At mass meetings considerable communication and presentation skills are required from facilitators, especially to get essential ideas and often highly technical issues across to the community so as to enable them to comment effectively, understand the issues and available options, and take informed decisions (*cf.* Figure 8.4). Disputes over the legitimacy of meetings often occur with groups who claim to have been left out of the process. Another difficulty is that decisions taken at mass meetings are not always sufficiently sensitive to micro-situations within the community at the household level. A separation of functions is required where principle and broad policy issues can be clarified at public meetings, while it is more appropriate to deliberate decisions with greater technical detail at small-group or household level.

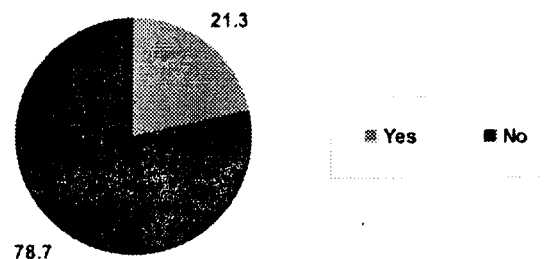


Figure 8.5 Personal involvement in the project

Even in a project with ostensibly high community participation the majority of the ordinary community members indicated that they had not been involved in the improvement of their neighbourhood (Figure 8.5). It is interesting to note that despite the high attendance of community meetings (*cf.* Figure 8.3), almost 80% of the respondents still feel that they were not personally involved in the upgrading project (*cf.* Figure 8.5). This may be either because residents do not generally define the mere attendance of meetings as personal involvement or it may be that residents do not regard these community meetings as effective structures for personal involvement. However, since 94.6% of those in the project that attended meetings were satisfied with the way in which information was shared at these meetings (*cf.* Figure 8.4), it would appear that the majority of community members regard community meetings as effective mechanisms for information sharing. Of those respondents that indicated their involvement in the project, 90% were involved in decision-making and 10% were workers on the project.⁹ Moreover, beneficiaries of a development project may perceive development and development-related processes and outcomes quite

9 Twenty-one respondents indicated that they had been involved in improvements

differently than developers and outside researchers. This may result in a situation where what seems contradictory in a specific context, makes perfect sense in another.

Table 8.2 Ability of the community to solve own problems

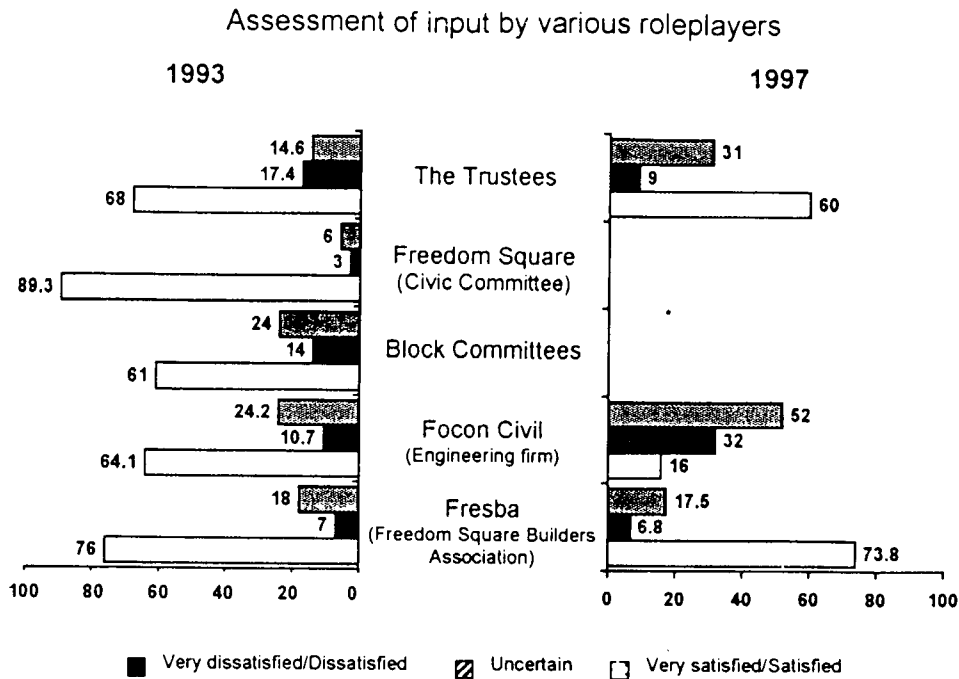
	Agree		Uncertain		Disagree		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The people of Freedom Square can solve most of their problems through their own efforts (1993)	50	48,5	12	11,7	38	36,9	101	100

Quite a number of the residents of Freedom Square were of the opinion that they were able to solve their own problems through their own efforts, something which is the essence of self-reliance and community participation (*cf.* Table 8.2). Such a finding is a contradiction in terms if it is to be analysed against some of the broader context zones of leaders that did not want to take responsibility for decisions, the non-payment of service by the majority of households and the refusal of access to outsiders to take-up business opportunities, to name but a few (*cf.* Section 4.1 of this chapter). Some interesting trends were discovered regarding a relationship between income, year of settlement and whether the Freedom Square community were able to solve their own problems. Larger proportions in the low income group (less than R400 per month) were positive about the Freedom Square community's ability to solve their own problems than in the higher income group (More than R400 per month), who were generally more pessimistic about the problem-solving ability of ordinary community members. With regard to year of settlement, those people that migrated to the area in 1990 (the pioneers) were more optimistic about their ability to solve their own problems than the people that migrated to the area later (post-1990).

Table 8.3 Community solidarity (ubuntu)

	Agree		Uncertain		Disagree		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
There is a lot of goodwill among the people of Freedom Square (1993)	67	65,1	14	13,6	22	21,4	103	100

As early as the 1990 survey, many respondents already mentioned good community spirit as one of the most positive aspects of living in Freedom Square. It would appear that sharing a common fate and struggling together does indeed create collective bondage among the members of a community. Given the fact that the residents migrated from different places to settle in Freedom Square and that the community also consisted of various language groups there is a remarkable us-feeling. This sense of *ubuntu* and community solidarity was confirmed in the 1993 survey when 65% of the residents did indeed indicate that there was a lot of goodwill in the community.



* Empty cells indicated that the specific role player was not evaluated in the 1997 survey

Figure 8.6 Assessment of input by various stakeholders

The greatest satisfaction with stake-holders in the upgrading project were with those interest groups from the community which were also closest to the people. One of the main reasons why Freedom Square Civics were evaluated so favourably is because the civics were to a large extent responsible for the land invasion. The majority of respondents were also very satisfied with Fresba, the reason for this being that Fresba consisted of builders only from the community⁹. The community was least satisfied with the outside contractor. Bi-variate analysis of the 1993 survey revealed that community members with a lower income level (less than R400) were significantly more satisfied with Fresba than people with a higher income level (R401 and more). One possible explanation for this may be that Fresba's membership consisted largely of unskilled and semi-skilled workers, people with whom the lower income groups could more readily associate themselves than could the higher income groups. In general, people with a lower level of income were much more satisfied with different aspects of the project than people with higher levels of income. This could emphasise the fact that the impact of site-and-service projects is greater for the poor of the poor than for the cream of the poor.

9 According to Stewart (1993:9) employing members of the community as unskilled labour and semi-skilled labour, and using Fresba as sub-contractor, has given the community a direct involvement in the project, earned them some income and established a joint responsibility with the contractor. The ownership established in this manner has largely prevented vandalism and crime on the project and has in fact established some kind of community cohesion and pride.

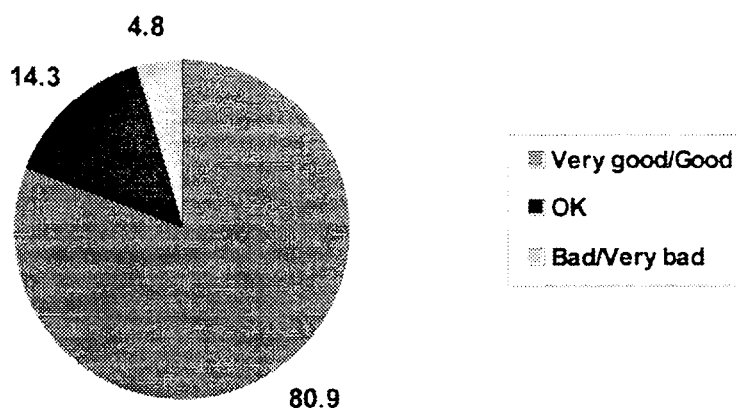


Figure 8.7 Perceptions of the work done by the developers in this area (1995)

The concept "The developers" refers to the Upgrade Community Trust, Fresba and Focon Civil. It is interesting to note that, almost at completion of the site and service phase of the project (1995), proportionally more community members (80,9%) were satisfied with the developers than two years earlier when the project was still in its initial phases, and, only 64% to 76% of the residents expressed their satisfaction with the developers. However, the 1997 survey revealed that community members, due to dissatisfaction with the quality of houses that they received, also started to evaluate the role of the different role players more negatively. This finding emphasises the fact that the assessment of a low-income housing initiative by an end-beneficiary community can be extremely time, context and product bound and specific. In fact, the project manager during the housing delivery phase indicated how, on an almost weekly basis, the perception of leaders from Freedom Square concerning his performance and contribution fluctuated between regarding him as the development hero to regarding him as the villain of the project.

5. Community participation in upgrading Freedom Square: discussion and conclusions

From analysing the surveys, other relevant documentation (*i.e.* minutes, letters, agreements, etc.) and the researcher's own involvement, it is clear that community participation constituted an integral part of the Freedom Square Upgrading project. The mere fact that the community invaded the land and then, through their elected leadership, initiated the project together with several NGOs and developers, is proof of the participatory way in which this low-income housing project evolved. All the important stakeholders in this project committed themselves to the ideals and practice of community participation. Community participation occurred at all levels and phases of the project. This is confirmed in the surveys of 1993, 1995 and 1997 where the residents of Freedom Square expressed their general satisfaction on both the process and the outcomes of this upgrading project. During the land invasion phase of the project, informal and unstructured forms of community participation dominated the scene (*i.e.* mass meetings, zonal meetings, etc.) while during the site-and-service and low-income housing phases more formalised forms of participation featured (*i.e.* Boards, Upgrade Community Trust meetings, Committees, etc.)

Community participation played an important role in the facilitation of sensitive issues such as: resettlement, site sizes, sewer blockages and many other housing and infrastructure-related

matters. However, community participation was no guarantee against the occurrence of conflict between different role players in the project. Moreover, the fact that community members and community groups were encouraged to participate even initiated and/or aggravated conflict.

The lessons learnt concerning community participation in the upgrading of Freedom Square are numerous and varied, even if they are not universally valid. Among the many lessons, the following can be highlighted:

- In the past people living in informal settlements were excluded from formal political structures and institutions at the local and the national levels. Although many communities have sought to fill this vacuum with structures of their own, their activities have often been constrained by the poverty of their constituents, the insecurity of their circumstances and their isolation from the mainstream of local administration.
- Political organisation around spontaneous informal housing is strongly influenced by the vulnerability and insecurity of residents, and by their need to gain access to land, tenure, shelter and services. In these circumstances, local organisation is sometimes issue-based and transitory, focussed on averting the threat of removal, for example, or on obtaining access to water. Furthermore, the powerlessness of informal settlers renders them open to dependent and exploitative relationships with patrons seeking a power base.
- By virtue of their marginalised and deprived nature, informal settlements are prone to conflict. This may be the result of internal competition over resources or influence, or it may reflect tension between informal settlers and surrounding communities.
- An arbitration or mediation mechanism should be put in place right from the start, and one enjoying credibility from all parties.
- Community leaders in an upgrading project should not be perceived as working too closely with the developer, because this may threaten the legitimacy and social acceptance of the leadership and erode their power base.
- Conflict around land remains highly emotive, whether it be between the residents of an informal settlement and the responsible local authority, the residents and the landowner, the residents and the developer, or among the residents themselves. Although land invasions and sizes of sites reflect a need for land, they sometimes also reflect a greed for land.
- Apparently the sizes and especially the shapes of sites are not regarded as a cost factor when communities embark on their own planning efforts. Where there is no proactive and professional planning body, resource-poor communities will address their own situation with the means at their disposal.
- Community representation should not be taken for granted. Regular democratic elections to elect representatives should be built into the management process.
- It is often difficult for community leaders to distinguish between an activist agenda and a development agenda.
- When an informal settlement is formalised, it is inevitable that some newly erected shelters be moved and stand boundaries altered. These changes are not popular, but they will be accepted if time is taken to educate people about as to why they are necessary.
- The technical level of an upgrading project also pre-determines the level of expected input from a community. Some decisions demand such a high level of technical knowledge that only a qualified engineer is really equipped to take an informed decision. There should therefore be differentiation of decision-making, just as there are different levels of community

input. Determining these levels and who should take the final decision and responsibility could be major issues of contention.

- The sharing of information/communication in an upgrading project is vital to the success or failure of a project. If this is left only in the hands of community leaders, it may distort the message. However, the communication of key issues offers a unique opportunity for community members to share information in their own way and this contributes towards developing their leadership potential.
- The roles and responsibilities of the different parties involved in development should be carefully defined and spelt out, and the development project itself carefully managed. Communities generally underestimate the cost of professional services and risks that developers run. Perhaps the greatest risk to developers is that informal contractors do not appreciate the time demands of a construction programme.
- Poverty does not only fosters egoism, it also breeds hostility towards those who are better off (Kruijer, 1987:15). Excluding certain people from business and employment opportunities in a settlement may benefit the community in the short term, but undoubtedly harms development in the long term.
- In defining a project or project area, technical and financial criteria should not be the only concern. Great care should be taken that the boundaries and structures established by the community itself are taken into account.
- There will probably always be tension between the actual development project and the ideal version of it, especially because resources are always limited. The tension between 'delivery' and 'democracy' is central in development work. Although it is generally accepted as necessary, community participation, which exposes laymen to technical information may give them the confidence to question or discredit professionals and to politicise their work. This results in conflict and distrust, delays and escalating costs.
- Professionals and development agencies are not accustomed to having their integrity questioned nor are they equipped to convey specialist knowledge to laymen. Professionals can be as much an obstacle to community participation as the ignorant community member.
- People should be enabled to have a say in the development product they will receive. In this regard it is vital that the professional or developing agency communicate the consequences and impact of the community's choices in the medium and the long term.
- Good community facilitation requires substantial financial support. Community leaders may, after an initial voluntary involvement in the development initiative, demand remuneration to compensate for their time, transport and input.

Successful development does not simply mean an absence of conflict; conflict can either help or hinder the development process. If it is well managed, conflict can be a dynamic force that generates new ideas and more appropriate solutions. In the transitional phase in South Africa, conflict will remain an 'essential evil'. If there is proper collaboration with communities, conflict can be managed in such a way that it helps to make people comfortable with the product and the process. Although section 4.1 of this chapter has focussed on conflict in the upgrading of Freedom Square, this particular development project is nevertheless regarded by many as one of the success stories of incremental housing in South Africa. In fact, the survey results supported the idea that the ordinary members of the Freedom Square community evaluated the community participation aspects of the Freedom Square project quite favourably. The tale of Freedom Square upgrading is one that reflects victory for ordinary community members. It also

demonstrates that informal settlers do have the inherent ability to participate meaningfully in their own development.

Building on the previous chapters, and this one, the next and final chapter (Chapter 9) will propose some emerging guidelines for community participation which organisations and individuals may consider applying in development initiatives.

Community participation in the upgrading of informal settlements: emerging guidelines



The call for effective community participation in upgrading projects is evident, but how community participation in urban development is operationalised, is often extremely vague. This chapter should be regarded as the point of convergence and concluding remark of what has been portrayed and debated in chapters one to eight to gain greater insight into and clarity on the dynamics of participatory development. Many of the ideas on community participation in the upgrading of informal settlements will be systematised and linked together in order to assist grassroots activists, state bureaucrats, development professionals and academics in deepening their understanding and practice of participatory development. This chapter suggests that there are several guidelines emerging in this field that organisations and individuals involved in the upgrading of informal settlements may consider applying.

Whenever development projects, especially low-income housing projects, fail to produce the desired results, the failure is often attributed to the lack of community participation. In planning and implementing development initiatives, the question has therefore frequently been asked, why there is ostensibly a lack of participation by community members. Usually the very reason why people choose or do not choose to participate, is sought within the community itself. In doing so the broader structural reasons for participation or non-participation are neglected. This study attempts to uncover some important issues that impact on the participation of different groups in the shelter-related affairs of deprived communities. This study has indicated how both macro-societal and micro-communal issues at the historical, political, economic, social and cultural levels have influenced donor agencies, authorities, development professionals, community workers, community leaders and ordinary members

of the community and their respective roles in the failure or success of participation in development programmes and projects in general, and in the upgrading of informal settlements in particular. This study has also indicated in several ways why and how those whose lives are to be improved should define what participation in development means to them, rather than technical experts and politicians.

It was demonstrated in chapters 6, 7 and 8 that real community participation is not easy to achieve. In an analogy with the words of the ancient philosopher on leadership, Machiavelli, one could say that there is nothing more difficult to arrange, more doubtful of success, and more dangerous to carry through than pursuing development initiatives in a participatory manner. It is difficult to organise and facilitate community participation in decision-making; there is resistance as well as ignorance among the more powerful actors of a development project and there is lack of participation by the community in the community organisation. There are also those who want to monopolise participation for their own selfish or humanitarian ends, and many other difficulties and dilemmas associated with community participation in development. Still, community participation is an indispensable component of informal settlement upgrading and low-income housing.

Upgrading and low-income housing projects are, due to their nature, closer to the community than other types of projects, making them ideal opportunities for realising community participation provided they are initiated, planned and implemented in a proper and appropriate way.

While everyone agrees on the need for participation in development, translating the term from a concept into everyday reality remains an arduous task. Methods of community participation should be appropriate and acceptable to both the affected community, the nature of the development initiative, and the stage in the project cycle, and cannot unilaterally be designed by development planners. Ideally the affected community should assist in deciding the method. If this is not possible, the development professional should present the proposed approach to the community for comment. It is useful to obtain suggestions from the community regarding methods of communication and participation which are currently effective in their community. No participatory approach can evolve simply in a sanitised executive office, removed from those communities for which it is destined.

No design of participation procedure can be perfect and workable from the first attempt. **Participatory procedures need to be put through a process of designing-testing-learning-revising** in a real field situation. Translating the goals of participation into practice is therefore a laborious process. For example, a development team starts with a trip through the neighbourhood to acquaint themselves with the social groups and the physical environment. The objectives of the study are also discussed with the residents. A survey is then conducted orally, using selected informants from different interest groups in the community. After the data collection phase this kind of inquiry is systematised. The next step is to hold meetings with the community and there are generally two ways of holding them: firstly, selected issues are discussed with certain groups separately; secondly, the meeting is held in a large, integrated group in which all the information of interest to the community is discussed.

A successful community participation strategy should **conform with community expectations and priorities**. Evaluation of previous projects in similar cultural and socio-economic settings to determine strengths and weaknesses of prior approaches; assessment of community capacity to sustain a development initiative, and community leadership, are important prerequisites in developing an appropriate participatory strategy.

Leadership sometimes poses both a problem and a challenge for community workers.

Community organisations need leaders, but in most urban low-income communities the only persons who can afford to be active in a community organisation are the richer among the poor: businesspeople, shopkeepers, landlords who do not have to worry all day about earning an income. Consequently, community leaders are often not representative of the population, but represent particular interest groups. The question of how to improve leadership of local organisations remains an issue on which little headway has been made. Community-based organisations have been an important breeding ground for developing community leaders. These organisations may be able to integrate both traditional and emergent leaders in the new decision-making bodies, and in this way, build a coalition of interests that unites different factions. Community participation can be effectively initiated through the creation of specific projects. However, several writers have warned against project-initiated participation - a project can easily become an end in itself and participation may decline once it is completed.

Training for participation is essential. Community leaders should be sent on training courses to improve their organisational, administrative and leadership abilities and to learn all facets of project management. Other skills that often need improvement are technical and financial management skills as well as conflict resolution skills. These skills will build the capacity of local leadership and end-beneficiaries thereby ensuring that their involvement is more meaningful and that their contributions have greater impact on the outcomes of development. This is also referred to as the development of capacity for self-management. On the other hand, it is equally important to train officials and development workers to be sensitive to the principles of participatory approaches and how to promote participation. Some even plead for a fundamental re-examination and re-direction of professional training, using relevant processes to create community awareness, understanding and motivation for community involvement. Others, again, ask for the de-bureaucratisation of agencies, and, since virtually all development professionals are products of the positivistic traditions of Western education, this largely precludes participation. Getting bureaucrats and NGO staff to work together takes considerable re-orientation and re-training on both sides. Sometimes developers and professional people who are involved in urban development are either scared or neither well equipped nor prepared to efficiently manage the "hard" and "soft" issues of a project in a participatory manner. They need to interact on a frequent basis with the end-beneficiary community, CBOs and community leadership to keep them well informed and to build partnerships.

What then can be done to promote participation in development? Development strategies need to be re-examined in respect of people's indigenous needs. Firstly, there are **no universal answers and development is not a subject for experts only**. Secondly, defining a development process should be **subjected to the democratic development process**, by which experts work closely with people and their institutions at all levels. Although wider political issues cannot be ignored, community participation hinges on mobilisation, training, motivation, organisation and leadership. Thirdly, in order for an intervention to be successful, it is useful for the intervenor to do three things:

- **Identify the existing networks of social institutions** in a community relevant to a planned intervention.
- **Relate one's intervention to individuals, organisations and situations** whose purpose, skills and responsibilities are clearly understood by the end-beneficiaries.

- If it is absolutely necessary to introduce a new actor or situation in a community, **ensure that its purpose is made as unambiguous as possible.**

Simply listening to a few community leaders cannot constitute a community diagnosis. To **include inputs from all the social strata and community subgroups** is very important. Opinions of less vocal, and often more vulnerable groups (*i.e.* women, tenants, unemployed people, the elderly, etc.) should also be sought. **Regional integration** implies that participatory programming should **reconcile local priorities with the overall strategy for entire communities.** **Iterative planning** about what to do, where to do it, and who the beneficiaries are, **should be geared towards increasing the production capability, the employment opportunities and the incomes of the most deprived groups.** There are no clearly defined community participation procedures which will guarantee a successful project in every situation. **Because of variations in community characteristics,** project size and degree of significance of the project need, there can be no uniform procedure for ensuring effective community participation. **Strategies adopted from elsewhere will rarely yield tangible benefits.** It is necessary to design the community participation approach to **suit local conditions,** a process that demands a prior knowledge of community behavioural patterns, priorities and expectations.

Factors such as culture, history, government policy and social, political and economic structures and circumstances influence community participation. Individual and group motivations appear to be context-specific and locality-bound rather than universally definable. As community participation grows out of a specific situation, its applicability to and replication in another region is problematic, as it encounters various and complex problems. In this regard one could refer to the disillusionment resulting from the realisation that replication of successful participatory projects is an unsolved problem.

The post-modern age we live in is a very complex and problematic time in history. Nothing is certain and simple anymore. Perhaps the only certainty is that nothing is certain. The 1990s is the turning point in world history when many of the structural givens of social development themselves turn out to be problematic. In dealing with a topic on participatory development in the upgrading of informal settlements, a mere attempt to formulate some guidelines could easily ignore the complex nature of our social reality. **Guidelines for promoting participatory development are not cast in stone and should therefore be seen neither as blueprints, nor as recipes, but rather as a frameworks of values, principles and approaches to promote the ideals of participatory development.**

According to Kuhn (1970) a scientific paradigm should, besides a theory, also include exemplars, instruments and techniques. Deliberations on problems, obstacles, constraints and issues related to community participation would therefore be incomplete without an attempt at drafting some tentative or emergent guidelines ("instruments and techniques") for promoting or facilitating participatory development. I use the term 'guidelines' in preference to 'techniques' to avoid the perception that guidelines are mere recipes or blueprints for guaranteeing the promotion of true community participation. Experience has shown that there are no "quick fix" approaches in pursuing development in a participatory manner. Due to the complexity of community dynamics as a human process there are neither blueprints, nor ready-made recipes of participatory processes which can be applied to promote participatory development.

After wrestling with more than 300 articles, books, project reports and other documentation on community participation, I am almost convinced that community participation is such a con-

text-bounded and time-specific phenomenon that there is the danger that the mere mapping out of specific guidelines may impede the true understanding of community participation. As this study develops it becomes increasingly clear to me that **concrete modes of participation need to be developed within the context of a particular project as it is impossible simply to transfer forms of participation** from one project to another. Community participation can be read and understood differently from one country to another country, from one community to another, from one case study to another, depending on the meaning assigned to it and the social implications derived from it. **There are no recipes, formulae or blueprints to promote community participation.** Therefore, there are **only broad principles to take note of.** What follows is a list of rather generic guidelines that are also applicable to community participation in the upgrading of informal settlements.

1. A list of “guidelines” for promoting community participation

Whoever wants to become involved in participatory development should:

1. **Demonstrate an awareness of their status as outsiders** to the beneficiary community and also the potential impact of their involvement. Development professionals should facilitate their involvement in a transitional way, in other words, build into their involvement a process of progressive redundancy or self-liquidation in order to encourage people's self-development and to avoid dependency.
2. **Respect the community's indigenous contribution** as manifested in their **knowledge, skills and potential. The creativity and self-initiatives** of the poor people should form the **starting-point of participatory development.** People can no longer be viewed as mere objects or targets of development – they are the subjects. Guard against a delivery approach to development – that is, an attempt to bring development to the poor through deliveries of knowledge and resources from outside. Poor people should be encouraged to undertake self-driven initiatives for change.
3. **Become good facilitators and catalysts of development that assist, facilitate and stimulate community-based initiatives and challenge practices which hinder people in realising their own initiatives** and in realising their own ideals. Good catalysts identify with the interests of the deprived and have faith in ordinary people.
4. **Promote co-decision-making and co-ownership** in defining needs, goal setting, and formulating policies and plans in the implementation of these decisions. Selective participatory practices can be avoided when development workers seek out various sets of interests, rather than listening only to a few community leaders and prominent figures.
5. **Adopt a process-approach to planning** in contrast to a blueprint/ready-made style and structure. In such a process approach outsiders (planners/professionals/experts) learn as much from insiders (community leadership/community members) as what insiders learn from outsiders. This process-approach is also called interactive planning where all the relevant stakeholders jointly define their development problems and collectively seek solutions in an interactive way with multi-directional flow of ideas and communication.
6. **Clarify the different roles and responsibilities with regard to promoting participatory development practices** since there are many different and sometimes unfocussed stakeholders involved. This will avoid any misunderstanding of the role professionals, community leaders and community members need to play.

7. **Communicate both programme/project successes and failures** – sometimes failures are more informative and directive than the successes.
8. **Promote the spirit of “ubuntu”** - a South African concept encompassing key values such as solidarity, conformity, compassion, respect, human dignity and collective unity.
9. **Listen to community members, especially the more vulnerable, less vocal and marginalised groups.**
10. **Guard against the domination of some interest groups** or a small unrepresentative leadership clique that often threatens the co-operative spirit in a community.
11. **Involve a cross-section of interest groups** to collaborate as partners in jointly defining development needs and goals, and designing appropriate processes to reach these goals.
12. **Anticipate the conflict potential in participatory development and design mechanisms to deal with it.** Strive for continuous deliberation and consensus-seeking efforts whenever there is a clash of opinions on process or product related issues. In development initiatives there is often a need for somebody skilled in conflict resolution and mediation to perform community facilitation work.
13. **Acknowledge that process-related soft issues are as important as product-related hard issues.** Any investment in shelter for the poor should involve an appropriate mix of technological and social factors, where both hardware and software are developed together. In this regard **recognise the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach to project planning and development.**
14. **Aim at releasing the energy within a community without exploiting or exhausting these community members.**
15. **Empower communities to share equitably in the fruits of development** through active processes whereby beneficiaries influence the direction of development initiatives rather than merely receive a share of benefits in a passive manner.
16. **Realise that, like in any other development effort, leaders play a crucial role in determining the success of community participation** in the upgrading of informal settlements. It is through building the capacity of the community, its organisations and its leaders that the foundations for community participation are erected or strengthened.

The above paragraph lists sixteen emergent guidelines for participatory development, and there are certainly more. These draft guidelines should not be considered as fixed rules, formulae or prescriptions; but they should rather reflect the lessons that have been learned by hard-earned experiences. The majority of these suggested guidelines “emerged”, were “tried and tested”, or “ignored” during the authors involvement in five informal settlement upgrading projects in South Africa. Although successful participation is very elusive, these guidelines could serve as a developmental strategy of conduct for bringing disparate groups together for the real intention and praxis of participatory development. At the same time these guidelines could also be used as a development ethical code. If one looks closely at these guidelines they appeal to different levels of human co-existence and serve almost as the norms of facilitating development in a participatory manner. Participatory development, and for that matter human development, is about processes whereby people empower themselves to participate continuously in improving their own destiny.

A reorientation of the thinking of development professionals is therefore necessary in which they should rather adopt the motto of planning *with* and not *for* the people. In this re-orientation

they should change from being implementers to being facilitators who foster the principle of minimum intervention and respect the indigenous knowledge of ordinary community members.

Where developers have adopted a facilitating role they need to understand that they are outsiders who cannot develop deprived people by themselves. Being a facilitator who promotes participatory development and foremost, implies understanding a community's problems/issues, assisting them to articulate these better, and then helping the community to search for solutions. Facilitators should never come with ready-made solutions or tell the people what to do; they should rather encourage and assist people to think about their problems in their own way. Besides giving advice and guidance, facilitators can do this by stimulating self-investigation and reflection among the poor; and by stimulating them to take their own decisions and action, and also to review and evaluate themselves.

The challenge is to make community participation more than an empty catchword. Community participation in development projects cannot function on rhetoric. Practice is far more important than definition. Although the majority of people engaged in development seem to understand the issues related to community involvement, they nevertheless appear to know little about how to handle these for purposes of policy design and project management. Community participation in development projects cannot be seen as an isolated phenomenon; it should rather be seen as part of a network in tandem with other development activities. Those potentially affected by development projects need to be more involved at every stage of the development endeavour. Local knowledge needs to be better utilised in the design and implementation of development programmes and projects.

2. Epilogue

The participatory development paradigm is here to stay. Although there are major issues and problems associated with community participation in development, I am, however, convinced that the benefits of participation by far outweigh these problems. Despite its ambiguities and limitations, the participatory approach enables people to assume responsibilities for policies and actions which concern them.

In this study, rather than rely only on secondary resources, I have, with a few notable exceptions, chosen to use examples from my own involvement in informal settlement upgrading projects in three provinces of South Africa. However, the reader has to look beyond the case studies to see the principles which are being illustrated. How to promote community participation in the best manner will remain an ongoing dialogue, a work in progress and an elusive ideal. I see this as healthy, because we all learn by doing and we learn even more through our mistakes.

I hope that the principles and guidelines introduced here may be useful in discussing, designing and evaluating the process of community participation in urban upgrading, whatever its content and wherever its location. I trust that this study will encourage self-reliant participatory development processes where local communities have a significant voice in initiating, planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating and controlling their own development future. I believe that this study could contribute to the process of sharing and learning from each other in reaffirming the values of true participation and the empowerment of the powerless and the vulnerable in such a way that it transcends barriers of race, class, gender and education.

"Participation is a good thing if we know how to foster it: Help people reflect on their own condition; Speak their language; Live with (or at least spend time with) them; Take their values and interests into account; Respect them as individuals; Find ways to get them to have a stake; Train them; Create appropriate reward structures; Pay attention to detail; Take adequate time; Do your homework" Dichter (1992:89).

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Social Science and Medicine 64(4,5):475-494.

ANNEXURE

Papers and publications that emanated from this study

The following refereed articles, papers and reports were delivered as products stemming from this study:

Accredited articles in refereed journals

- Botes LJS., Stewart T. & Wessels J.
1996. Conflict in development: Lessons from the housing initiatives in Freedom Square and Namibia Square. *Development Southern Africa* 13(3):453-467.
- Botes LJS. & Van Rensburg D.
1999. Community participation in development: nine plagues and twelve commandments. Approved for publication in the *Community Development Journal* (first edition 2000).

Papers at international conferences and seminars

- Botes LJS.
1996. *Promoting community participation in development initiatives: some South African examples illustrating the complexities and difficulties*. The Development Studies Association Conference, 18 - 20 September 1996. London: Reading.
- Botes LJS.
1996. *Stedelijke ontwikkeling en huisvestingsbeleid in Zuid-Afrika*. 25 October 1996 Antwerpen: Department Sociologie en Sociaalbeleid: University of Antwerpen (UFSIA).
- Botes LJS.
1996. *Low-income housing policies and community participation: urban South Africa in a global context*. State and Society relations research seminar, 29 October 1996. The Hague: Institutes of Social Studies.
- Botes LJS.
1997. *Low-income housing policies and community participation: Urban South Africa in retrospect*. Planning in the Americas. Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning. Ft. Lauderdale Florida. 6 - 9 November 1997.
- Botes LJS.
1997. *The participatory development paradigm: historical origins and theoretical roots*. Oregon State University, Corvallis. 10 November 1997 & Utah State University, Logan 13 November 1997.

Papers at national conferences and workshops

- Botes LJS.
1994. *An overview of principles and problems in participatory development*. Centre for Health Systems Research, University of the Free State (Workshop on community involvement in Primary Health Care), Bloemfontein, 18 July 1994.
- Botes LJS. & Stewart T.
1994. *Conflict in development: an experience in housing delivery*. Conference of the South African Association for Conflict Intervention, Bloemfontein, 28 September 1994.
- Botes LJS.
1995. *Progressive versus conventional housing*. Free State Housing Summit. Bloemfontein. 12 August 1995.
- Botes LJS.
1999. *It takes many to tango: the organisational and institutional dynamics of community participation in development*. Development Society of Southern Africa Biennial Conference, 7-8 April 1999, Johannesburg: Rand Afrikaans University.

Research Reports

- Botes LJS.
1994. *Pilot search and identification of possible housing and urban infrastructure projects.* (For the National Youth Development Forum). Cape Town: Independent Development Trust.
- Botes LJS. & Van Loggerenberg JF.
1994. *Report on regional and local forums in the Orange Free State and the Northern Cape.* Bloemfontein: University of the Orange Free State & the Institute for a Democratic Alternative of South Africa.
- Botes LJS, Matsepe M. & Tshabalala S.
1995. *Report on urban development and housing initiatives for the Free State Region.* Cape Town: Independent Development Trust.

Summary

Key terms

community; participation; development; community participation in development; participatory development; empowerment; informal settlement; urban upgrading; low-income housing; poverty.

The emergence of participation as an alternative paradigm of development has been phenomenal. All over the world, and in South Africa in particular, enthusiasm for community participation in development exists. Moreover, many development initiatives in South Africa aspire to be participatory and people-driven processes. However, the difficulties of achieving participation at grassroots level is not always fully recognised or analysed. Therefore, participatory development, specifically in urban upgrading in South Africa, was the focus of this research. This study attempted to move beyond both the development rhetoric and the lofty sentiments associated with participatory development, and to search for a deeper understanding of community participation in development.

In this search for a more in-depth understanding of the dynamics of participatory development, the study firstly traced the roots of community participation back to some of the social and development theories and paradigms from which community participation originated. The acceptance of participatory approaches to development reflects an awareness of the inadequacy of previous development efforts that failed to communicate effectively with local persons and considers their felt needs and potential contributions. Participatory development was developed primarily in a Third World context, albeit with Western influences, and it grew out of a wide range of alternative and divergent ideas, theories and paradigms, from all over, and from a multitude and rich legacy of development forces and approaches that influenced and co-shaped it.

Secondly, this thesis attempted to achieve conceptual clarity on community participation in relation to development projects. Community participation is for the purposes of this study, defined as a collective process that has its focus on the active collaborative involvement of key-stakeholders in joint decision-making that will influence the outcome of development decisions and of actions impacting on the broader development context of an end-beneficiary community.

Thirdly, this research paid some attention to community participation in low-income urban housing projects. Important impediments or obstacles to community participation were exposed, with some reference to their application in urban upgrading contexts. This study highlighted the emergence and evolution of participatory housing processes in urban low-income communities, both internationally and in South Africa. The global nature of shelter poverty, specifically in urban environments, was explored and the extent of shelter poverty in South Africa's urban areas and related low-income housing initiatives was discussed. The emergence of participatory urban development in South Africa was also analysed.

Fourthly, the research described and analysed the community participation dynamics of a selected case study of informal settlement upgrading. For this purpose Freedom Square (an informal settlement on the outskirts of Bloemfontein, the capital of the Free State Province in South Africa) was selected as a case study. The findings demonstrated that informal settlers do have the inherent ability to participate meaningfully in their own development, albeit not without conflict among the different stakeholders involved.

Lastly, the study proposed some emergent guidelines for promoting or facilitating community participation in urban upgrading projects. These guidelines could serve as a developmental strategy of conduct for the practice of participatory development and also as a development ethical code. Participatory development, and for that matter human development, is about processes whereby people empower themselves to participate continuously in improving their own destiny. A constant reorientation of the thinking of development professionals is therefore necessary, during which process they should rather adopt the motto of planning *with* and not *for* the people. In this reorientation they should change from being implementers to being facilitators and enablers who foster the principle of minimum intervention and who respect the indigenous knowledge of ordinary community members.

The participatory development paradigm is here to stay, but the challenge remains to make community participation more than an empty catchword. Although there are major issues and problems associated with community participation in development, the benefits of participation by far outweigh these problems. Despite its ambiguities and limitations, the participatory approach enables ordinary people to assume responsibility for policies and decisions, and also for actions which concern them.

Opsomming

Die opkoms van deelnemende ontwikkeling as alternatiewe paradigma is merkwaardig. Oral in die wêreld, ook in Suid-Afrika, is daar groot entoesiasme vir gemeenskapsdeelname in ontwikkeling. Boonop streef baie ontwikkelingsinisiatiewe daarna om deelnemende en mensgedrewe prosesse te wees. Desnieteenstaande word die probleme verbonde aan gemeenskapsdeelname op voetsool-vlak nie altyd genoegsaam erken of ontleed nie. Deelnemende ontwikkeling, en spesifiek soos dit in die Suid-Afrikaanse stedelike opgraderingstoneel vergestalt, is die fokus van hierdie navorsing. In hierdie studie is gepoog om verder as die blote ontwikkelingsretoriek en lofwaardige sentimente gekoppel aan deelnemende ontwikkeling te beweeg deur dit op die keper te beskou en tot 'n dieper verstaan van gemeenskapsdeelname in ontwikkeling te kom.

In die poging om tot 'n dieper verstaan van die dinamika van deelnemende ontwikkeling te kom, het die studie eerstens gesoek na die teoretiese en paradigmatische wortels waaruit gemeenskapsdeelname ontwikkel het. Die aanvaarding van deelnemende benaderings tot ontwikkeling reflekteer 'n bewuswording van die ontoereikendheid van vorige ontwikkelingspogings om effektief met plaaslike mense rakende hul behoeftes en moontlike bydraes te kommunikeer. Deelnemende ontwikkeling het hoofsaaklik in 'n Derde Wêreld-konteks ontstaan - althowel met Westerse invloede - en gegroei uit 'n wye verskeidenheid van alternatiewe idees, teorieë en paradigmas en vanuit 'n ryke nalatenskap van ontwikkelingskrigte en -benaderings wat daarop ingespeel en daaraan gestalte gegee het.

Tweedens het hierdie tesis gepoog om konseptuele helderheid ten opsigte van gemeenskapsdeelname in relasie tot ontwikkelingsprojekte te verkry. Vir die doel is gemeenskapsdeelname gedefinieer as 'n kollektiewe proses met die fokus van aktiewe samewerkende betrokkenheid van sleutelbelangegroepes in gesamentlike besluitneming wat 'n impak het op die breër ontwikkelingskonteks en die ontvanger-gemeenskap.

Derdens het hierdie navorsing ook gefokus op lae-inkomste stedelike behuisingsprojekte. Belangrike struikelblokke of probleme wat met gemeenskapsdeelname verband hou, is ook uitgelig, asook die relevansie hiervan vir stedelike opgraderingskontekste. Die studie het ook die ontstaan en ewolusie van deelnemende behuisingsproesse in internasionale en Suid-Afrikaanse lae-inkomste stedelike gemeenskappe beklemtoon. Die internasionale aard van "skuilplek-armoede" in spesifiek stedelike omgewings is verken en die omvang van skuilplek-armoede in Suid Afrika se stedelike gebiede en verwante lae-inkomste behuisingsprojekte is ook bespreek. Die ontstaan van deelnemende stedelike ontwikkeling in Suid-Afrika is ook ontleed.

In die vierde plek het die navorsing die dinamika van gemeenskapsdeelname aan die hand van 'n geselekteerde informele nedersetting opgraderingsprojek beskryf en ontleed. Hiervoor is Freedom Square ('n informele woonbuurt aan die buitewyke van Bloemfontein, die hoofstad van die Vrystaat provinsie) as gevallestudie geselekteer. Die bevindinge het duidelik aangetoon dat informele nedersetters die inherente vermoë het om betekenisvol aan hulle eie ontwikkeling deel te neem, alhoewel nie sonder konflik tussen die belangegroepes nie.

Laastens het die studie riglyne vir die aanmoediging of fasilitering van gemeenskapsdeelname in stedelike opgraderingsprojekte voorgestel. Hierdie riglyne kan as 'n strategie vir optrede en as 'n etiese ontwikkelingskode dien. Deelnemende ontwikkeling en ook mensgesentreerde ontwikkeling omsluit prosesse waar mense hulself bemagtig tot voortdurende deelname om hulle eie toekoms te verbeter. 'n Voortdurende heroriëntering van die denke van ontwikkel-

ingskundiges is nodig sodat hulle die gedagte om *met* mense en nie *vir* mense te beplan nie, ten volle aanvaar en uitleef. In hierdie heroriëntering moet ontwikkelingskundiges verander van implementeerders na fasiliteerders wat respek toon vir die inheemse kennis van die mense wat hulle poog om te ontwikkel en 'n aanvaarding van die beginsel van minimum intervensie.

Die deelnemende ontwikkelingsbenadering het gekom om te bly, maar die uitdaging is steeds om dit prakties tot uitvoer te bring. Alhoewel gemeenskapsdeelname in ontwikkeling nie sonder dubbelsinnighede en probleme is nie, stel dit gewone mense by uitnemendheid in staat om beleid en besluit, en daarom ook handeling wat hulle raak, te beïnvloed.