

**Producing Knowledge or Building 'Regimes' of Truth?**  
**A critical study of two Community Based Organisations and A**  
**Development Facilitation Agency in the Western Cape**

By

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### ABSTRACT

### PREFACE TO THE COMMUNITY AND URBAN SERVICES SUPPORT PROJECT AND THE MOBILE SELF-HELP CENTRE, IN FRANSCHHOEK AND NEW REST

<b>1.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	1 - 5
<b>2.</b>	<b>BEING IN THE FIELD BEFORE REACHING THE FIELD</b>	
2.1	Defining the Field	7 - 10
2.2	First Encounters	10 - 11
2.3	De-mystifying the Brief	11 - 13
<b>3.</b>	<b>CHARTING THE CHOICE OF LITERATURE</b>	14 - 21
<b>4.</b>	<b>RESEARCH METHODS, AN ASSESSMENT</b>	
4.1	Participant Observation	24 - 26
4.2	Semi-structured Interviews	26
4.2.1	Number of Interviews and Method of Sampling	26
4.2.2	Interview Process	26 - 28
4.3	On Being Accompanied in the Field	28
4.4	Participatory 'Urban' Appraisal	29 - 31
4.5	Ethical Dilemmas	31 - 32
<b>5.</b>	<b>FRIENDSHIPS, 'FALSEHOODS' AND FIELD WORK</b>	
5.1	Meeting Zeera	33 - 34
5.2	Field Workers or 'Extension' Agents?	35
5.3	Building Rapport	35 - 36
5.4	Insider Moves	37 - 39
5.5	Participatory 'Urban' Appraisal Workshops	39 - 40
5.5.1	The First Workshop	41 - 46
5.5.2	The Second Workshop	46 - 48
5.6	Producing a 'Manual' for PUA	48 - 49
5.7	'Home Grown' Processes of Domination	49 - 50
5.7.1	Powerful Leaders and Careful Choices	50 - 55
5.8	Crises and Revelations	56 - 58
5.9	Personal Vulnerability: Tales of Violence and Oppression	58 - 63
<b>6.</b>	<b>PRODUCING KNOWLEDGE OR BUILDING 'REGIMES' OF TRUTH?</b>	
6.1	Negotiating Political Domains	65 - 68
6.2	Building 'Regimes' of Truth?	69
	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	70 - 73
	<b>APPENDICES</b>	

## **Abstract**

This study is based on research carried out at the request of the Community and Urban Services Support Project (CUSSP). The research formed part of the internship programme for the Practical Anthropology course at the University of Cape Town, and involved an investigation into the communication strategies employed by community based organisations in two selected areas in the Western Cape, namely, Franschhoek and New Rest (Guguletu).

The thesis is a self-reflexive account of the research period and it explores how the acceptance of participatory approaches to development, and, conflicting interpretations of the term 'participation' can be constructed, maintained and reproduced; resulting in potential conditions which support processes of domination. Reflexivity involves a systematic and continuous analysis of the research process. To do this one should not necessarily aim to learn more about oneself (although this is an inevitable result of field work) but continuously to move from the 'intensely personal experience of one's own social interactions . . . to the more distanced analysis of that experience for an understanding of how identities are negotiated, and [particularly for this thesis] how social categories, boundaries and hierarchies and processes of domination are experienced and maintained' (Wright & Nelson 1995:48).

The literature used to inform the thesis are drawn from a variety of sources. Escobar's analysis (1988) of past and current development discourse and practice was initially

useful in its critical perspective of the development process. Nelson & Wright's book (1995) entitled, Power and Participatory Development, was instrumental to the orientation of the thesis, especially in its deconstruction of the term 'participation'. Other literature utilised in the thesis (Hope, Timmel & Hodzi 1984, Oakley & Marsden 1985, Overholt, Anderson, Cloud & Austin 1988 and Chambers 1994) explores potential definitions of the term. These definitions were useful in my attempt to categorise the various conceptual interpretations of the term that I encountered during the research process. Such definitions were important in that they provided some indication of how 'participation' was implemented by the group and organisations concerned.

The data used in the thesis are derived from documentation that I produced for the Community and Urban Service Support Project, which include a research report, Participatory 'Urban' Appraisal workshop outlines and a manual/hand-out on techniques for community participation. These materials are qualitatively informed. The research methods used to produce them (the report and the manual) include Participant Observation. Participant observation 'involves getting close to people and making them feel comfortable enough with your presence so that you can observe and record information about their lives' (Bernard 1994:136). This research method was most useful for a critical analysis of the various interpretation of 'participation'. Open ended (or semi-structured) interviews were used as a means to gather data about community based organisations and those closely associated with these structures, in the two research areas. Twenty-two people were interviewed during the research process. Other data used for this thesis are derived from official documentation

provided by the Community and Urban Services Support Project. These materials focus on the operational activities of the project and were useful for an initial understanding of project views on participatory development. These materials are used to inform a critical analysis of the research process and they are utilised to investigate how the different interpretations of 'participation' may lead to the maintenance of centralised forms of control.

Part of the conclusion drawn in the thesis is that the reflexive exercise is an important one for anthropologists, in that it places the researcher and the field in wider hierarchical systems (Nelson & Wright 1995) which allow the researcher to realise that s/he works in contested political domains. Because the development anthropologist has to work in these contested political settings s/he has to develop a critical awareness of these environments and the perpetuation of 'truths' within these environments.

The thesis also concludes that specific stakeholders in the community development process may adopt perspectives of 'participation' which reflect interests that are at odds with the transformative and democratic nature of genuine participatory development. The thesis also concludes that while the adoption of such perspectives may lead to the promotion of control and oppression; the stakeholders also exist in (and have obligations to) social and political environments which prevent them from effecting fundamental change in established spheres of control.

**Preface to**

**The Community and Urban Services Support Project & The Mobile  
Self-Help Centre in Franschoek and New Rest (Guguletu)**

The Community and Urban Service Support Project (CUSSP) was established in October 1992. The project<sup>1</sup> was developed in the context of USAID's support for the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa in the early 1990s, with special reference to the improvement of urban housing conditions for the disadvantaged in South Africa after the repeal of the Group Areas Act. CUSSP is active in four key areas, policy and institutional development, finance for land acquisition, housing and construction management assistance. In approximately two years, the project has worked with a total of seventy-four different 'communities' nationwide and has work on-going in approximately fifty-four areas. The average group size of these communities is seven hundred families or 'house units', although this varies considerably from area to area.

One of the key roles of CUSSP is the acknowledged need to strengthen community organisational capacity. This is primarily achieved through the provision of training to improve local management and the implementation of Impact Grant Programmes. Impact Grants are approved by USAID (and disbursed by CUSSP) to strengthen the management capacity of community based organisations.

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<sup>1</sup> ref., CUSSP Mid-Term Review, June 1995

Both New Rest (in Guguletu) and Franschhoek are identified as high intensity projects with fragile Community based organisations. This means that these communities require substantial organisational support, in the forms of training and technical/legal/social development advice from CUSSP. For Franschhoek this assistance is aimed at the improvement of local governance especially with regard to easing racial tension in the area and assisting in the housing process for disadvantaged people in a high income area.

First Operational in the mid 1980s, the Mobile Self-Help Centre is a small development organisation which was sub-contracted by CUSSP in 1992 to work in the two above mentioned areas. The co-coordinator of the MSHC provides a field based service to assist CUSSP in the implementation of the project's objectives.

## Introduction

In the newly democratic South Africa, a special niche has been created for the concept of 'participation' which is seen (by those involved in the democratisation process) as central to the reconciliation and nation building process. The acceptance of participatory approaches to development seems to reflect the drive to establish popular power and potential which were suppressed during apartheid. The dramatic changes in development rhetoric in the past decade, seems to be rapidly gaining ground in various development fora in South Africa.

Significant changes in the development paradigm, from 'top-down' to 'bottom-up' approaches represents a change in focus from 'things' to 'people' (Chambers IN Wright & Nelson 1995:32). Ideally these changes include the exchange of development modes from a Blueprint (prescriptive) approach to a 'process' (locally informed) approach. In the development context, changes in decision-making become decentralised rather than centralised. Professionals working in this context are encouraged to empower the intended beneficiaries rather than motivate and control their actions.

I first came across participatory research methods during an intensive week of scheduled work which formed part of the Practical Anthropology course. I had been anticipating this week since I heard about the possibility of us learning about participatory research methods and I looked forward to the prospect of adding what I felt was a crucial dimension to my 'already acquired' anthropological skills. We were provided with tangible, practical tools to empower the subjects of our study. These methods included drawing Venn diagrams to

establish different priorities among our subjects and doing mapping exercises to establish the level and location of resources in the area. The sheer exhilaration of seemingly being able to offer something empowering, tangible and accessible (to the subjects of my study) in the field was what seduced me with regard to the use of participatory research methods.

What I failed to perceive at the time that I was learning about participatory research methods is that the use of these methods could also be central to the production of world-ordering knowledge and contribute to processes of domination, the very thing that I wanted to avoid. As Williams (1976) explains, that the word 'participation', like community is a 'warmly persuasive word' which 'seems never to be used unfavorably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term'. Participatory research is claimed to occur **with** the subject of one's study rather than **on** the subjects and allows participants to have greater control over matters which directly concern and affect them. Regarding the ideal participatory development process,

The process in fact generates 'countervailing' power to confront already well-established power configuration within any particular context. This process is also characterised as 'creating space' or the imperceptible movement of pushing out the frontiers and of achieving space within which groups might begin to function and to take action.

(Oakley and Marsden 1984:26)

Furthermore, wherever the process of 'participation' is linked to structural change or the achievement of 'power', 'It is impossible to exclude the achieving of 'power' as the fundamental prerequisite for these changes. 'Participation' to bring about structural change implies the taking of action, and this action can only be taken from a position of power' (ibid). This thesis explores various conceptualisations of 'participation' a concept which

emerged as a powerful political entity in community development during my study of the local communication strategies used by two community based organisations in the Western Cape. The thesis argues that while participatory approaches to development are ideologically beguiling, they may promote processes of domination. The thesis critically assesses how my research may have contributed to established views of participation and the participatory research process. Each chapter in the thesis attempts to explore whether (and if so, how) participatory approaches to research and development management actually contributes to processes of domination. In chapter three for example, I examine the effect of literature choice and usage in the promotion of institutional perception of participation. To substantiate my argument, I make detailed reference to my research experience during my internship with the Community Urban Support Services Project (CUSSP). The self-reflexive nature of my account of field experience aims to reveal how and why these processes of control were promoted.

Chapter two describes my encounter with a strange phenomenon, that of being in the field before reaching the field. This chapter critically assesses my experience of the client organisation as a center of phenomenal political influence with clearly defined institutional spheres of control. I recount my experience of maladjustment, alienation and my desperate need to role play in spite of the fact that I had not yet met the people from the two areas in which I was to conduct field work. These experiences made me question where the field 'begins' and where the field 'ends' and they made me question the number of fields one could work within simultaneously.

Chapter three examines the literature offered, utilised and accepted during the course of my

research as another means of contributing to institutional knowledge. I take up an important concern which is raised by Arturo Escobar in his book (1995) and Nelson and Wright (1995). Escobar explains how the production of knowledge through research and the subsequent documentation of research helps to entrench established views of development. Chapter three follows the implication of Escobar's argument and includes a careful assessment of material which provided varying definitions of the word 'participation', and examines the literature regarding stakeholders involved in participatory processes of development. The chapter also considers my acceptance of institutional representations of 'the other' in text and analyses and how this may have contributed to potentially biased perceptions of people in the areas where I conducted my research. Lastly, I assess the importance of literature that is critical of the 'participatory' development paradigm.

Chapter four summarises the methods I used to implement my research. I attempt to assess the utility of these methods in light of the problems I experienced in the field and in light of the advantages they provided. In line with the exercise in self-reflection, I critically assess the methods themselves. To what extent have my use of these methods promote the objectification of the other, that is, how did I create (for the client organisation) a 'concrete' image of the people that I observed and interviewed during the internship? This chapter also includes a careful assessment of how existing power relations were reaffirmed in the process of my research for CUSSP.

In Chapter five of the thesis I describe and reflect on what Cesara (IN Golde 1982) calls the 'immersion period'. In this chapter I describe how my evolving friendship with one of my clients was central to the establishment of rapport with the extension workers in the field. I

also examine my own contribution to processes of domination in my relation to traditional levels of authority and explain why, by being a black woman, my opinions, questions and intrusions seemed not to be perceived as dangerous by the men that I was with in the field. In Chapter five I also assess my experience of a veiled sense of reality in the field: While there was general consensus about what is required in the formulae for real participation in community development, in practice most of the groups and individuals involved in this process seemed to have different and conflicting answers to the equations.

In conclusion, I attempt to synthesise the different elements that led my research on the communication strategies used by two community based organisations to promote what Escobar (1995) calls 'the bureaucratisation of knowledge'. I emphasise that, although one cannot discount the importance of participatory approaches for the creation of a democratic culture in South Africa, it is equally important to be aware of the different conceptions of 'participation' which depend on the political interests of individuals in the community development process.

## Chapter Two

### Being In the Field Before Reaching the Field

Situated in an impressive edifice of marble and glass, the CUSSP office provided a welcome respite from the cloying heat and the grind of traffic outside. I had received my research brief from the Community Urban Services Support Project (CUSSP) about two months before the internship and I had prepared a preliminary proposal for my first meeting with my clients. According to the terms specified in my brief<sup>2</sup>,

The intern would undertake a study of CBO communication strategies and mechanisms for communities engaged with CUSSP and its partners. The intern would be asked to analyse their findings and make recommendations for restructuring more effective community communication for development. The interns would consult with the CUSSP staff in designing the study and then work with CUSSP field staff in its implementation. The intern would then be given an opportunity to present his or her findings and recommendations to CUSSP and its partner organisations in a workshop.

I was required to describe and study the communication strategies of two community based organisations based in the Western Cape. This would involve being in the field with CUSSP field staff and it would include tentative recommendations for the improvement of the communication strategies employed by the locally based organisations that CUSSP liaises with to implement its initiatives.

At my first meeting with the project advisors, I learned that the CUSSP project was developed in the context of USAID's support for the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa

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<sup>2</sup> ref., Appendix 1

in the early 1990s. In essence, the project is principally concerned with the improvement of (urban) housing conditions for the disadvantaged in the country. Key aspects of the CUSSP project (as identified in the June 1995, mid-term review of the project's activities) are as follows: the acknowledged need to strengthen local organisational capacity, provide technical advice to promote the building of capacity among disadvantaged communities, and to provide continuous training assistance that is responsive to actual needs at the local level.

As stated in the brief, I needed to work with CUSSP field staff in order to implement my research. This meant that I had to work with the Mobile Self-Help Centre (MSHC) which is a small, South African development business that is sub-contracted by CUSSP to implement project initiatives in two communities in the Western Cape, namely, New Rest (Guguletu) and Franschoek (Cape Winelands). CUSSP is also active in other areas of the Western and Southern Cape such as Hout Bay, Bo Kaap, Kwanobule (hostel in Langa), Knysna and East London.

In light of CUSSP's focus on urban housing, the MSHC's mandate to work in New Rest and Franschoek involved addressing the needs of the squatter communities in these two target areas. I was to conduct my research on the communication strategies of the locally based organisations, while the MSHC was active in these areas.

## **2.1 Defining the Field**

Since I needed to work with the MSHC field staff in order to carry out my research for CUSSP, I had to approach the co-ordinator of the MSHC and I met her at the CUSSP office.

Unlike various anthropological accounts of field work that I had read, my field work

strangely began when I met with my clients at the CUSSP office and not only when I arrived in the 'field'. Various personal accounts of field work that I had come across (Briggs 1954, Codere 1959 and Landes 1938 IN Golde 1986) identified the client as either the anthropologist or a remote academic department that seemed far removed from the reality of the 'real' field. In contrast I felt that my research had begun at the CUSSP office. Everyone that I met at the office curiously seemed to have a 'part' in the 'drama' that I imagined to exist in the two areas where I was to do research, New Rest and Franschoek.

This led me to question where the 'field' actually is. Does the client of practical anthropology always define where the field is? And is it possible (in any sense of the word) to simultaneously work in multiple fields? When I arrived at CUSSP, my feelings of alienation and maladjustment were almost to be expected, after all I was entering a new environment and it is not uncommon for a person to feel less than confident while facing the unexpected. Bernard (1994:159) describes the sense of shock anthropologists experience during the initial contact period. My particular experience of first contact with the organisation was in a sense, 'cultural'. Here, 'office politics' was prominent, as was organisational hierarchy and the rules and practices that provided a sense of control. Mastering the language of development could be a significant means of exclusion or inclusion. It later transpired that this conceptual and political environment could replicate itself in the community based organisations chosen to work with CUSSP. In this sense, if I was to learn something about how community based organisations work in Franschoek and New Rest, I had to use the moment before entering the 'real' field to understand how the spheres of organisational control are constructed and maintained. An article written by Gupta and Ferguson (n.d., pg. 4) explores the idea of the field:

Since fieldwork is increasingly the single constituent element of the anthropological tradition used to mark and police the boundaries of the discipline, it becomes impossible to rethink those boundaries or rework their contents without confronting the idea of 'the field'. . . [especially the fact the] . . . world being described by ethnographers has changed dramatically without a corresponding shift in disciplinary practices since the period when 'fieldwork' became hegemonic in anthropology.

My experience of seemingly 'being in the field before reaching the field' was paradoxical. The two groups (community based organisations) that I was required to study were not 'tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically self-conscious, or culturally homogenous' (Appadurai 1991:191). The two community based organisations (like CUSSP/MSHC) may have some definitive boundary but they also exist in a loosely territorialised and intergrated system which shapes their actions.

I also began to question how 'anthropological' my research would be and where it would appear on the 'hierarchy of purity' regarding field sites. According to Gupta and Ferguson, the historical constitution of field sites have tended to exist on a 'hierarchy of purity' in that, field sites which were defined as exotic and strange, and the people as marginalised and different was nearer the apex of this hierarchy. I was also having great difficulty identifying where the field began and ended, who it encompassed and whether those included could be considered 'anthropologically correct'. As Nader (IN Chambers 1988) explains, anthropologists have tended to 'study down' rather than 'study up' in order to understand how local realities are constructed and maintained.

My primary encounter with CUSSP provided a glimpse of the precarious symbiotic environment in which the organisation and its community based partners exist. As such

Nader's bid (1974) for anthropologists to 'study up' in order to understand 'how power and responsibility are exercised', does not fit this scenario. I needed to study around, inside and outside the constituted field (this being the groups themselves and the physical/political space they occupy) in order to understand the overarching and intricate factors affecting the work of the two community based organisations.

## 2.2 First Encounters

What I felt during my first contact with CUSSP was, in retrospect, a profound and psychological experience of the organisation as a center of phenomenal political influence. I dressed conservatively for the first meeting because I felt this was required by the corporate environment. I wore tailored gray and black clothes and in retrospect, I cannot quite remember when I wore clothing of different colors during this research period. It seemed as though I wanted to draw attention away from myself, to make myself smaller, less noticeable and less intrusive. Once in the Regional Advisor's office, I approached and spoke to him as though he were my previous employer and that this was the organisation that I had worked for during the past year<sup>3</sup>. During this time I had tried to cultivate a professional image, to learn the 'language' of development agencies, as I was in regular contact with other development organisations as part of my job. I also felt compelled to adopt the approach necessary to 'fit in' with such an organisation. My prior experience of an institutional environment, should have alerted me to the possibility of a similar experience with CUSSP and as a result I could have prepared myself to deal with the institutional pull to conform to

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<sup>3</sup> I had spent the past year working for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Malawi, as an Information Assistant.

`insider' perception, process and politics. However, this was not to be.

While I was sitting in the CUSSP Regional Advisor's office, I smugly imagined that my more flamboyant dress code at UNDP was the only thing at odds with the current scenario. For a short while, I was comforted by this thought. I `knew' what professional approach was required and I felt I had written a cohesive research proposal in response to the brief provided by my clients. My sense of comfort dissipated when I met with the National Policy Advisor for CUSSP, the second time I went to CUSSP. In retrospect, this was really my first meeting with my clients as I suddenly realised the magnitude of the task I had undertaken and I was suddenly very aware and disturbed by the physical and conceptual environment that I had entered.

### **2.3 De-mystifying the Brief**

I received the brief from CUSSP almost three months before I was to begin my internship with the organisation. There were two potential topics that I could choose for my research and I chose the `Communication Strategies' brief, partly because I had been involved in some mass communication work in the previous year.

Before meeting with the National Policy Advisor for CUSSP, I had spent the past week discussing my final proposal with my academic supervisor and trying to formulate a means of addressing it. My supervisor argued that it would be important not only to analyse the communication strategies used by CUSSP in their work with community based organisations, but that it would be crucial to study the project itself. At the time, I simply accepted that I had made a mistake in interpreting the brief. In retrospect, I realise why he thought it was

important to analyse the project itself, he wanted me to develop a critical awareness of the project in order to understand how institutional initiatives affect the intended beneficiaries of development. His argument was reminiscent of a comment made by another lecturer in the department that 'Anthropologists never really get on with governments'. This comment was striking and reminded me of responses from people outside the academic environment, that anthropologists are good at criticising the approach of organisations to development but offer little in the way of potential recommendations to improve these approaches.

At the beginning of the research period, and in fact throughout my years of study at the university, I rarely questioned the judgements made by my lecturers and supervisors. I had naively accepted that their knowledge and experience ought not to be questioned. Field work was the rite of passage and it seemed as though a shroud concealed those who had conducted 'real field work'. 'Initiants' who were unable to master the complex theoretical semantics necessary for initial inclusion, and those who could not lay claim to regional specialisation or whose 'region' was not 'distant, exotic and strange' could not penetrate this miasma.

As students we had also received the message that anthropologists conducting institutional research had to be the St. Thomas' of social enquiry, ever critical of authority and systematically doubting of institutional power. At best, students tended to avoid research involving institutions, in spite of the fact that institutions can 'produce, transmit and stabilize development 'truths' (Watts 1993:263). Extracting information from community based organisations and producing knowledge for a specific organisation (in this case my client) was perceived as form a betrayal, I would be contributing to the empowerment of the organisation by providing them with the information they required and contributing to the

reinforcement of existing structures of domination.

My discussion with the Regional and National Advisor was in direct opposition to my supervisor's suggestions. CUSSP required me to study the communication strategies used by the Community Based Organisations with whom they were in regular contact. My clients were clearly opposed to a study of CUSSP. The advisors explained that a critical analysis of CUSSP would involve a detailed and careful assessment of a vast network of development partners that the project forms part of, as well as an analysis of the social and political environment in which CUSSP exists. The advisors' opposition also reflected a genuine concern for me to meet the requirements of the brief in the time specified for research. In essence, this episode should have alerted me to the fact that I would be expected to work in 'contested political domains' (Fetterman 1983) and that I would have to adopt a variety of roles (perhaps simultaneously) to mediate between the conflicting demands of the client organisation, my academic supervisor; (and later in the research process) the extension workers of the MSHC and local leaders in the two research areas.

As such this chapter has attempted to explore the initial experience of being in the field and explain how my difficulty in defining 'a field' was actually symptomatic of the contested political settings in which I was to do research. In the following chapter, I attempt to explore how the literature offered to me from individuals, groups and institutions within these contested political domains would affect and shape the content of and my approach to the internship.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Charting the Choice of Literature**

At the beginning of my internship, I did not question the materials I had chosen, been offered and used for the internship period. Most of what I had read about participatory research provided an ideological interpretation of development and seemed to define participation as essentially beneficial for the subjects of my study. The materials used to inform the workshops (Srinivasan 1990, Mascarenhas 1990 and Chambers 1994 amongst others) tend to describe participation as the sole means for disadvantaged and marginalised groups of people to have greater control over their livelihood. All of these authors acknowledge the immediate environment in which participatory research takes place, that is, they emphasise the fact that these contexts are isolated and economically impoverished. They also stress that the people in these contexts have little influence over the events that affect their well being.

My first aim was to try and understand how a project such as CUSSP 'fits' in with existing development paradigms in South Africa. To do this, I had to familiarise myself with the evolution of past and current debates around development theory and the effect of such theory on changes in development management and practice within CUSSP.

The literature which traces housing struggles in South Africa (since the birth of the apartheid state in 1948) were particularly useful for a historical contextualisation of the urban housing development experience in the country. Such literature was especially useful for a contextualisation of the current experiences of CUSSP and the MSHC within South Africa's

broader history of urban development. The historical contextualisation of housing development in South Africa, is also well developed in Soni's article (Smith 1992). Here, the author examines the political role and social effect of state intervention in the housing development process from the mid 1970s to the late 1980s. Soni's article was particularly useful in its analysis of change (or lack thereof) in the management of development. Information about the findings of the Cillie Commission after the (Soweto Uprising in 1976) and the effects of the Riekert Commission (1978) stressed that centralised, top-down and non-participatory approaches to development were evident in the late 1970s.

Although CUSSP is a project that seems to have had limited experience of South Africa's socio-political history, the project has to operate in a context where technicist ( i.e., non-human) approaches to housing policy was significant in the late 1980s, and may still be evident in project management to-day (Parnell IN Smith 1992:54). During the late 1980s for example, some attempt was made by the state, to move development rhetoric away from state sponsored initiatives to individual and corporate responsibility for housing. The disadvantaged populations were encouraged to be responsible for their own development in spite of political, social and economic circumstances. Robinson (IN Smith 1992:295 - 297) takes this argument further in her analysis of state intervention in urban development:

The planning of South African cities both before and during apartheid was deeply infused with prevailing political and moral norms. In addition, planning as an independent discursive practice contributed to and enabled these norms

and that for the apartheid government . . .

Urban black locations . . . were not simply 'housing schemes' but places of manipulation,

domination and control . . . The township was to be divided into precincts which were to under the control of a headman who was responsible for law and order. These were then combined into blocks under 'blockmen' and further into superintendencies which were the responsibility of the white superintendent<sup>4</sup>.

One of Robinson's conclusions from her discussion of 'power, space and the city' in apartheid South Africa is that 'planning discourse and the practical experience of administrators were bound up with the political projects of the time, even as they made their own significant contribution to the elaboration of political power' (Smith 1992:298). This information was useful in that it helped me realise that the staff of CUSSP/MSHC have to operate in a context where the process of unraveling these past 'political projects' is a difficult and ambiguous enterprise that continuously challenges the goal of genuine participatory development.

To understand how the entrapment of managers and other decision makers can be affected by factors outside their sphere of control and, how decisions made in such contexts can lead to a reaffirmation of the external sphere, I decided to examine Ley's approach to development theory and its 'contribution to the elaboration of political power'. Leys' book (1996) provides a systematic evaluation of development theories and explains how these theories were affected by fundamental changes in history and international relations. This led me to explore the invariable link between the evolution of development theory and the practice of development by CUSSP/MSHC and the two community based organisations in New Rest and Franschhoek.

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<sup>4</sup> ref., Cutten 1951 pg. 84

Leys' explains that the first theories of development emerged during the advent of industrial capitalism in the late eighteenth century when the impact of 'human economic, social, political and cultural development' was brought to people's attention (Leys 1996:4). The author traces the evolution of development theory from the 1950s through to the 1990s, explaining that although important ideas about human progression and the 'destination' of the human population existed in the late eighteenth century, it was only in the 1950s when a narrower conception of 'development' came into being. As decolonisation became a reality for Africa in the early 1960s, the European powers began to question how the economies of the new (and dependent) nations could be made more productive.

The author analyses development theories that emerged over the past four decades and explains how and why development initiatives based on these theories failed. The Participatory Development paradigm emerged in the mid 1980s with the recognition that many development initiatives fail because they are 'top-down', interventionist approaches concerned with cost-effectiveness<sup>5</sup> and 'things' rather than people.

The literature on participatory development, does not only stress the importance of creating the right environment for greater individual participation. Such literature also emphasises that participatory development includes long term empowerment of the individual, participation becomes an 'end' in itself rather than a 'means' to implement project objectives. Some of the authors (Timmel & Hope 1984) pay careful attention to the different and influential

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<sup>5</sup> c.f, Chambers R. (IN Nelson & Wright 1995), Leys C. (1996), Ramirez-Faria (1988) for a detailed discussion on the evolution of development theory

political contexts in which participatory research takes place but fail to recognise that development organisations and projects are bound by the very structures they create to regulate the development process (c.f. Porter, Allen & Douglas 1994).

In documentation published for development agencies, 'participation' is construed as yet another entity necessary to streamline the development process. As a result, participatory and decentralised forms of research and development is seen as yet another means to achieve their project aims rather than transform current relations of power. There was some evidence of this understanding of 'participation' during the PUA workshops that I held with the CUSSP technical staff and such documentation provided a useful insight into why participation is construed as an entity rather than a process. According to Oakley and Marsden (1984) 'Much of the literature on participation sees participation as the 'missing ingredient' in the development process; a tangible input which can be physically inserted into . . . development projects'.

In various official forms of documentation, little reference is made to existing political imbalances which affect the implementation of participatory approaches. A statement in the 1989 report produced by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for example confirms this, 'Respect of human rights, justice and equity are legitimate subjects for dialogue among sovereign partners. Fuller mobilisation of human resources and their productive energies will be facilitated when basic human rights are respected' (OECD 1989:78). Such statements require careful reading and, at the time of research, I made little effort to carefully assess of these and similar statements.

Other documentation that attempted to interpret participatory research for the institutional context tended to contain confusing messages. These materials (e.g., Midnet PRA Interest Group, June 1994) emphasised that the aim of participation is to achieve maximum popular representation for community development to take place. These materials provide a description of methods used for participatory research and emphasise the importance of spreading the good news about a participatory approach to development. They do not however, consider the fact that such material can be selectively used to achieve the aims of the project, which, while not necessarily negative, may ignore the human aspect of participatory approaches and promote processes of control.

During my internship, I was also offered official documentation concerning the client organisation. I used these materials to familiarise myself with the operational aspects of the organisation. While this material was certainly useful as a comprehensive introduction to the activities of the organisation and its partners in development, my perception of these partners in development and the organisation had two main effects. In the first place, my perceptions of community based organisations and the communities that they represent were initially affected by their representation in community profiles compiled by CUSSP. Secondly, the documentation provided by CUSSP/MSHC provided me with the opportunity to perceive the range of demands, constraints and choices that have to be made by advisors in specific contexts.

Douglas, Porter and Allen (1994) illustrate part of the problems experienced by project managers and their clients. The authors emphasise that there may be consensus within the organisation and amongst concerned local leaders that 'real' participation entails structural

change. In reality, 'control management', top-down approaches to development and limited community participation prevails, because financial accountability is an essential component of project management (c.f., Nelson & Wright 1995). More importantly, participation to bring about structural change involves a fundamental reversal of existing power relations - something development projects cannot consider, given their limited service implementation time, their obligation to the host state and their need for project funding.

An article which critically assesses the term participation with special reference to 'practicing community development' (Bhattacharyya 1995), presents a new perspective of community development as a quest for solidarity and agency. This particular article led me to question how the use and promotion of participation as an ideal could also be a quest to demonstrate solidarity and agency. In townships like New Rest where powerful local leaders control the development process by their access to external resources (especially contact with various agencies), there is a strong need to demonstrate commitment, solidarity and agency to potential sponsors who 'require' locally representative structures to work with. Other literature (c.f., Eyben & Ladbury 1995) also stresses the importance of 'high status interest groups' who monopolise the participatory process (that has been put in place by external agencies) and, as a result, contribute to processes of control in the area.

The shifts in power within the communities also influence the local process of control even though external organisations may want to set up genuine and sustainable representation at the local level. As Nelson and Wright warn, these locally based organisations may become 'parallel structures' to that of the state . . . they can be subject to corruption and are unlikely to persist'. The authors also critically assess the 'gaps between institutional rhetoric and

practice' in that locally based organisations that attempt to effect real participation rarely have 'political clout beyond the local area' (Nelson & Wright 1995:13).

These local organisations may see (in project policy documents for the intended beneficiaries) and hear (in project meetings with intended beneficiaries) of the development agency's belief in genuine participation but in practice (project implementation and decision-making) CBOs are not included in the negotiation processes outside their externally defined<sup>6</sup> limited sphere of control. This reference was particularly useful in my reassessment of how community based organisations' increase their spheres of influence and as such, contribute to processes of domination. I began to question where they were placed on the hierarchy of decision-making processes and whether their views of participation were different to that of the agency active in the area and if not, why not.

The literature chosen, offered and accepted for the internship affected not only my perception of my clients and the context in which they work. The choice of literature also shaped the types of research methods that I would use for the internship and determined the definitions of 'participation' that I would adopt to conduct interviews, participant-observation and participatory urban appraisal workshops. In the next chapter, I critically assess how the research methods that I used during the internship shaped the research process and examine how the use of these methods may have contributed to existing spheres of control.

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<sup>6</sup> There are various players involved in the definition of this 'limited sphere of control', I discuss this in greater detail in Chapter Five.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Research Methods, an Assessment**

A comprehensive understanding of social research methods within the confines of academia does not necessarily translate into the seamless practice of these methods in the field. When I received the brief entitled 'An assessment of the Communication Strategies used by Two Community Based Organisations in the Western Cape', I knew very little about potential communication strategies that might be used by these locally based organisations. I was actually excited by the thought of doing research for a project (CUSSP), that I arrogantly deemed prestigious enough for my internship because it was sponsored by USAID. It did not take long for me to discover that implementing the terms of the brief and using the methods acquired during the Master's course would not be an easy task.

Three weeks before I started field work, I was terrified. It was fine hypothesising about how research should be done and discussing what to avoid when conducting research in the safe confines of academia. 'Real' and solitary field work on the other hand, seemed vastly different to confined academic discussions and 'laboratory type' group field work. I felt as isolated as (I often laughingly reminded myself) a 'kapluna daughter' amongst the Utkuhksalingmiut (Golde 1986:19). There are times when I relish the (seeming) selfishness of isolation but I arrived at the CUSSP office partly consoled by the fact that I would not be expected to live in the areas chosen for research nor would I be expected to enter the field alone. I remember reading about the experiences of other anthropologists in the field, and I felt a surge of relief when the National Policy Advisor for CUSSP said quite smugly in a

thick scot's accent, 'the days of anthropologists living for weeks or months in villages and exotic places are over, academics must just forget about those days'.

I was anxious about the prospect of 'real' field work, because I had never done research outside the bounds of the university. Language was a significant barrier, I could not speak Xhosa and I understood very little Afrikaans. But I was most terrified of the experts who seemed to know it all as I would be working in a multidisciplinary context including professionals au fait with advanced legal theory and financial management. These people would, no doubt, be watching my amateurish approach to research. Even when I thought of one of my lecturer's words, 'you must now consider yourselves as professionals', I did not feel reassured, not among a group of people whose professional titles and language consisted of a series of acronyms that seemed to defy transcription. This initial experience compelled me to act as a 'professional', loyal to a specific professional milieu. This attitude seriously affected my ability to anticipate how participatory approaches to development could contribute to existing power relations and forms of domination in the organisations that I would be working with. Chambers (1993:13) explores this phenomena when he analyses the 'deep' preferences of normal professionals. He explains that 'at a more immediate level, the paradigm shift (from things to people) depends on professional people. They are the key. The problem is not 'them' (the poor) but 'us' (the not poor). The massive reversals needed to eliminate the worst deprivation need professionals to fight within the structures in which they find themselves. Most, however trapped they feel, have some room for manoeuvre and can find allies . . . The basic issue is power. Those with power - 'us' - do not easily give it up.'

#### 4.1 Participant Observation

Participant observation became the most important research method that I used during the internship period. It became an all encompassing experience that it seemed to demand a transformation of my priorities, my perception of the field and my place within that field. As this section of the chapter hopes to show, participant observation assumed a particularly pervasive nature while I was doing research for CUSSP. Reading Codere's (IN Golde 1986) experience of 'Field-work in Rwanda', was a welcome and yet fearful revelation, she described field-work as a total experience:

. . . involving an hour-by-hour basis our private, physical and psychic well-being, the minutiae of daily living, everything we know of our own culture and of our science, and all of these in relation to new problems that demand solution or fresh contexts that provoke reaction and thought without letup.

(Codere [1960] IN Golde 1986:144)

In the first instance, participant observation involved spending a considerable amount of time at the (MSHC) coordinator's house and attending numerous meetings scheduled by my clients with the 'host communities' in Franschoek and New Rest. It also involved careful attempts to avoid what Bernard (1994:310) calls 'reactive observation'. During my casual conversations with the senior and community advisors or the extension agents of the MSHC, I realised that some of these individuals were responding to my questions and my presence because of my defined role by CUSSP as 'Masters' anthropology student from the University of Cape Town. It seemed for example, that the advisors were concerned with projecting the image of 'new professionals'<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> c.f. Chambers (1993) defines some of the elements of the 'new professional', these include a decentralised approach to decision-making, sincere efforts to empower the disadvantaged populations and a willingness to learn from and acknowledge local people and their assets.

Secondly, participant observation in the form of 'being there' involved considerable listening and empathising. In New Rest, Franschhoek and within the organisation (MSHC), personal tragedies seemed endemic. As I describe in Chapter five of the thesis, tales of violence, children suffering in abject poverty and women's vulnerability were a pivot on which my 'being there' seemed to balance.

The systematic application of research methods featured high on my list of priorities regarding the internship, as did rigid adherence to a prepared research time-frame. As I soon discovered in New Rest and Franschhoek, however, set research time-frames were very difficult to put into practice. For example, we (one of the field workers and I) would arrive at New Rest for a scheduled meeting and half of the people who were supposed to attend would appear an hour later and the other half would not attend at all. Aspects such as the actual physical distance to Franschhoek and New Rest, the lack of transport funds and persistent tension within the communities seemed to plague my attempts to complete semi-structured interviews with people in New Rest/Franschhoek.

What I failed to address at this stage is the fact that emphasising a rigid time-frame is actually in line with the organisation's requirement for quick research that not only meets project implementation deadlines but also enhances mechanistic project management approaches by limiting the time available for genuine participation. Added to this, I failed to critically assess how my use of participant observation could contribute to biased perceptions of those in the two research areas. My observations of poverty, apathy, corruption in local leadership and the like, helped construct a concrete image of these areas and the people that lived there. This confirmed some of the prejudices already in place at CUSSP and reinforced the agency's

stress on control. My observations were later validated and made 'real' by the excerpts chosen (for citation in my report for CUSSP) from the semi-structured interviews that I conducted with individuals in the field. As Wright and Nelson (1995:49) explain, '... at the writing stage identities become more fixed, and representations become controlled by the author, whose voice is privileged'.

## **4.2 Semi-structured Interviews**

### **4.2.1 Number of Interviews and Method of Sampling**

Semi-structured interviews were also used as a means to gather information regarding local people's knowledge of and feelings about community based organisations in New Rest and Franschhoek. I scheduled a minimum of ten semi-structured interviews for each of the two areas. In Franschhoek, twelve interviews were implemented and in New Rest, eleven. The sampling technique used is what Bernard (1994) calls 'snowball sampling'. This technique involves the identification of potential interviewees who in turn identify other individuals who may accept to being interviewed. As the following assessment will show, the implementation of this technique and the prescriptions for semi-structured interviews were not always easy to follow.

### **4.2.2 Interview Process**

The interviews were to be carried out whenever possible during the research period as it was difficult to predict when potential interviewees were going to be present in the area and available for an interview. The semi-structured interviews were a useful means of allowing interviewees to speak about the (then) Residents' Association (in New Rest) and the Housing Action Committee (in Franschhoek) among other important issues that directly affected the

well-being of people in these areas. In Franschhoek, these semi-structured interviews turned into formal interviews and became very extractive. The interviews were in part affected by the time factor but the 'power' dimension was even more significant. Time played an important role in the availability of potential interviewees and my ability to reach them at a specific time during the day. For example, it happened that several of the days scheduled for interviews were not feasible because other important meetings set up by the agency for the discussion (with the local Housing Action Committee) of potential means to negotiate with the conservative council in Franschhoek.

Potential interviewees also tended to be laboring on wine farms in the surrounding area or very occupied with child care responsibilities. The majority of women interviewed in Franschhoek (about five women) seemed very reluctant to speak for long without any form of prompting from me or the field worker present at the time. In this context, formal interviews were stilted, extractive and seemed to be putting the interviewees under enormous pressure to talk for a long period of time.

Although semi-structured interviews were not compromised in New Rest, the sampling technique did not help produce a random sample of potential interviewees. The use of snowball sampling led to men nominating other men as potential interviewees. As I explain in section 5.7, I made some effort to ask women in the area to speak about their experiences in New Rest, but only two women, (of the eleven interviewees) spoke. In this instance, the choice of interviewees through snowball sampling resulted in the reinforcement of power and gender divisions in the area.

The semi-structured interviews also served as the means to gather emically informed knowledge from the general population in New Rest and Franschoek about the community based organisations responsible for setting development processes in motion. The data gathered during these semi-structured interviews were later used as evidence of local inhabitants' general satisfaction/dissatisfaction with their CBOs. The information derived from the interviews were never intended for the eyes of those who were part of the actual community based organisations. Fetterman's comment (1983:219) synthesises this very well, 'One of the most common mediums for interaction is the report. An ethnographic report rich in detail is as potentially dangerous as it may be helpful, depending on how the material is presented and who uses the information.' At the time of research, I had little idea of how my report would be used. I was vaguely informed that it would be used 'for documentation purposes'. As to what this meant was not entirely clear except that the information could contribute to an existing store of concrete knowledge about these areas, and that the information in the report could be used for specific institutional intervention.

#### **4.3 On Being Accompanied in the Field**

I was initially very concerned about having a field worker present at each interview. I had been instructed not to enter Franschoek or New Rest alone but I was worried that the presence of the field workers would affect the responses of the interviewees or local perceptions of me and my work. As chapter five of the thesis hopes to show, the presence of the field workers did not seem to affect the range of responses provided by those interviewed. In fact, the people interviewed did not seem to be affected by the field workers as they recounted in great detail stories of intimidation and severe disciplinary action in New Rest. However, the presence of the female field worker in New Rest seemed to reaffirm

relations of power in the area, for the simple reason that our input or presence was not seen as having the potential to affect the status quo. I also explain in chapter five, how, in New Rest, the older men seemed to control who had access to development, who was included in the dialogue about development processes, and what information was divulged about these processes.

#### **4.4 Participatory 'Urban' Appraisal (PUA) Workshops**

A third and significant research method used during the internship appeared through Participatory 'Urban' Appraisal (PUA<sup>8</sup>) workshops carried out as a means to influence current communication strategies used by field workers in New Rest and Franschhoek. In the final research proposal<sup>9</sup> submitted to CUSSP, three workshops were planned for the research period. Only two workshops were eventually implemented, one with technical advisors of CUSSP and the other with field workers from the MSHC. Participatory appraisal workshops consist of a series of activities and discussions that aim to assess local skills and knowledge. These workshops can also be used to assess the needs of a development project's intended beneficiaries. These needs may be identified by the project managers as technical or social needs.

When I proposed to conduct these workshops in the two research areas, it was explained to me by CUSSP that it would not be a good idea for me to conduct these workshops in the two

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<sup>8</sup> ref., Appendix 2., for an outline of the PUA workshop

<sup>9</sup> ref., Appendix 1, for the research proposal

chosen areas because the nature of these workshops tend to foster local 'expectations'. I was encouraged however, to conduct the workshops with the technical staff and CUSSP's extension agents (MSHC field workers) in order to provide some input on participatory approaches to leadership and group dynamics. I spent time observing and recording the reactions of participants to some of the exercises designed for the two workshops implemented during the internship.

As the following extract from the report submitted to my clients show, my observation during the workshop helped to highlight individual and group reactions to issues of leadership, compromise and conflict management:

The first workshop initiated with CUSSP technical staff revealed that it is quite difficult to convey the importance of full community participation in development projects without setting this up as an ideal rather than a necessity.

Those attending this workshop tended to stress the importance of control management (c.f., Analoui 1994) as the only means to achieving responsible community effort. For example, in response to the statement 'allowing for creativity', most of the attendants agreed that the creativity and initiative of local beneficiaries should be given direction and should be 'managed to prevent loss of funds'.

The responses of field workers in the second workshop indicated both a recognition of the need to learn from the communities in which they work and frustration with their inability (as part of CBOs) to deliver after having fostered local expectations. This type of workshop might prove difficult to implement in groups which assume (through familiarity with some of the themes explored) that the problems of participation have already been identified and that there is no means of alleviating these problems.

The workshop with CUSSP was successful in the sense that it provided me with important information about how decision-makers can respond to participatory approaches to development. If I had the opportunity to do this workshop a second time with another group

of technical staff (in another project for example), I would approach the issues of leadership and group dynamics in a more specific way by subscribing to some of the issues discussed by Analoui (1994) in his contrast of 'prescriptive' (mechanistic and non-human) versus 'descriptive' (adaptive and human) approaches to management.

#### **4.5 Ethical Dilemmas**

The implementation of the research methods previously mentioned were not exempt from ethical dilemmas. In Franschhoek, it became very difficult for me to trust two of the extension agents that I had to liaise with when they were (anonymously) accused of raping a young girl in one of the squatter settlements. Although I was not in direct contact with these two men every day, I began to dread the day that I would have to go with one or both of them into the squatter settlements in order for me to interview the local people. This latent fear led me to delay the interviewing process in Franschhoek, I could not speak to the agency's coordinator about my fears because everyone seemed to trust the fact that the men were incapable of committing such a crime and I too, was supposed to believe in their innocence.

Ethical problems were not only apparent in my personal experiences in the field, they were particularly apparent in New Rest where I felt that writing about violence in the area were a definite means of distorting outsiders' views of the area. I felt that this was important, especially because people in New Rest were also committed to the economic and social improvement of the area and its population. On the other hand, personal tragedies in this area could not go undocumented because I felt that they revealed the harsh and difficult circumstances in which these people existed and within which they had to make important

decisions about their lives. In these cases, I was compelled to conduct research 'on' people (Cameron IN Harries-Jones 1990) and produce knowledge about the lives of these people for CUSSP. My unease grew as I began to question how the information (produced in the workshops, the manual on 'participatory research techniques' and the report were) going to be used by the organisation. Who was going to use this information? The information produced at the end of my internship was not going to be 'for' the least empowered people that I interviewed or observed. Although I allowed my informants a voice by allowing them to speak freely during the interviews, my representation of them in text was not going to empower them but those for whom the report is produced. These questions plagued me as I did my research and I tried to find the means to resolve them.

In the next chapter, I explore some of these ethical and procedural dilemmas with careful reference to the internship process. More importantly, the next chapter examines some of the tensions which affect CUSSP/MSHC's acceptance and practice of participatory development and, analyses the potential of these tensions to contribute to processes of control. These tensions encompass the problems that CUSSP/MSHC have between meeting the demands within their organisations and working within the constraints of project related individuals external to the organisation. Ideologically defined tensions are also apparent within these contexts and may promote greater polarisation between those directly involved with local people and those who are involved in the policy making process.

## Chapter Five

### Friendships, 'Falsehoods' and Field Work

#### 5.1 Meeting Zeera

I met Zeera the second time I went to the CUSSP office. I spent most of the field work period with Zeera as it was agreed (by CUSSP and myself) that to help me gain access to the area under study and for reasons of personal safety, it would be best if I was accompanied by one or two extension agents (or locally based individuals) in both Franschhoek and New Rest. Zeera is the Director of the Mobile Self-Help Centre (MSHC), a small business that is mandated by CUSSP to assist in the housing development process in Franschhoek and New Rest. Zeera's job is to coordinate the work of field workers and other extension agents attached to the MSHC. The MSHC is sub-contracted by CUSSP to work in these two designated areas. In order for me to contact the extension agents of the Mobile Self-Help Centre, I had to work with Zeera.

Three months before I met Zeera, she had been in a near fatal car accident which had left her right arm virtually maimed. She had returned to work soon after the accident because 'there was too much to do at work and there wasn't anyone to replace me'. Talking about her accident became a central topic of our conversations over the weeks that I spent in her company. More importantly, being a good listener helped me build the kind of friendship with her that would be necessary to promote the rapport building process with her field workers.

The fostering of this instrumental friendship involved several tasks. In the first instance, Zeera could not drive very well without the full use of her right arm and as her car did not have power steering, I had to help her turn the wheel at most turns on the roads and I had to remove the safety steering wheel lock each time we got into the car. After a while, my movements became less noticeable and unawkward and Zeera entrusted with more important tasks. I began to write the minutes at each meeting that we attended, I helped her tie her head scarf (as she is Moslem and must cover her hair) and I typed the monthly reports. These activities set the tone for my acceptance by Zeera and as a consequence, the extension agents.

When I first met Zeera, I felt that she was very suspicious of me and my motives for approaching her organisation. Initially, I was closely identified with CUSSP and I learned that there were significant differences of opinion and differences in political ideology between the MSHC and CUSSP. These differences of opinion manifested themselves around the insistence of CUSSP management to follow project procedure to the letter, which was sometimes perceived as valuing project implementation above the human cost of development.

I felt comfortable with Zeera's critical approach because during the course of the research period (Cochrane 1971) I would be compelled to work with authority, meet 'sudden requests for information' (Conlin IN Grillo & Rew 1985), and I would have to experience the constraints of doing research within project boundaries. I expected that with the MSHC, I would at least find a forum where I could air my feelings about working with a powerful organisation.

## **5.2 Field Workers or 'Extension' Agents?**

In the third section of chapter four, I explain that I was accompanied in New Rest and Franschhoek, for reasons of safety and easier access to people in these areas. Various extension agents (field workers for CUSSP/MSHC) accompanied me in the field. There was Nomsa, (for New Rest) William and Zandwe, (for Franschhoek).

When I first met Nomsa it was at a workshop set up by CUSSP to meet with the New Rest Residents' Committee, one of the community based organisations with whom CUSSP liaised in the area. When I first met with one of the representative groups from New Rest (at a meeting held at the CUSSP office) Nomsa approached me and said 'The women like you because your smile is warm and your eyes are open'. This comment struck me, it was Nomsa explaining what the women were feeling rather than the women themselves approaching me for this purpose.

This led me to question the role of the field workers, were they 'extension agents' in the real sense of the word, carrying out the bidding of the organisations even if these were contrary to positive development in the areas that they worked?

## **5.3 Building Rapport**

It is quite difficult to assess whether the field workers came to accept me because I was mandated to do research, or because I was amiable, or because I came to be accepted in Zeera's house or further still whether it was due to a combination of these factors. The time I spent with them seemed too short for the seemingly 'genuine' rapport building that tends to occur when an anthropologist does 'real fieldwork' (Gupta & Ferguson n.d.). It seemed

that the process of rapport building was by no means unilinear. Gaining the confidence of the field workers required a genuine, concentrated effort to learn about their lives and to experience the conditions in which they worked. During these short weeks, I had to drop many of the contrived roles I had created for myself prior to field work. I especially had to relinquish the perception of myself as an 'expert'. As Cochrane (1971) and Chambers (1994b) explain, I needed to reassess my approach to the people that I was going to work with. I wanted the field workers and the people in New Rest and Franschoek to feel at ease with me, being an arrogant 'expert' was not going to help this objective.

My rapport building with the field workers and people within the Housing Action Committee (Franschoek) and the Project Committee (New Rest) came through consistent effort in what Cochrane calls the 'non-expert side to advisory work'. In other words, I needed to 'emphasize calm, patience, good temper, modesty, and loyalty'. These qualities, according to Cochrane (1971:74) 'are not only the qualities of a diplomat; they lie at the heart of good extension work'.

Exercising these qualities were not nearly as easy as I imagined them to be. More importantly, I began to feel uneasy about 'building rapport' with the extension agents in spite of the fact that it was necessary for my research. I was particularly concerned about my ability to remain critical of the research process and the extension agents involved, if I demonstrated my loyalty to the group. This tension was particularly evident in my attempt to establish 'insider moves'.

#### 5.4 Insider Moves

A study carried out by Heideman (1995) which documents six development workers' conceptions of 'development' suggests that there is an invariable link between political activism and development work. This seemed to be confirmed in my research, when I discovered that the MSHC field workers and the 'staff' of community based organisations had been political activists during apartheid. For these individuals, CUSSP was there to help implement the revolutionary change they (the activists) had set in motion. The change for each individual from political activism to development work was not seen as a linear process but one that seemed characterised by 'one step forward and two steps back'. Development work seems to be a natural result of their work as activists, as the enterprise of 'development' seems to mirror their previous efforts to empower the oppressed.

Throughout my research it was repeatedly emphasised that one could not genuinely become involved in development work without having been a political activist. The explanation given was always the same, 'you cannot possibly understand the issues'. The MSHC staff stressed that activists could identify with the plight of the 'people' as they had lived through political struggles with the impoverished and knew somehow what the 'people' really needed, and, what they were really experiencing on a day to day basis. My education about these matters appeared in conversations with the field workers every time I was in the field. Zandwe was the most vocal in this respect, he would use vivid analogies to describe what needed to be done to alleviate the plight of the poor and marginalised. Zandwe reveled in political rhetoric, and once earnestly explained 'the situation' to me, 'a snake' he said, '. . . should not be chased away. It should be killed and you must kill the head so that it cannot turn around to get you when you are not looking'. As he spoke, the 'snake' took on the shape of

the many forms of oppression I imagined that he had experienced and was still experiencing. Among the field workers, I was an anomaly and no anthropological 'insider moves'<sup>10</sup> were going to make me fit. I was not a political activist nor had I ever really been one. I could not, as many other anthropologists had done before me, 'go native' precisely because my timing was very bad. I was in the 'new' South Africa, the struggle was over, the liberators had won and we were working with politically 'transparent' institutions. I had missed the long and arduous ritual necessary to become a political activist. Some commented that it would be difficult for me to understand 'what is really going on' in terms of the grand political picture, I resented being told this and I recounted countless stories of oppression that I had heard and experienced as I was growing up in Malawi under the Banda regime. I also tried to dissociate myself from CUSSP per se and attempted to immerse myself in the lives of the MSHC staff in an attempt to show my solidarity with the group. I hoped that I would achieve a double goal by doing this. In the first instance, I was hoping to change the MSHC staff view of me as an elite student from a prestigious university suffering from the 'degree syndrome'. Amongst the MSHC staff, anyone who seemed to value institutional qualifications over real life experience was said to suffer from the 'degree syndrome'. I was also hoping to appease my supervisor's desire to see more of a critical awareness of CUSSP as an organisation.

The expressed concern of the field workers for the empowerment of the poor and marginalised in the areas that they worked, could be seen as pure rhetoric. However, within

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<sup>10</sup> c.f., Bernard (1994:153) who refers to Turnbull's words (1986:27) in describing what I have termed 'insider moves'. 'During fieldwork, you 'reach inside,' he observed, and give up the 'old, narrow, limited self, discovering the new self that is right and proper in the new context.'

the hierarchical organisational structure of CUSSP/MSHC the field workers seemed to have little power to influence the status quo in the areas where they work. It is their job to act on orders provided by the organisation, which in turn considers the needs of the community based organisations in these areas. This does not mean that field workers are simply automatons who obey the rules set out by the organisation to which they are attached. The time allocated for research seemed too short to explore whether in some cases field workers do create their own spheres of influence in the areas that they work. Among the field workers mentioned here however, rarely was there a demonstration of the need to accumulate political advantage, although implied in my conversations with them.

During the afternoons that I spent with William and Zandwe for example, they often spoke cynically of the 'Gravy Train', who was on it, who had missed it and always (wryly) that they never aspired to being on it themselves. Such conversations implied that genuine political activists should not have accumulative aspirations nor could they be fallible human beings inadvertently affected by the need to appear and be affluent. As Heideman (1995) explains, I discovered that development workers in close contact with powerful and financially stable institutions do not find it easy to struggle against the temptation to accumulate political advantage.

### **5.5 Participatory Urban Appraisal Workshops**

My inability to identify 'insider moves' necessary for rapport building should have alerted me to the potential responses of the extension agents to the workshop designed to assess their approach to participatory leadership and group dynamics. A section of my final research proposal on the 'communication strategies' brief provided by CUSSP included the

implementation of two participatory appraisal workshops designed to assess approaches to leadership and participatory group dynamics. As I mention in chapter four these workshops were originally designed for implementation in the two areas chosen for research. My clients insisted that since their project was not wholly concerned with the appraisal of community needs nor the delivery of houses, it would not be wise for me to conduct these workshops with the inhabitants in the two research areas. However, they were interested in attending the workshop if I would be prepared to conduct it at the CUSSP office.

We (as a group of Masters' students) had recently learned about Participatory Rapid Appraisal (and similar research techniques) and had tried them out with reasonable success during a short field trip to a small wine farming town in the Western Cape. I was excited to try out these techniques in a different context and in part, I chose to conduct the workshops (with CUSSP and the MSHC field workers) to test the potential of such a workshop to alter management ideas about leadership and community participation.

I also chose to use the techniques because I felt that the importance placed on 'participation' would be a central to any effective communication strategy. Some of us were also excited by the 'idea of an active, politically committed, morally engaged anthropology' (Scheper-Hughes 1995: 415) and we imagined that the use of participatory research techniques would help us avoid extractive research that tended to benefit institutions and other such bastions of power.

### 5.5.1 The First Workshop

I initiated two Participatory 'Urban' Appraisal workshops during the course of my internship. One workshop involved the technical staff and community development advisors attached to CUSSP. The second workshop involved extension staff (of the MSHC) for New Rest and Franschhoek. Each workshop attempted to familiarise those present with the principles of participatory research, to assess personal attitudes to field realities and to differentiate between workshop environment and field reality. I tried to make each workshop more or less unique in terms of content and approach because of the different people present. The following extract from my personal journal describes my experience of that first workshop with the technical and community development advisors:

This morning I had my first workshop on Participatory Urban Appraisal (PUA) with the CUSSP technical staff. Had it not been for my experience as a tutor I would have felt seriously undermined at this workshop. It seemed as though it was very difficult for the technical staff to grasp the importance of community participation. They perceived participation as an ideal rather than as a necessity. I tried to observe the reactions of the various individuals to the exercises that I set throughout the workshop. More than half of them had come to hear about the methods, they were fascinated with Johari's window, I thought it was because it sounded exotic, new and as though it promised to deliver. I later realised that they knew about Johari's Window and were waiting for me to provide a different interpretation! Others came to learn about the seemingly mystical principles of anthropology, they were convinced that anthropologists had certain insights that other social scientists did not. They questioned how we reach them and they wanted to know what is different about anthropology and anthropologists.

I was overwhelmed by their questions and expectations of the workshop. I had never really reflected on what the discipline itself could offer, even though I had analysed (in essays) the utility of the discipline in various practical contexts. I kept wondering if this is how we have set up ourselves to be, mystical, exotic and full of promise, much like the people previous anthropologists had studied. The workshop lasted for three hours and my confidence dwindled as the questions grew more persistent. It slowly dawned on me that I was trying to make professionals set in their ways and jaded by experience, listen to arguments in favor of 'transformative' participation. It was like walking on broken glass.

As I left the CUSSP office, I felt tired, I was convinced that the material produced from our discussions would be neatly typed up and included in the agency's arsenal as documentation for a consultant or training officer in the distant future.

The first workshop that I initiated with CUSSP technical staff revealed that it was difficult to convey the importance of full community participation in development projects without setting this up as an ideal rather than a necessity. This was particularly interesting in that any allusion to real empowerment or my insistence that participation is a transformative process was efficiently crushed. Most of those attending this workshop tended to stress the importance of control management (Analoui 1994) as the only means to achieving responsible effort from their intended beneficiaries. In Porter et al (1994), the authors mention that organisational control is particularly important to project success. The significant gap between institutional rhetoric and practice serves the purpose of greater organisational control of development at the local levels. Furthermore, the organisations do not only provide the framework within which locally based organisations are to operate, they can perpetuate similar frames of development discourse and practice taken up by CBOs which in turn, use these to promote further control and local domination by those who have access to the rhetoric.

At the first workshop, this was especially demonstrated in the responses to the discussion around the importance of role reversal and active learning from the intended beneficiaries. Those present admitted that it was important to actively learn from the intended beneficiaries, but they did not see role reversal (especially in the sense of allowing intended beneficiaries greater decision-making power) as an crucial aspect of this. The responses of technical staff to the workshop clearly demonstrated the existing precarious balance (c.f. Korten 1990 and

Bryant & Allen 1982) between the need to achieve project aims and to empower people in the process of development, versus the attendants' needs to satisfy multiple and personal priorities. One section of the workshop, entitled 'Allowing for creativity' amongst intended beneficiaries, was hotly debated, most agreed that the creativity and initiative of local beneficiaries should be given direction and should be 'managed to prevent loss of funds'. The concern with financial accountability and effective supervision or control provided a glimpse of what the organisation understood 'participation' to mean, limited contribution on the part of those whose lives are to be affected by agency intervention and strict adherence to project objectives and procedure.

Various authors' analysis of project management (c.f., Analoui 1994 & Porter, Allen & Thompson 1994) emphasise that control is a prominent feature for project success. As these authors explain, decision-makers in the project context may want to implement genuine participatory approaches to development and they may also want to change their approach to management. In reality, these decision-makers are constrained by a politically and economically structured environment where they personally experience a range of conflicting demands, constraints and choices during the course of their work.

According to Cusworth (IN Analoui 1994:69) the demands, constraints and choices placed before project advisors (such as those that exist at CUSSP) and the ability of these advisors to deal with these is directly linked to their 'conscious . . . need to meet the project targets'. This concern provides a significant source of tension in that these individuals have to meet the social and technical demands of superiors and subordinates within the organisation, which are often at odds with the demands of project related individuals such as contractors, other

advisors, local and government officials outside the organisation.

As my conversations with the extension agents (see section 5.4) and the discussions at the PUA workshops show, these tensions can feed into conflicting ideas about participatory development. They can also emerge around conflicting political ideologies, the constitution of effective project management and personal and/or professional aspirations.

One could argue that decision-makers should not see themselves as constrained by project objectives, but that they should aim to be pro-active or attempt to become 'change agents' (Analoui 1994:10) who transform 'mechanistic' management strategies to 'adaptive' strategies. Concerned with the improvement of management strategies for development, Rondinelli (Analoui 1994) defines mechanistic management strategies as hierarchical with a high degree of control and low tolerance of ambiguity in the project process. In contrast, the adaptive management strategy is collegial, participatory, interactive with a high tolerance of ambiguity. Becoming a 'change agent' is not an easy task to achieve, it involves challenging the 'systems' in which one exists and challenging the profession (in this case management) that one practices.

Given my initial perception of the organisation as one which was only concerned with project implementation, I thought that I would at least make my 'knowledge count' (Harries-Jones 1990), by preparing PUA workshops. In an analysis of anthropology and advocacy, Harries-Jones explores how anthropologists can make their knowledge more productive and as a result promote the empowerment of their research subjects. I felt that the PUA workshops would promote discussions around leadership style and participatory approaches to

development. I did not want my research to be extractive and I did not want to simply produce documentation for CUSSP. I wanted to bring a different and recent (if not a new perspective) to the project. To me, promoting participatory research methods was to be a moral undertaking, even though I did not admit this to myself at the time. In retrospect, what I felt at the end of the first workshop was that I had betrayed those unknown 'intended beneficiaries'. I had in the words of my supervisor, 'bought into their (CUSSP) dialogue, their 'systems' and ways of perceiving the development process. By providing a group of technical staff with potential strategies to improve agency intervention under the guise of 'community participation' I felt that I had subverted my aim to improve agency approach to their intended beneficiaries. In conducting the workshop and eventually accepting to produce a hand-out (a brief manual as it was described by CUSSP) of participatory techniques for the agency, I was reproducing 'expert' development discourses and promoting what Escobar calls 'the bureaucratisation of knowledge'. This is further illustrated by Escobar's (1988:430) words,

The production and circulation of discourses is an integral component of the exercise of power, as contemporary scholars have amply demonstrated . . . Development itself, as a discourse has fulfilled this role admirably

My contribution to a centralised information system was very difficult to avoid and was certainly not based on an ethical decision. In the first instance, I was asked by my clients to conduct a workshop on some of the techniques I had mentioned in my research proposal, this included outlining 'participant observation' the most important research method in anthropology. My clients, situated in South Africa, where development initiatives have tended to be top down and non-participatory were interested in participatory research techniques that could easily be transferred to their extension agents. More importantly, I was

driven by the need to impress and I saw the workshop as a means to demonstrate some professional expertise and to clarify my position within the 'expert' milieu. Although this was not as deliberate as it seems, my acceptance of the need to produce discourse that complies with their view of the development process was a means of avoiding confrontation with existing and standard discourses within CUSSP. I was anxious to complete my research in the six weeks allocated and I wanted to change their perspectives through gentle persuasion.

### **5.5.2 The Second Workshop**

The second workshop initiated with the Mobile Self-Help Centre (MSHC) field workers from Franschoek and New Rest was quite different in content to the first workshop with CUSSP's technical staff. The workshop stressed the importance of self-critical awareness in the approach to and work with communities. Those present were encouraged to provide examples of their personal experiences in the field with regard to the lack of local participation in local development processes. For example, the field workers explained that there were various obstacles to their work in the communities. These included distorted perceptions of their work in the area (c.f. section two, part ii., of the final report in appendix 4) and negative leadership practices in the community. The field workers also stressed the need to increase their personal awareness of the multiple (and dynamic) contexts in which they work.

As the final report (see appendix 4) explains, the effectiveness of local outreach (as implemented by the field workers and the HAC [in Franschoek]) tends to be distorted by HAC members' personal prejudices brought about through various forms of class

consciousness and sustained by the divisive political ideology of apartheid. Such tensions affect the potential of field workers to implement participatory approaches to development in Franschhoek, because the experience of relative social and political disadvantage is part of the lives of the HAC members who are directly involved with the 'squatters' in Franschhoek.

I found this particular workshop a challenge and I tried hard to prevent myself from taking over the lively discussion. As the workshop venue was Zeera's house, I was more relaxed and felt less pressured to perform as a designated expert. The extension agents seemed to be more responsive to participatory research and field work, it could be that the idea of genuine participation was compatible with their previous role as political activists for democracy. At this stage I had not even questioned what impact the workshop might have on the work of the extension agents nor that they might respond in a specific way because of their political beliefs. I assumed that the use of participatory techniques and adherence to the principles of community participation could only be beneficial. Given the increasing professionalisation of development, I should have been concerned about the content of the workshop providing more 'tools' to the extension workers to carry out the tasks set by the organisations without effecting genuine participation.

In his discussion of power and development, Watts (1993) explains that the professionalisation of development seems to be directly related to promoting processes of control as professionalisation seems to mirror institutionalisation:

`Professionalisation' (a set of techniques and disciplinary practices through which knowledge are organised and disseminated) and `institutionalisation' (an institutional field in which discourses are produced, recorded and implemented).

(Watts 1993: 264)

## 5.6 Producing a Hand-Out for Participatory Urban Appraisal

Almost a week before the end of my internship with CUSSP/MSHC, I was asked to produce a `hand-out' of the workshops that I had conducted. It was explained that the hand-out was to be included in the training manual that would be provided to CUSSP field workers and as such, the content had to be concise and simple enough to be read easily by the field workers.

I produced the hand-out before the end of my internship, making sure that the words used to describe and explain the important steps to ensuring participation in various communities were clearly set out. I was aware at the time that this material would undergo several levels of `processing' before field workers in New Rest, Franschoek (or any of the other areas that the organisation is active in) would see and use it. However, I felt powerless to refuse. I had started off considering myself as a consultant and in my knowledge, effective consultants met `sudden requests for information' and produced the goods, irrespective of how the material is used after research. I also wanted to avoid assuming the position of being a keeper of morality (Conlin IN Grillo & Rew 19:84), who was I to say that the documentation would not be put to legitimate use? Although multinational corporations do not seem to have a good reputation regarding the use of documentation that is submitted to them, I did not want to give the impression that I would be right if I withheld the hand-out from the organisation on grounds that it would not be used for honourable and `progressive'

purposes. In spite of my reservations, I felt that I had to allow the organisation the benefit of the doubt.

This perception was quite misplaced. Shortly after the request for the hand-out, I happened to meet with one of the senior personnel at CUSSP and he casually said, 'Its great that you're doing the manual, we'll have to make a place for it amongst our technical workshop material'. His comment reminded me of a similar response made about the need for 'more documentation', during the workshop held with the technical personnel. His statement also seemed to reify general institutional approach to the concept of participation. In short, 'participation' is convenient as long as it works within the parameters of project procedure and allows the project to achieve its intended objectives.

This approach is contrary to what Chambers (1995:41) explains genuine participation to be. At the organisational level, the author emphasises that 'projects concerned with people should become processes of learning, enabling and empowering, with open-ended time frames allowing for participation and change, while blueprint approaches with rigid time frames and set targets should be confined to things, limited to some physical aspects of infrastructure'.

### **5.7 'Home-Grown' Processes of Domination**

In Franschoek and especially in New Rest, I was quite disillusioned when I discovered that it is not only those directly associated with the institution who are capable of reproducing processes of control; the 'target' population for development also contribute to processes of domination. This discovery made me question the authenticity of the visible and overtly

displayed characteristics of those in the field. Prior to my field work in Franschoek and New Rest, I had read much about corruption in 'development'. In a few of these cases (c.f., Ferguson 1990, Porter et al 1990 and Tvedten & Hangula 1993/4), corruption and the maldistribution of goods in the development process is articulated by the very organisations sponsoring the development process.

My focus on this aspect of corruption led to my failure to realise that processes of domination could also be promoted by people outside the institutional arena. This perception stemmed from an old bias I had of romanticising the personalities of those 'deserving' of economic 'upliftment'. Deep inside I was convinced (and each time I doubted my conviction, my academic supervisor reinforced the idea) that in the end, development should consist of a transfer of goods from those who have to those who did not have. Who were the 'haves' and who were the 'have-nots' was never really clear.

In New Rest, I discovered to my disbelief that, not only were there people of different socio-economic conditions living in the physical space and that they were being subject to similar development initiatives from external agencies. There were also people who did not fit my profile of those 'deserving'. These people formed part of a group of powerful leaders in the area and while some were well meaning in their work with the external agencies and the people in New Rest, they contributed to processes of control in the area.

#### **5.7.1 Powerful Leaders and Careful Choices**

I was presented with the grim reality that there (in New Rest), where I least expected (and perhaps where I should have expected it because of the inhuman conditions in which people

lived) were people who were only interested in securing a seat for themselves on the 'grave train'. I met people who in spite of their significant efforts to help the inhabitants of New Rest had in that process become the kind of corrupt 'big men' Sahlins wrote of<sup>11</sup>. Unlike Sahlins' explanation of the leveling mechanisms that existed among the Melanesians to prevent corruption, in New Rest there seem to be no leveling mechanisms for those who have power. Education, property and affluent connections are irreversible forms of political advantage in New Rest and those who possess these go unchallenged by the less educated and the least affluent.

A particularly striking comment 'we don't say who should be part of it and who should not be part of it, everyone gets a chance' (regarding leadership) implies that most people in New Rest have the opportunity to participate equally in decision-making processes involving the area. Further conversations with New Rest inhabitants revealed that people in the area are very careful in making choices on the part of others, as this is perceived as an attempt to take power or gain political advantage over established local leaders - a dangerous thing in an environment where any form of relative advantage is seen as a threat to personal/group power.

I met several of the powerful 'leaders' the first time I went to New Rest. These individuals formed part of the project committee, which is designed to represent New Rest with regard to CUSSP initiative in the area. In order to provide its development services<sup>12</sup>, CUSSP needs

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<sup>11</sup> My use of this comparison is to illustrate certain power relations in New Rest, and is by no means a direct comparison of these two socio-historically distinct places.

<sup>12</sup> These services include local organisational development, the provision of advice on housing development options and facilitation of housing project funding through U.S. A.I.D.

to liaise with a locally established body. Like other development agencies with little intimate knowledge of local power relations and reluctant to disrupt these, the organisation identified established leadership to work with.

The first time I went to New Rest, Nomsa (see section 5.2) had the task of collecting the completed list of newly elected Project Committee members. As we waited for this list to be compiled, we sat with Vuyo (who is the secretary of the committee) and we waited a while for the other members to attend the meeting. We were supposed to meet with the members at around five o'clock that afternoon. At five thirty, some of the members appeared namely, Old Dlamini, Mr. Tembo and Nomveleka.

Before these three arrived, I had spent some time speaking with Vuyo asking him about 'how things work' in New Rest. Our conversation was quickly taken over by Mr. Tembo who began to explain in great detail 'why things are not working in New Rest'. The others (Nomsa, Nomveleka, Old Dlamini and Vuyo) remained quiet and so did I. It is quite difficult to stop Mr. Tembo from talking once he has started, his voice is deep, his face is earnest and he speaks with an infallible certainty about the affairs and people of New Rest. I found it difficult not to admire his actions when I learned that although he is active in external development fora, he has also been central to the liaison of New Rest with what he calls the 'development community'.

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In my report<sup>13</sup> submitted to CUSSP (December 1995) a section of the report, entitled 'Defining Community' suggests that community leadership characteristics may change depending on current and local socio-economic circumstances affecting leadership style. In New Rest, I found it very difficult to distill specific leadership characteristics in identified local leaders.

Leaders such as Mr. Tembo, Old Dlamini and Mr. Mchisi among others, seemed to embody a myriad of characteristics. In the first instance, they appeared to adhere to what some people in the area called 'traditional' leadership. They were older men with a history of activity in the area who were sometimes 'elected' by the inhabitants in a collective forum. Their age, education and sex were some of the categories mentioned as necessary for 'representational' leadership.

Such leaders sometimes assumed leadership by virtue of their activities in the area, especially in terms of establishing basic contact between the inhabitants and external development sponsors. The leaders make use of the identified characteristics to address situations at hand such as the settlement of violent disputes amongst residents. I discovered that these characteristics could also be utilised to demonstrate to those with little political influence, the extent of the leaders' powers. The leaders would demonstrate these abilities by setting up meetings with prominent members of the development community, acquiring visible forms of wealth (car, brick house, education) and by making eloquent speeches at public meetings. In some townships of the Western Cape (c.f., Ramphela & Thornton 1988) these

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<sup>13</sup> ref., Appendix 4

demonstrations of power and influence provides a firm platform for personal political advancement. In New Rest, such demonstrations reaffirm the hierarchy of political influence and provide the leaders with closer identification to sources of real power.

A conflict theorist, Ralf Dahrendorf (IN Bryant & White 1982: 210) analyses the concept of power versus co-optation in the management of participation and explains that:

Participation is then a way both to generate and to express power, through elections and interest groups . . . Those in authority are likely to co-opt these processes and use the public to support their own ends. That is the nature of politics . . . Each will cease to represent the interests of the workers, or clients, and will become engulfed by the perspective of management.

Evidence of precarious power relations and political rivalry emerged as I listened to the men talk in meetings and as I observed individual deference in the presence of more powerful men. My ability to observe these subtle character changes depended on whether the men saw my presence as 'dangerous' to their personal agenda. As a young black woman doing research, I found that sometimes, the leaders (mostly men) were wary about revealing their 'real' characters but most of the time they were not very disturbed by my presence. The younger men, Vuyo, and Markie seemed to be easy to talk to. Nomsa and I often met up with them in New Rest and we did not feel intimidated in their company. Among the older men (Old Dlamini, Mr. Tembo and Mr. Mchisi) there were few instances when I was frustrated by their dismissal of us because I felt that I was perhaps missing out on important issues. Sometimes, the older men told me about New Rest in very simple terms and seemed to avoid my questions about leadership in the area. We (Nomsa and I) enjoyed the fragile protection that our gender provided. Mr. Tembo, (one of the powerful leaders in the area)

was protective towards Nomsa and I. At best, this was an ambivalent situation and Nomsa and I sometimes felt reassured by this latent protectiveness and at other times disempowered in his presence. My experience then, was different to that of Sudarkasa (1961) who during her field work among the Yoruba in 1961, and commented that:

It was much easier for me to learn about men's activities from elderly men, who regarded me or less as a daughter to whom they could explain things, than it was for me to get information from men who were about my own age . . . They always seemed a bit uneasy in the presence of the woman whose . . . age made her their peer.

(Sudarkasa IN Golde, 1986:182)

As such, the female field worker that I was accompanied by in this area, was not seen as a potential threat by the men that I spoke to. I tried to persuade some of the women to speak of their experiences in New Rest and to tell me what they knew about the Residents' Association. The women were very reluctant to talk and a few of them explained that they knew nothing about the locally based organisation, stating that the men were involved. I was to discover that women were not seen as potential leaders in the area and that their roles tended to be confined to child minding and vegetable hawking. In contrast, it came as no surprise to me that I would only be able to ask one or two key questions before the male interviewees would take control of the interview. At times, this was extremely frustrating, because the men seemed to expect me write down every single word and I was unable to regain control of the interview or even steer it in any specific direction.

## 5.8 Crises and Revelations

In the fourth week of the internship, my research nearly ran aground. Added to severe reversals in my perceptions of those I was doing field work among, there were several external events that nearly derailed my research. I received a call from Zeera early one Wednesday morning, Zandwe and William had been accused of raping a girl from one of the squatter camps in Franschhoek. They were coming to Cape Town that same day to seek Zeera's help. On Tuesday night there had been an anonymous phone call to the police in Franschhoek and the William and Zandwe had been accused. The accusation was seen (by Zeera and the MSHC staff) as a deliberate ploy by the politically conservative council in Franschhoek to destroy the close relationship between the extension workers and the families in the squatter camps. Both Zandwe and William came to Zeera's house to seek her advice, I too was supposed to be at her house not only because their accusation could seriously affect my field work, but also because I was expected to show solidarity with the MSHC group. I did not feel as though I could cope with this, I was supposed to work closely with Zandwe and William. This episode re-emphasised my dependence on the extension agents to do my research and it stressed the fragile nature of the rapport between these extension agents and myself.

Hearing about the events surrounding the alleged rape, Zeera wanted to show the extension workers that as a good manageress, she believed in their side of the story and trusted that they were not implicated in this matter. Zeera allowed the extension workers to borrow her vehicle in order for them to drive back to Franschhoek. After all, it was late at night and it would be difficult for them to find safe public transport at this time of the night. Early on Friday morning Zeera called me in desperation, the car had been found on the main road to

Paarl and was beyond repair. This event revealed an ironic side to the idea of genuine participation. Zeera had been prepared to allow greater control to the extension workers and had been severely disillusioned in the process. Such tragic happenings (in other settings) may often be the turning point for managers and leaders who are initially willing to allow greater decision-making power and control to communities. They reaffirm what these managers and leaders have erroneously believed all along, that the impoverished and marginalised cannot act responsibly (Chambers 1994a, Bryant & Whyte 1982 and Grillo 1980) and as such do not deserve the 'luxury' of taking part in processes which affect their daily well being.

Any form of planned research during this period was impossible, I was caught up in the events that occurred and it was impossible for me to extricate myself from matters which at first glance did not seem part of my research. As we had no car, Zeera and I were unable to spend much time in Franschhoek, I spent some of this week in Zeera and Kaila's company. The afternoons seemed long for we spoke of many things. I learned about Zeera's family life and how she came to be involved in the liberation movement in the early 1970s. Her involvement in the liberation struggle had been greatly influenced by her own experience of physical abuse and oppression during the years that she had been married to the father of her children. Zeera struck me as an insightful manageress, she was soft spoken and was very protective towards me, it was not difficult for me to grow close her and to accept the role of confidante.

I also spent much time with Kaila (Zeera's niece) during this week. The events of this week made me realise that as it was impossible to separate the intended beneficiaries of development from the process of development itself. It was also impossible to understand

development without being part of the lives and experiences of those who initiate the development process. Even if six to eight weeks are set aside for research or consultancy work, it is important to realise that these weeks can be affected by the daily unforeseen events taking place during the research period. In this sense, I felt that the research period was validated and made real, it became natural or a part of the scheme of things because it was affected by every day events. Strangely, my approach relaxed at the end of this week. Zeera and Kaila invited me to the new Two Oceans Aquarium at the Waterfront. The three of us sat in front of one of the massive tanks partly hypnotised by the carnivorous fish that meandered through brown waxy seaweed in a seemingly muted and secure world. The view in front of us seemed to reflect the kind of physical and social environment the field. In the field, agencies, extension workers and intended beneficiaries of development seem to pretend not to be predatory and yet it is difficult to distinguish otherwise. Agencies also attempt to create and sustain muted and secure worlds that cannot be muted nor secure because of the seemingly 'predatory' nature of inhabitants in these worlds.

### **5.9 Personal Vulnerability: Tales of Violence and Oppression**

At the end of week four, I hoped that there would be less turmoil and that I would be able to take up my research where I had left off. I decided that I needed to spend more time in New Rest, as I had spent a considerable amount of time in Franschoek up to this point. I contacted Nomsa on Monday and we boarded the train at Salt River station. Salt River station is the departure and arrival point for commuters as far afield as Simonstown and Somerset West. Smells of old engine oil, urine and sweating bodies which hung heavily in the air grew easy as we stood in meager shadows in an attempt to hide from the burning sun.

It was a late Wednesday afternoon. We were invited into Vuyo's house (Vuyo is the secretary for the New Rest Residents' Association and became secretary for the Project Committee which came into being during the research period) and we sat on the bed. As I wanted to learn about the local organisational structures in the area, I asked Vuyo to try to tell me about the existing local groups and I asked him to attempt to explain how these functioned in the area. Vuyo had no difficulty explaining this to me, his English was flawless. The following is an extract from my personal journal regarding Vuyo's response:

Vuyo told me of violence and intimidation in New Rest. Nomsa seemed ill at ease, it was as if she did not want me to hear of such things, not now at least. Perhaps she thought it was not a good introduction to the place, nevertheless Vuyo went on. He explained that in New Rest the Disciplinary Committee was a very powerful group. The members of the committee tended to take disciplinary matters into their own hands, beating and harassing alleged offenders. He also explained that there was no specific procedure for the interaction of the local organisations, report backs to the executive committee was haphazard and complex. The committees themselves are very fluid with the members joining or leaving at will.

Tales of violence seemed to weave my visits to New Rest together, Nomsa had been attacked twice outside New Rest before and although I tried to banish the thought from my mind I was always wary. That evening, Nomsa and I left New Rest at six. She took a taxi to Guguletu in order to catch another taxi to Lwandle in Somerset West. I took a taxi to Langa so that I could catch a taxi to Cape Town. The night fell quickly in Langa but I sat quietly in the taxi, comforted by the thought that 'my color will hide me'. As long as I did not speak, no-one need know that I was a foreigner and I would be safe. Two hours elapsed in the darkness of a now silent township, the taxi driver was waiting for more passengers. I was suddenly struck by the thought that here in the darkness there was no 'anthropological method' to turn to, if I was killed out here in the darkness it would probably be weeks before someone knew

what had happened to me and what would my family think? After all, anthropologists are individuals with responsibilities and familial ties outside the field work context and I always had difficulty explaining to my family what it was I actually did, because I feared that (as a woman) if they knew the potentially dangerous nature of my work, I would be compelled to stop. As I sat in that taxi in Langa, my thoughts turned to Bernard's words on 'Surviving Fieldwork'. Dealing with danger in fieldwork is elaborated in a brief but sobering section in Bernard's (1994:157) book:

Accidents have injured or killed many anthropologists. Fei Xiaotong, a student of Malinowski's, was caught in a tiger trap in China in 1935. The injury left him an invalid for 6 months. His wife died in her attempt to go for help. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo was killed in a fall in the Phillipines in 1981. Thomas Zwickler, a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania, was killed by a bus on a rural road in India in 1985. He was riding a bicycle when he was struck.

Bernard's advice on how to deal with the possibility of being injured or attacked in the field, 'Don't go anywhere without medical insurance and consider whether you need evacuation insurance.' (1994:158) included measures that were not available to me as a foreign student with a limited budget, in South Africa. Moreover, until then, I had not considered the possibility of being injured, attacked or killed, and, as I sat in that taxi in Langa, my vulnerability became more apparent.

There were three other women and five men in the taxi. The taxi driver disappeared amongst some shacks to the right of the vehicle and did not return for another forty long minutes. At last, he decided it was time to leave. At this stage, I felt weak and frightened at the thought of reaching the taxi parade in Cape Town and having to find another taxi home. The blackness seemed to engulf me as I ran up the steps to the parade, there were very few taxis

left at this time and I walked quickly to reach the one for home. The taxi was swift, and once within the safe confines of my flat I felt the weariness return with a vengeance, it was past eleven o'clock, the suburb was quiet and I took refuge in seemingly predictable and constant darkness.

The next day, I went back to New Rest with Nomsa. Nomsa had a message for one of the women living there and I was to 'conduct some interviews'. It was hot inside the shack and there were two men and women inside. The men drank cold beers and Nomsa and I were offered coca cola. I felt very unprepared for these interviews in spite of the fact that I felt I had some grasp of local issues that were important in New Rest. I felt compelled to speak to the women first and intimidated by the thought of interviewing the men first, but the men spoke first and the women were quiet. I did not have to ask a series of questions, I interjected when I thought it might be necessary and for most of the time I was quiet.

The men spoke of a recent incident in the township. A man had been accused of raping a young girl and some members of the Disciplinary Committee decided that they would force the man to confess to the crime. By the time the news had spread to other parts of New Rest, a mob had gathered in one of the township's clearings, two men tried to break into the accused's house and failing to do so, they climbed on the roof, tore at the corrugated sheeting and pulled him out of the shack. The man attacked by the mob and was stabbed fourteen times in the thigh and waist. He was hacked so badly with a machete that he had a gaping wound across his forehead, one of the first men spoken to described this graphically, 'the hole in his head was so big, you could put a cassette in it'. We left this shack quite unnerved even though it was just past lunchtime, until this moment I had associated my

personal vulnerability with darkness. The events of this week led me to question the possible link between my personal vulnerability in the field and the tales of violence and domination in New Rest.

These events and stories seemed to validate what I had discovered during my conversations with powerful leaders in the community. The stories reinforced my perception of control and domination perpetuated by the established leadership in the area. My experience of vulnerability provided a powerful example of the experiences of those with little influence in the area or those who experience discrimination because of their age and sex. My vulnerability also provided me with the ability to comprehend (in a limited sense perhaps) the powerlessness of local people<sup>14</sup> living in precarious, violent environments with powerful leaders who seem to possess the means to change the status quo. The following comment, made by one of these leaders confirm the invariable link between engendered vulnerability and the political control of locally based organisations and their leaders in the area:

'People are powerful assets in a place like New Rest, many people here follow a certain leader because of the person's skills. That power can be gained through political knowledge, [social] prestige or by force; In New Rest all of these apply equally'.

In this chapter I have attempted to deal with a range of issues pertaining to the perceptions and practices of participatory development. It is evident that there are many sources of tension which prevent those involved in the community development process from implementing mechanisms for popular participation in development. In the first instance, I

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<sup>14</sup> In such cases, local people may even give up their 'right' to participate actively in decision-making processes because they do not perceive their personal potential to change their lives for the better.

have tried to explain that many of key players involved, exist in a politically and economically defined system which (to an extent) defines their input and outputs in the development process. Secondly, the personal experiences and political ideology of key players in the development enterprise seems to affect their perceptions and practice of participatory development. In the concluding chapter, I revisit these contested political domains and examine their potential to contribute to 'regimes of truth'.

## Chapter Six, Conclusion

### Producing Knowledge or Building 'Regimes of Truth?'

In an article entitled 'Other Knowledge and Other Ways of Knowing' Barth states that:

We achieve nothing by denying the existence of power and hegemony in the world; and we turn ourselves into hostages of undesired discourses if we merely look for faultless victims who deserve our advocacy. Our strategy must be to transcend and thus transform the debate. But no matter how often and how compellingly anthropologists arrest reification and oppose homogenization, these selfsame features seem to crop up again and again in anthropologists' own unguarded speech and thought.

(Barth 1995 vol.51)

When I chose the research brief offered by CUSSP, I was convinced that I would have no problem being objective, neutral and 'scientific' in my approach to research. I was also arrogant in my conviction that I could easily identify those deserving of my advocacy. During the research process however, I came to realise that the boundaries distinguishing those 'deserving' from the others were far from clear, let alone established. More importantly, these boundaries were being defined and redefined by individuals and groups within the category of those that I had identified as being 'deserving'.

My acceptance and perpetuation of the participatory approach to research and project management coincided with my singular perception of 'participation' as a transformative entity that could only bring about fundamental political change. During the research process, I began to realise that I had become a 'hostage' of the discourse and that for me to understand why there was so little 'participation' in practice, I had to go beyond the idea that 'participation' equates genuine empowerment of the poor and marginalised.

## 6.1 Negotiating Political Domains

During my internship with CUSSP/MSHC, there were differing and opposing political settings within which I had to do research. As the previous chapters show, each setting had specific forms of leadership (see section 5.7.1), conflicting political ideologies (see section 5.5) and groups justifying/explaining the status quo of non-participation. This was compounded by the fact that I, as the researcher was expected to perform multiple (and conflicting) roles in these contexts. In chapter five, I explain how and why these roles were governed by specific obligations which were defined by various key players in these contexts.

Fetterman has recently (1983) explained that the urban field worker (and in my case, the development anthropologist) is compelled to work in contradictory political settings and is 'required to play many roles in the political context of contract research'. Negotiating personal and professional roles in these influential political settings seems to be very difficult and can (without constant vigilance) easily lead to establishing processes of domination. Being called upon to do research involving locally based organisations, the inhabitants in these areas and CUSSP/MSHC meant that I would have to confront the ethical dilemma of 'taking sides', mediating different roles during the research process and running the risk of contributing to processes of control. Redclift's comment: 'Taking sides' in development need not mean choosing between commercial interests and engaged political activism . . . is a choice that worries anthropologists most.' (1990:201) clearly reflected my dilemma. As I explain in chapter five for example, there appeared to be differences between MSHC's management style (which tended to be adaptive) and CUSSP's management style (which tended to be prescriptive). Within these two organisations and the two community based organisations on which I was mandated to do research, there were differing political

ideologies that were placed along the continuum between so-called 'pure and non-profit' political activism and activities related to commercial interest.

Whisson attempts to explore this dilemma (Whisson IN Grillo & Rew 1985:135) by charting the different and opposing roles of 'advocate' versus 'collaborator' that anthropologists may have to adopt in their work with powerful organisations. Whisson explains that:

The advocate assumes no goodwill on the part of the authorities, only a concern to pursue their own interests as they see them, and is but a short step from the activist who seeks to mobilise forces to press his point of view, in effect raising the cost of opposing him and his clients or subjects. The advocate reared in the functionalist tradition will tend to see the removal of outside interference as having merit, so that the target community can continue to develop the institutions appropriate to its own perceived needs. The collaborator assumes that good-hearted ignorance pervades the bureaucracy with which he works . . . so that his role is to lead a willing horse to the waters of truth.

My internship with CUSSP/MSHC placed me at the center of various conflicting political domains within which I was called upon to mediate (among others) the roles of being advocate and collaborator. Advocate in the sense of attempting to document the poverty, the marginalisation and the sense of entrapment people experience in places like New Rest and Franschhoek. On the other hand, I was also a collaborator in the sense that ultimately I was producing documentation for a powerful institution that had the means to marginalise or include these people in their empowerment programs. The perceptions of participatory development in all of these settings (CUSSP/MSHC, Franschhoek and New Rest) were not only conflictual, they were paradoxical (c.f., chapter five). Understanding these perceptions and explaining how they may have promoted processes of control was the main task of this thesis. It became increasingly apparent (during each phase of my research) that although there was some consensus on what participatory development should entail, in practice,

'participation' became a malleable (and vague) entity that could be used by various individuals in the development process.

In chapter two, I described and examined my experience of 'being in the field, before reaching the field'. This experience was to be my introduction to the institution as a field in itself that existed in a symbiotic environment with those who exist in the 'real' field. The initial experience also provided me with insight into the organisation's approach to and perception of the development process. This discovery was central to my subsequent analyses of other 'players' and settings in the two research areas.

Chapter three went on to explain how specific literature collected to inform the research process influenced my perception of participatory development and shaped the content of the two workshops conducted with CUSSP/MSHC. The vast variety of literature available on the topic of participatory development and/or the concept of participation led me to realise the importance of representation in text. During the research period, I was offered (and used) documentation on the research areas by CUSSP. While this offer was certainly well meaning and appreciated, the objectification of individuals and groups within these documents may have provided another means of reifying spheres of control. The 'representative' group with whom CUSSP/MSHC was to liaise was clearly established. The 'participatory' potential of people outside this group were identified in concrete terms and could have determined whether or not they were included in the development process.

In chapter five I explained that I needed to work closely with the field workers and extension agents in New Rest and Franschoek in order to reach the community based organisations

in the respective areas. To do this, I felt the need to gain the friendship of the MSHC co-coordinator whose actions could affect the extension agents' cooperation in the field. My friendship with the co-coordinator however, meant that I had to manage a fragile relationship of obligation to CUSSP's representative, whose management approach and political ideology regarding community development was different to that of the MSHC co-coordinator. Producing documentation for CUSSP on participatory approaches to development and conducting Participatory 'Urban' Appraisal workshops, provided an additional source of worry. At this stage, it was clear that there were conflicting and powerful ideas about 'participation' and by providing a humanist perspective of the concept, I had packaged 'participation' as the 'missing ingredient' essential for the success of project implementation.

Chapter five also examines potential 'home-grown' processes of domination. In this respect, the role of leaders in local development and the perception of 'participatory development' by these leaders were important. This chapter also demonstrates that those who form part of locally based organisations (in New Rest for example) were instrumental in promoting processes of domination. The stories of violence and intimidation did not only provide (as I mention in the report for CUSSP) the difficult environment in which the CBOs work, the violence seemed to be perpetuated by some as a means of establishing control in the area.

## **6.2 Building 'Regimes of Truth'?**

The adoption of the concept of 'participation' in South Africa, reflects the overall concern of most partners in development to effect democratic processes necessary for genuine community development.

In this thesis, I have attempted to explain how the conceptual distortion of 'participation' reproduces relations of control and domination rather than promote democratic development processes. Those involved in the development process in New Rest and Franschhoek may have (in certain circumstances) used the idea of participation to achieve project interests without considering the long term human cost. Although the thesis emphasises that this could be an intentional enterprise aimed at increasing the political advantage of those in power, the thesis also reasons that those who genuinely want participatory development are often caught up in the enterprise of gentrification. Stakeholders, whether they be local leaders in New Rest or the advisors of CUSSP must live within specific social and political environments. More often than not these compel them to act in ways which promote processes of domination and contribute to specific forms of world-ordering knowledge.

The mere fact that 'participation' forms part of project discussions and appears in project policy documents, and the fact that CUSSP/MSHC are willing to include the critical insights provided by the discipline of social anthropology, indicates a general willingness and strength of purpose to counter processes of domination and dismantle 'regimes of truth'. Yet one must still ask how effective these efforts really are. I conclude therefore by expressing a hope that the argument outlined here will help organisations such as CUSSP and MSHC recognise the seemingly contradictory nature of their enterprise. I hope it will assist them to recognise the need to be ever vigilant in the face of social and organisational constraints, which can direct genuine efforts away from participatory development into the fold of control management.

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## APPENDICES

## **Appendix 1: The Research Brief From the Community and Urban Services Support Project**

### **CUSSP Internship Proposal no.2**

#### **Research and Analysis of Communication Strategies and Practices of Community Based Organisations**

##### Background

A vital component of community-driven development is a strong, representative structure mandated to take decisions on behalf of its constituents. This is particularly important in housing delivery where it is simply not possible for all community members to be involved in the range of complex and highly technical decisions necessary. Success of community development projects often depends on the degree to which information flows to and from these community structures. It has been the experience of CUSSP and other development facilitation agencies that few communities are able to establish and maintain effective communication processes, the result most often being the classic situation of 'one step forward and two steps back'. Much of the dynamics of this problem are well known: gatekeeping on the part of leadership, personal agendas, logistical problems, lack of resources, etc. Yet there does not seem to be consensus among development professionals around strategies to effectively address the issues. While we recognise the problem, CUSSP does not currently have the staff capacity to undertake an in-depth analysis leading to the design of more effective communication strategies for communities.

##### Assignment

The intern would undertake a study of CBO communication strategies and mechanisms for communities engaged with CUSSP and its partners. The intern would be asked to analyse their findings and make recommendations for the structuring of more effective community communication for development. The intern would consult with the CUSSP staff in designing the study and then work with CUSSP field staff in its implementation. The intern would then be given an opportunity to present his or her findings and recommendations to CUSSP and its partner organisations in a workshop.

##### Timing

Timing is not a critical issue with this assignment and thus could be flexible.

**Appendix 1: The Research Proposal Submitted to CUSSP**

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO  
COMMUNITY AND URBAN SUPPORT  
SERVICES PROJECT  
(CUSSP)  
CAPE TOWN**

**TITLE: RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPATORY STRATEGIES  
AND PRACTICES USED BY CUSSP AND ITS PARTNERS  
IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**NAME: ROSE LAVILLE  
DATE: 24 OCTOBER 1995  
DEPARTMENT: SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the end of 1994, the South African government's estimates of the urban housing backlog in the country stood at 1.5 million units. In addition to this, approximately 720,000 existing serviced sites will require upgrading to meet the minimum standards of basic accommodation. While recognising that South Africans have the right to housing, the African National Congress' concept paper on the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) acknowledges the difficulty in delivering housing and services.

There are many ways in which development agencies are involved in the delivery of urban services one of these is technical assistance. For CUSSP, technical assistance is a means of capacity building and knowledge transfer within the context of community development. Amongst other factors, this rests on (1) local perceptions of the project and its agents and (2) the mechanisms used to involve people in the process of social change. The aim of this project is to examine and evaluate the dialogic process which occurs between the representatives of a 'community' and the intended beneficiaries of technical assistance from CUSSP. The research on which it is based will entail the use of ethnographic methods and will be carried out over a six week period.

Research methods such as semi-structured interviews and participatory workshops will be used to collect the relevant data. The focus will be on two 'communities' within the Cape Peninsula with which CUSSP has been working. For comparative and analytical purposes, the samples will include individuals from differing socio-economic categories within those communities.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The present research aims to examine communication strategies employed by CUSSP to improve capacity building and supply of organisational support and training at the community level. The following proposal provides an idea of the kinds of documentation to be utilised to inform this study and pays careful attention to the types of anthropological methods to be used for this research. As the paper will show, participant observation will form a major part of research methods, to be supported by semi-structured interviews and participatory rapid appraisal research techniques.

## 2.0 PROPOSED LITERATURE REVIEW

'Empowerment and upliftment of communities is now recognised as a basic aim of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)' (Bank 1995:2). What constitutes these 'communities' and which communities will benefit from such empowerment and upliftment is recognised as a thorny issue by many development agencies. Various case studies (Ferguson 1990, Porter, Allen & Thompson 1990) have shown that there are many development agencies and policy makers who rapidly define the concept of community in order to implement projects and deliver services.

In researching CUSSP's participatory strategies and mechanisms for community development, I will refer to material which examines the concept of community (Gilbert & Ward 1979, Ramphel & Thornton 1988) and misunderstandings surrounding community development (Bhattacharya 1995 and Cochrane 1971). In light of CUSSP interest in the improvement of communication strategies in the field, participatory approaches to community development, discussions of rapid appraisal techniques (Beebe 1995, Chambers R. 1994a & 1994b) and the practice of such techniques within various frameworks (Chambers 1994, Cousins 1995, Korten 1990?, Scrimshaw & Hurtado 1987 and Srinivasan 1990) will be necessary.

CUSSP's focus on urban services support will be discussed and how this relates to experiences

housing development initiatives in informal urban settlements. This is essential because of the current conceptual and political struggles around the future of hostel dwellers and farm worker/tenants. Relevant literature regarding housing on farms includes Waldman's thesis (1994) on farm workers' experiences in the Western Cape. An examination of articles by Robinson (1990) Soni (1990) and Parnell (1990) in Smith (1992) will form the core of a focus on the historical and political contents fo housing policy creation in contemporary South Africa.

In order to address the issues surrounding 'information flow' in community development, I will initially refer to Escobar's (1994) Encountering Development which deals with the complexity of putting development into practice. It is clear (at this stage) that I need to examine more documentation relating to these issues.

### 3.0 RESEARCH DIRECTION AND AIMS

The brief identifies effective communication as an essential component of 'community-driven' development, the following strategy is proposed:

- (1) study CBP communication methods and structures for 'communities' engaged with CUSSP
- (2) Analyse findings derived from (1) and make preliminary recommendations for action

In order to address these questions an aim will be to study the effectiveness of CBP in technical assistance through an assessment of participatory approaches used in workshops convened by CBPs.

### 4.0 KEY RESEARCH QUESTION

The key research question is as follows: Examine and evaluate the dialogic process which occurs

between the representatives of a 'community' and the intended beneficiaries of technical assistance from CUSSP.

## **5.0 RESEARCH METHODS**

### **5.1 Participatory Urban Appraisal (PUA) Workshops**

Originally designed for needs assessment research in rural areas, participatory research techniques can help improve team work and promote communication between individuals involved in the development process. PUA workshops are most important in that they form part of a series of rapid assessment tools for social development research which allow for maximum participation by the study population in matters which directly affect their well-being.

At least three PUA workshops are suggested, one for each of the communities sampled for research and one for CUSSP fieldstaff and some of its CBPs. Time and venue must be planned in advance with the cooperation of community representatives and/or senior fieldworkers. Each workshop will take place on a different day in one week for each of the targeted areas. This will attempt to ensure that a variety of people participate. It must be noted that these workshops are to enhance communication between representatives and the members of the community.

Workshop allocation will not be differentiated in terms of socio-economic or other related categories in order to emphasise and promote the social aspect of community. The PUA workshops are an essential means for formulating key questions for substantive semi-structured interviews to be carried out to highlight communication blocks and possible ways forward.

### **5.2 Participant Observation**

Participant observation will be the main research method to be used in this study to gather data about people's perceptions of CUUSP's initiatives into their communities. This is particularly relevant given that individual knowledge and perceptions of housing priorities may not coincide with that of CUSSP as a local benefactor. Participant observation will be carried out for most of

the fieldwork period when there is no direct engagement in interviews or PUA workshops.

### **5.3 Semi-structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews (Bernard 1991) will be used to gather data about individual knowledge and explanatory models for housing need. Key questions for these open-ended interviews are derived from Skinner's (1990) interview format where use of a key research question is made to obtain an insiders' perspective.

## **6.0 STUDY POPULATION AND SELECTION OF INTERVIEWEES**

The selection of interviewees for this study will initially require assistance from field-staff in indicating potential sources of information. Subsequent informants will be accessed through the use of snowball sampling<sup>1</sup> which involves the use of key informants who will indicate other potential interviewees. This particular technique may help to build the kind of local rapport necessary for meaningful and productive research.

## **7.0 DATA COLLECTION**

Participatory methods will be used to collect data. At least twenty people from each community will be interviewed. The group will be divided according to the description of informant selection as set out in the previous section. Given that the interviews will be of an open-ended nature, participants will be able to freely discuss the issues related to housing. The interviews will be conducted in English, unless the informant wishes to use their first language - in this case use of a fieldworker will be made. Interviews will take place in different locations within the targeted area depending on the level of privacy afforded and the personal comfort of the informant.

## **8.0 ENVISAGED ANALYSIS**

Once documented on computer, the semi-structured interviews will not only be analysed to access local perceptions and knowledge of housing initiatives. From these data insights will be gained as

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<sup>1</sup> N.B. This sampling method does not necessarily generate representative data

to what people say they understand about the process of community development. I, as the principal researcher will undertake this research with the help of a principal fieldworker/s familiar with the community.

## **9.0 FINDINGS**

The findings will be reported in a seminar at the end of the six week study. The findings may also be published in appropriate local housing development or human development journals. The aim here is to inform regional policy makers and other community based organisations on alternative ways to promote effective local communication processes.

## **10.0 ETHICS**

All interviewees will have the aim of the study explained to them prior to interviews. All data will be treated as confidential and it is acknowledged that potential informants have the right to decline participation in the research process without fear of future repercussion.

## 11.0 TIME SCHEDULE

DATES	ACTIVITIES
Sept 15	Meeting with Steve Horn, 'brief' discussion
Oct 23 - Oct 27	<p>Preliminary observations in the field &amp; One day spent with field-staff to design the study.</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews with RDP Forum Reps; Field Workers and Participant Observation of Workshop Process/Write-up.</p>
Oct 27 - Nov 3	<p>PUA Training/Workshop (Tuesday &amp; Wednesday?)</p> <p>One day for Semi-structured Interviews with (remaining) field-staff re: current comm. strategies and perceptions of response /Write-up</p>
Nov 3 - Nov 13	<p>Cooperation with field-staff to Locate possible interviewees.</p> <p>PUA Workshops</p>
Nov 13 - Nov 20	Participant observation & Interviews with community members. Follow up on local views of workshops carried out, knowledge of technical options available re: housing & documentation of alternative suggestions /Write-up
Nov 20 - Nov 24	Analysis of findings to recommend possible effective communication and participation strategies
Nov 24 - Nov 30	Report Write-up
December 3/4	Presentation of findings and Report Delivery

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Appendix 2: Basic Outline for Participatory Urban Appraisal Workshops  
with CUSSP and MSHC staff

BRIEFING: PARTICIPATORY URBAN APPRAISAL (PUA)

31/10/1995

The purpose of community participation is to help people develop the outlook, competence, self-confidence and commitment which will ensure 'responsible' community effort. Participatory Urban Appraisal (PUA) is derived from the term Participatory Rural Appraisal which is based on a set of techniques originally designed for community needs assessment. For the purposes of this workshop and for those not directly involved in needs assessment, the underlying principles of PUA are of interest and value to shaping community development work.

Workshop Outline

A

1. Baseline attitudinal assessment:

- (i) creativity / initiative / problem-solving

20 minutes

2. Expectations of the workshop

- (i) fears, hopes and expectations

20 minutes

B.

1. Workshop and 'field' reality:

- (i) resistance to change or reluctance to take risks?

40 minutes

C.

1. Building organisational capacity & improving communication:

- (i) the s.u.c.c.e.e.d method  
(ii) learning to listen  
(iii) professional objectives versus community needs  
(iv) role perceptions and Johari's window  
(v) forcefield analysis

2 hours

2. Improving community participation:

- (i) Participatory Urban Appraisal (PUA) techniques  
(ii) Trials of PUA techniques

1 hour

Total: 4 hours 20 minutes

Appendix 3: The Participatory Urban Appraisal 'Manual' on Techniques for  
Community Participation

PARTICIPATORY URBAN APPRAISAL

TECHNIQUES FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

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## Participatory Urban Appraisal (PUA)

Participation is now widely seen as crucial to community development processes but the gap between the use of fashionable methods and field reality remains unchallenged<sup>1</sup>. This paper documents a set of practical approaches (Participatory Urban Appraisal) designed to ensure community participation and to increase agency knowledge of local conditions and processes. Empirically, these techniques have proved powerful and popular on their own but ideally they should coexist with other research methods.

Participatory Urban Appraisal (PUA) is taken from the term Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), which is based on a set of techniques originally designed for needs assessment purposes. These techniques are also useful for the transfer of information to communities as the principles of PUA involve a reassessment of approaches to research and local knowledge transfer.

This document will examine the following:

1. The principles of Participatory Urban Appraisal (PUA)
2. Assessing personal attitudes to field realities
3. Workshops and field reality
4. Building local capacity and improving communication
5. Participatory methods in practice

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<sup>1</sup> Chambers R (1994) 'Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): Analysis of Experience' IN World Development Vol 22. No.9 pp 1253 - 1268, Pergamon Press: Great Britain

## 1. Principles of Participatory Urban Appraisal

### IMPROVE YOUR APPROACH

- A. **A Reversal of Learning:**
  - i. learn from local people, on site
  - ii. Listen to and learn from local physical, technical and social knowledge
  - iii. Assess your personal attitude to the local context and the people you work with, be aware of your own behavior
  
- B. **Learning Rapidly and Progressively:**
  - i. Be flexible in the use of research methods, improvise
  - ii. Try to reduce following a blueprint program of action
  
- C. **Offsetting Biases:**
  - i. Try to listen instead of lecture
  - ii. Try to probe (when appropriate) instead of passing onto the next topic for information transfer
  - iii. Try not to impose information, share, explain and learn
  - iv. Try to seek out those who are being marginalised, the poorer people, women and the young, listen to and learn about their concerns and priorities
  
- D. **Optimising Tradeoffs<sup>2</sup>:**
  - i. Learn what is worth knowing about the community (gather relevant information)
  - ii. Ignore surplus information which is not approximately related to the research (aim for accuracy)

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Chambers R (1994) 'Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): Analysis of Experience' p.1254.

## 2. Assessing Personal Attitudes to Field Realities<sup>3</sup>

### LEARN FROM YOUR ATTITUDES

#### A. Taking Initiative

i. Answer the following questions and keep the following issues in mind when carrying out a workshop or getting people to take part at public meetings:

Q1. How do you feel about taking the lead in discussions?

How do people at the meeting feel about taking the lead?

Q2. What happens at local meetings, who takes the lead?

Q3. What happens when a few or one person dominates?

#### B. Allowing for Creativity

i. When using participatory methods it is important to allow community members to be creative in gathering/transferring information, this encourages interest which in turn produces information that can easily be accessed and transferred to others.

Q1. How do you feel about allowing for creativity?

Q2. What does creativity produce? (new ideas? interest?)

Q3. Should creativity be controlled? under what circumstances? why?

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<sup>3</sup> Srinivasan L (1990) Tools for Community Participation. A manual for training trainers in participatory techniques UNDP Technical series/PROWESS: New York

### C. Solving Problems

i. The ability to solve problems or to seek potential means to solving problems is shaped by our perceptions of self, others and the environment in which we exist.

Q1. How do you normally approach a problem? (any problem)

Q2. The following suggest possible reasons for the poor not solving local problems, what do you think of these?

- \* a reluctance to take risks
- \* a sense of powerlessness/fatalism (ie destiny rules)
- \* fear of economic consequences or loss of face

### 3. Workshops, Interaction and Field Reality

#### A. Workshops, Interaction and Field Reality

Workshops and discussion groups often reveal much about local views of (and knowledge about) the project and exposes the approach of project agents to the concerns and priorities of communities. Observing and listening to members of the community can tell you much about local attitudes, interests, fears and expectations.

Things to consider in workshops, meetings and discussions with communities:

i. **The smokescreen effect:**

People may only tell you what they want you to know, rather than what you should know about conditions in the community.

ii. **Fear of speaking up in groups:**

Individuals who have historically or culturally been denied the opportunity to voice their concerns may not take part in decisions which directly affect them. In communities where power has been denied certain groups, the marginalised may not have the courage/ confidence to negotiate a better quality of life, even if they are provided with skills training. Be aware of this and encourage individuals to contribute in other activities or to speak in other focus groups.

iii. **Factional, cultural and personal differences:**

These may prevent individuals or groups from taking part in workshop process or cooperating with people that they have been put with to create a representative community based partner for the agency. Learn about these by observing local interaction and use your best judgement in approaching potential problems.

iv. **Fear of overstepping customary roles:**

Communities consist of groups and individuals with different levels and types of responsibilities. Be aware of this, listen and learn about these social and political boundaries it may help you avoid conflict and help you increase knowledge transfer in different ways with different groupings (see methods section).

#### 4. Building Local Capacity and Improving Communication

#### LISTEN, LEARN & PLAN CAREFULLY

##### A. Building Local Capacity

This involves a range of activities some of which have been mentioned in previous sections of this document. The following is a check-list for action leading to increased local capacity.

i. **The S.U.C.C.E.E.D., method for Workshops and Discussions<sup>4</sup>**

- \* Set a brief clear task
- \* Use hands-on multi-sensory materials reduce verbal communication
- \* Create an informal, relaxed climate
- \* Choose a growth-producing activity
- \* Evoke feelings, beliefs, perceptions and aspirations
- \* Encourage creativity and analysis
- \* Decentralise decision-making

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<sup>4</sup> c.f. ref: Srinivasan L (1990)

## ii. Learning to Listen

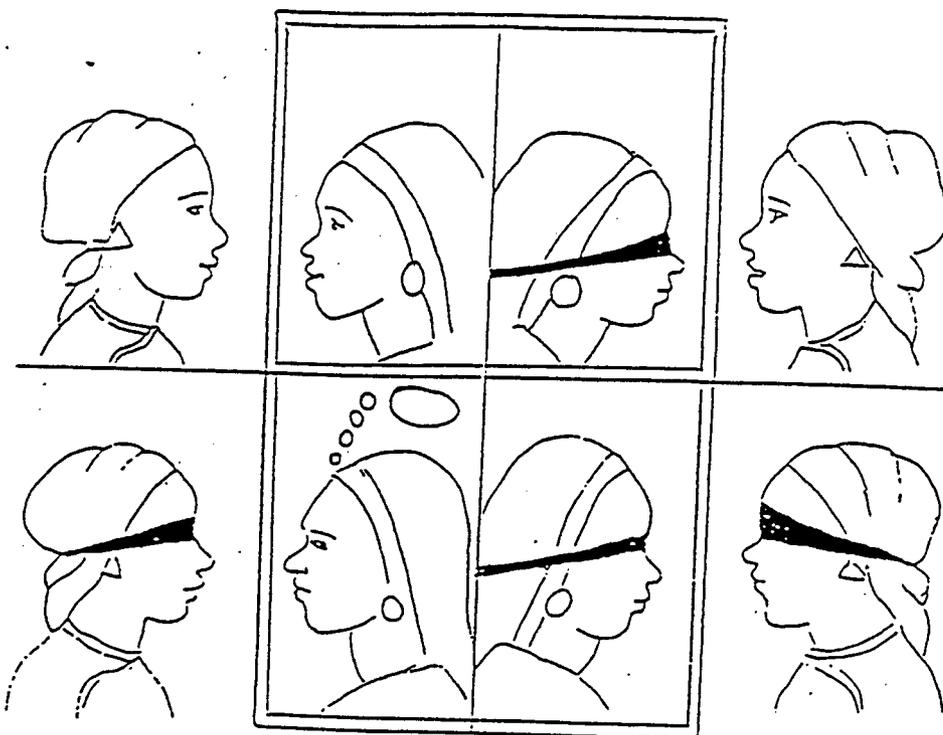
- \* Listen actively to what others say
- \* Consider local ideas carefully even if they differ from yours or the projects
- \* Try to detect if your professional aims (success, power, prestige) are more important than achieving community priorities, deal with this by using your best judgement or by seeking advice

## iii. Understanding role perception: Johari's Window

Look at the illustration below, which window/s match your current experience in the field?  
If need be, how can you change this?

**OPEN** - Both parties know each other at least superficially and the relationship seems friendly.

**BLIND** - The outsider (extension agent) can see problems and their solutions clearly but the insider (villager) does not see them at all.



**HIDDEN** - The insider (villager) has certain feelings, beliefs, values, fears, etc. which only insiders are aware of. They are hidden from outsider's view.

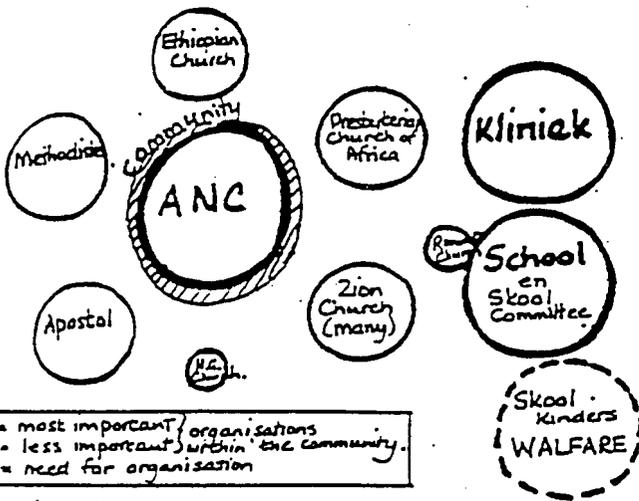
**UNKNOWN** - Neither party knows the other well. They may however get to know each other better in the future in the course of working together over a period of time.



ii. Venn Diagrams and Ranking Charts

- \* To use this technique you may need cardboard paper which should be cut into different size circles
- \* Get the group to draw the circles or indicate on the circles which services are more important to them (and as such they can show priorities)
- \* Venn diagrams can also be used to show active organisations in the area and the relationship of local people to these as well as the perceived importance of such organisations to local people
- \* Ranking charts can also be used to determine the type and level of local priorities. This method can also be used to negotiate local priorities and project aims

Venn diagram: De Doorns 2 Orchard



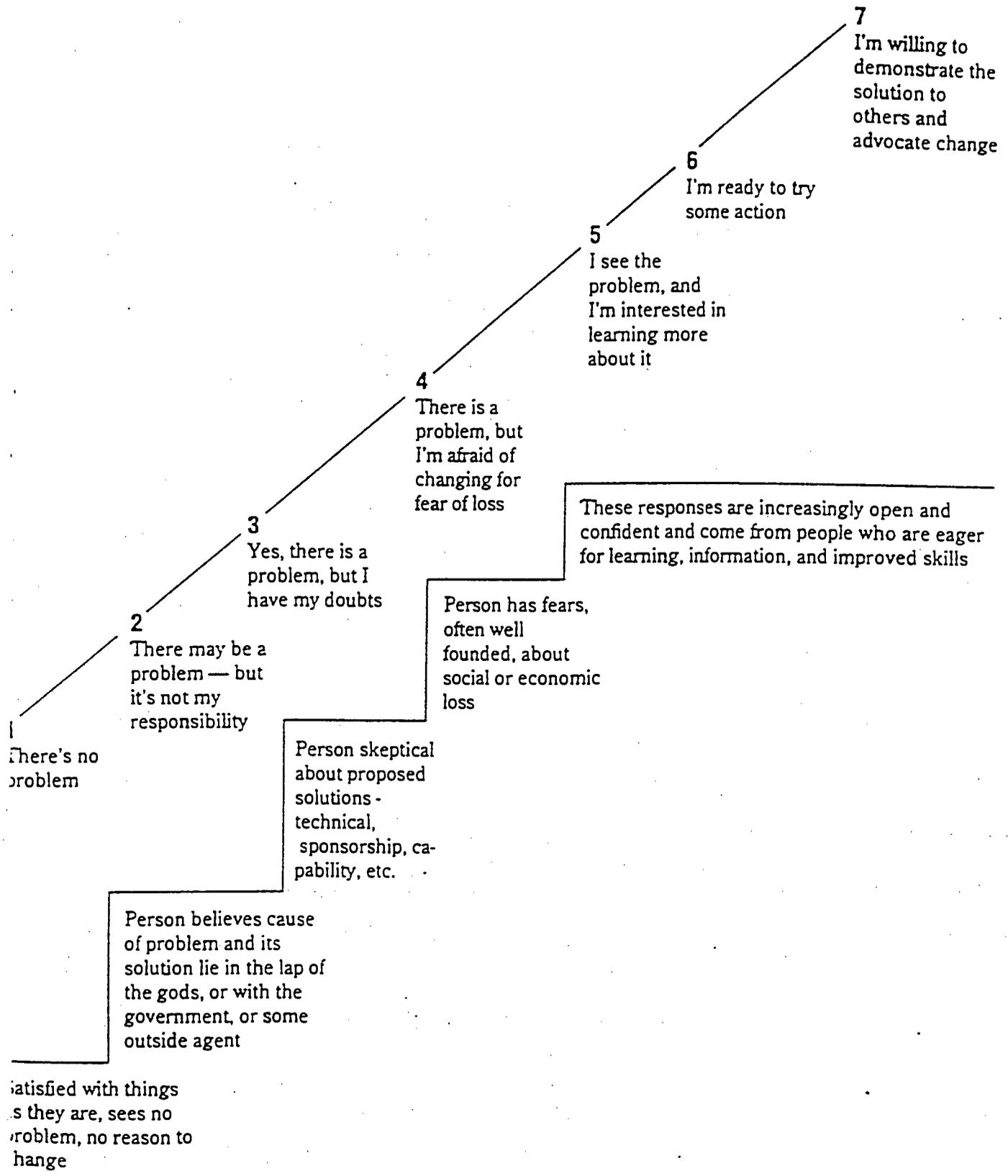
larger circle = most important organisations  
 smaller circles = less important within the community.  
 broken circle = need for organisation

8 @ , 2 ♂ participants.

Experience
Time
Enterprise
Teacher Training   Job Knowledge   Equipment   Skills
Understanding
Resource Centre   Resources   Publications   Posters
Workshops   Career Days
Guidance Committee   Target Group   Funding
Guidelines   Ideas
Expectations
Motivation
Inspiration
Information
Parents

Issues and follow-up  
 Participation in both exercises were very high and interesting outcomes were ensured by placing the students and teachers in different groups for the exercises.

Examples of a Venn Diagram and Ranking Chart



**Appendix 4: The Final Report Submitted to the Community and Urban Services  
Support Project (CUSSP)**

**Research Report Submitted To:  
COMMUNITY AND URBAN SERVICES SUPPORT PROJECT  
(CUSSP)  
Cape Town**

**AN ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES USED BY  
TWO COMMUNITY BASED ORGANISATIONS WORKING WITH CUSSP.**

**CASE STUDIES: FRANSCHHOEK AND NEW REST (GUGULETHU)**

**M. J. R. Laville  
Department of Social Anthropology  
University of Cape Town  
December 1995**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is now widely accepted by development agencies in South Africa and abroad that sustainable human development (Fitzgerald, McLennan & Munslow 1995) rests on (amongst other factors) the creation of a participatory context for the interaction of local people and their representatives at the 'community' level. This research attempts to document the communication strategies employed by these representative groups in their work with people in areas identified for development assistance.

The findings reported in this document are based on research conducted over a period of six weeks. Various methods, such as participant observation and semi-structured interviews associated with applied anthropology were used to document these communication strategies in two areas. As the study shows, it is very difficult to unravel the process and product of information flow in communities undergoing rapid social, economic and political changes. In the two areas chosen for this study (Franschhoek and New Rest in Gugulethu) these changes seem at once erratic, sluggish, frustrating, elating, progressive and regressive.

Nevertheless, this research was interesting and worthwhile in that it provided an opportunity to critically assess CBOs and their representatives at work. Such a study is also useful in that it may promote a better understanding of the contexts in which CBOs work and reveal the needs and problems experienced by CBOs and the effect of these on CBO ability to become a productive asset to 'communities'. As the findings indicate, several discoveries were made and questions emerged around the following issues: The importance of actively listening to and considering the views and experience of local inhabitants, the effectiveness of existing communication strategies used by two CBOs in their respective areas, the centrality of context in its effect on the communication process which needs to occur between local inhabitants and their representatives, and the feasibility of community based organisations as the main partners for development agency work with disadvantaged populations.

## CONTENTS PAGE

CONTENTS	PAGE NUMBER
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION	2
1. Introduction to the Relational Contexts of Franschhoek and New Rest	3
i. Franschhoek	3 - 4
ii. New Rest	4 - 5
2. Outreach to Communities, a Necessity for Improved Communication?	5
i. Attitudes and Prejudice	6 - 7
ii. Role Perceptions	7 - 10
iii. Assessing Community Leadership Characteristics	10 - 11
iv. How Context Affects CBO Effectiveness	11 - 13
3. Needs Assessment and Information Transfer, Procedures and Problems	13 - 14
i. Defining Community Needs	14 - 15
ii. Assessing Meeting Procedure	15 - 16
4. Building and Maintaining Productive Relationships in New Rest and Franschhoek	16 - 18
5. Improving Technical Workshops by Teaching Participation	18 - 20
6. Defining Community	20 - 21
7. The Issue of Lasting Empowerment	21 - 22
8. Potential Recommendations for Improving Communication Strategies in the Field	23

## Introduction

Community based organisations (CBOs) are currently the main partners for agencies and projects involved in housing provision processes in South Africa. According to the Western Cape Community-based Housing Trust (WCCHT), a variety of these organisations is active in the country. These include (among others) established township residents' and civic associations, development fora and trusts, workplace related employee groups and farm labour and tenant groups (Jenkins 1995).

There are many ways in which development agencies are involved in the delivery of urban services one of these is technical assistance. For the Community and Urban Support Services Project (CUSSP)<sup>2</sup>, technical assistance involves training, organisational support and capacity building for it's clients. Amongst other factors, the effectiveness of these activities rest on (1) local perceptions of the project and its agents and (2) the mechanisms used by the community based organisations to involve people in the process of social change.

The aim of this report is to document and analyse (point number two) the dialogic process which occurs between the representatives of a 'community' and the intended beneficiaries of technical assistance from CUSSP, inevitably, this involves some analysis of point number one. In the first instance, the report provides a brief historical and political contextualisation for the two areas researched. Subsequently, the report documents some of the basic characteristic differences in each area with specific reference to the basic effect of these on the use of potential communication strategies.

Following this, I document and analyse findings (regarding CBO communication strategies) by making use of a variety of themes associated with effective communication in the two areas where research was conducted. These analyses are followed by a critical assessment of the complexities

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<sup>2</sup> CUSSP is a nationally based project funded by USAID

associated with the random use of the term 'community', a central term in development fora which implies solidarity and agency amongst client populations, and where (in many cases) solidarity and agency is superficial or non-existent. Such an assessment would be incomplete without a brief (yet critical) assessment of lasting 'community' empowerment as a crucial aspect of development in the real sense of the word, this appears in the third section of the report. In the fourth and final section of this report, I briefly describe and analyse the two Participatory Urban Appraisal workshops initiated with CUSSP technical staff and the Mobile Self Help Centre (MSHC) fieldworkers. As each workshop was unique in content and objective, I will compare and contrast them in light of the potential effect of similar workshops to be initiated with CBO members with whom CUSSP works.

## **1. Introduction to the Relational Contexts of Franschhoek and New Rest**

This section of the report provides a brief description of the historical and political contexts of the two areas studied. I have examined each area separately for purposes of clarity.

### **i. Franschhoek**

Franschhoek valley forms part of the Cape winelands and has a long history of European settlement. Historically (and currently) a National Party stronghold, it has been (as wine farming area) an epicenter of wealth in the Western Cape. Given its political history of racial division and the socio-economic oppression its farm workers, the people of Franschhoek have for generations been divided into a wealthy capitalist class and the proletariat living in sub-economic conditions which were exacerbated with the entrenchment of Apartheid.

In the newly democratic South Africa, disadvantaged populations in Franschhoek are now presented with the opportunity to 'share in development' (personal communication: Mayor of Franschhoek, Kahlberg 1995). At the time of research however, it was apparent (through conversations with the Housing Action Committee) that the wealthy in Franschhoek were not

willing to share in this development for the simple reason that their assistance would transfer greater economic, political and social power to people who have historically depended on their goodwill to survive.

As the disadvantaged in Franschhoek have lived for generations in the area, many are socially and politically isolated and know very little about life outside the farming environment. Waldman's study of farmworkers' existence on farms in the Western Cape (1993) reveals that farmworkers have few or no formal employment benefits and know little about their human rights. Political tensions between the white and black population in Franschhoek were apparent at the Local Government elections. Conversations with a group of local inhabitants (on election day) a fair distance from town could not vote because the farmer they work for had threatened not to pay them if they did not work. Given the powerful position of wealthy white farmers, business owners and other capitalists in the area and the political subjugation of the poor, the latter see themselves as unable to confront the former on equal terms, they cannot demand, negotiate nor suggest ways forward.

## **ii. New Rest**

According to various conversations with inhabitants in New Rest, the informal settlement was established in 1989. New Rest is currently situated on land which forms part of Gugulethu. In the past year, the number of dwellings in the area have increased from approximately one thousand to three thousand. In spite of the lack of electricity, sewerage services and effective water supply, New Rest is ideally situated in terms of access to transport and shops.

There are many children seemingly under the age of five at New Rest. The lack of a suitable playground for the children or creche facilities means that the children play with anything they can find in the pathway, plastic bags, sand and detritus. The women who remain in New Rest during formal working hours may work from in the shack selling vegetables, cigarettes and other disposable goods. There seems to be a high rate of formal unemployment in New Rest. Some of

the men who seem to have formal jobs (an important factor for leaders to acquire local prestige) are part of the New Rest Residents Committee (NRRC) leadership.

Local organisational structures in New Rest consist of the NRRC (ibid), the Disciplinary Committee, the Youth Committee, respective Area Committees and the Executive Committee. The NRRC forms a combined body of representatives from the abovementioned committees. Since the 15th of November 1995, a Project Committee which is to liaise with CUSSP on project issues, was elected. Apart from the Project Committee, the committees deal with a variety of local issues such as violence, youth programmes<sup>3</sup>, access to basic services and womens' projects.

During the course of this research it became evident that there is a variety of political, economic and cultural dynamics at play in New Rest. Given the short duration of this research it has been difficult to assess the full impact of these dynamics. However, (as the following sections in this report show) it became apparent that these played a significant role in determining the nature and extent of local interaction with the NRRC and other committees in the area.

## **2. Outreach to Communities, a Necessity for Improved Communication?**

'Empowerment and upliftment of communities is now recognised as a basic aim of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)' (Bank 1995). Community based organisations (CBOs) are perceived by the national government and some development agencies as the key to achieving community participation and representation in the development process.

Analyses of participatory approaches to achieve representative community development have shown the need to improve organisational and individual approach to local inhabitants. Such analyses include a careful assessment of feelings about authority, perceptions of customary roles, individual prejudices and the need to encourage creativity and local initiative (Srinivasan 1990).

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<sup>3</sup> Such as the South African Police initiative with the youth of New Rest to combat crime in the area.

predominantly Xhosa speaking area)<sup>5</sup> did not attend public meetings to the same extent as women from Phase 412 (both Xhosa and Afrikaans speaking) and Phase 281 (predominantly Afrikaans speaking). Of the few women who attended public meetings, few voiced their views or suggestions. One of the women interviewed for this study said 'there is a lot of argument (debate) at the meetings and because of that, I don't speak much', another women (from Phase 2) explained 'the men usually talk, we women don't'.

## ii. Role Perceptions

Such responses provide an indication of how women (generally speaking and perhaps excluding the women who form part of the HAC) accept the imposition of subservient roles on them, as defined by the seemingly patriarchal environment in which they live. Studies carried out by Overholt, Anderson, Cloud and Austin, Cloud (1984:31) state that 'identifying the gender division of responsibility for labor [and] management . . . is crucial to project analysis because the segmentation of control and responsibility has practical effects'. Such division is particularly apparent in Phase 2 , where it was explained (by the HAC workers in the area) that the women living here are from conservative Xhosa families from the Transkei and their cultural ties and identities are seen as important in giving meaning to their lives<sup>6</sup>. Such responses also indicate that there is a need to address local perceptions of authority and that there is a need to refine CBO approach to local inhabitants by encouraging CBO members to see the value in listening to and learning from local inhabitants.

The effectiveness of local outreach is also reduced when CBO members are unable to relate to people because of personal prejudices associated with various forms of class consciousness. As the following comment shows, these personal prejudices can act as a divisive force within the

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<sup>5</sup> This information is based on conversations with the HAC members themselves and women interviewed from the informal settlement.

<sup>6</sup> This information still needs to be confirmed.

CBO and they can reduce the potential of CBO interaction with communities. These comments are not directed at person concerned (from the HAC in Franschoek) but discussed when he is not there.

'We have to discuss how we are going to reach him. We have to teach him about the history of oppression in Franschoek, he must understand that he represents people who voted for him on November 1st'

'He did not even read the [Social Compact<sup>7</sup>] document, he just accepted it and it questions the legitimacy of the HAC'

'He sits at meetings and doesn't say anything'

Further conversations with the HAC revealed that this person was seen as someone with visible middle class aspirations. Unlike the other HAC members he does not live in a squatter camp, instead he has a two storey house with a pleasant garden and he has a car. The HAC members wanted the MSHC coordinator to speak to the person 'because she is on the same level as him'. They were convinced that he would not listen to them as they live in the squatter settlement. They wanted him to sign a ANC membership document which will legally bind him to certain responsibilities.

It was later acknowledged that signing a binding document would not necessarily change this person's feelings about who should have authority, who can be shown respect or how to put aside personal prejudices. It was agreed that to change personal attitude and approach there is a need

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<sup>7</sup> The Social Compact document was designed to bind the Council of Franschoek to support future development in it's informal settlements and Franschoek in general.

for continuous support for the group in various ways.

In contrast to Franschoek, New Rest is a socially and culturally fragmented settlement with a highly transient population. Problems associated with information flow in New Rest appears in conversations with local inhabitants, in the CBOs created by inhabitants and in the interaction of these CBOs with residents. These problems are expressed in confusion about the role of the NRRC and in confusion about the different characteristics of community leadership which are influenced by the socio-economic conditions existing within New Rest.

There was substantial confusion (from the inhabitants) around the role of the New Rest Residents' Committee in the area. Unlike Franschoek however, such confusion was not random. In New Rest specific groups of people had very little knowledge of the NRRC and its work. These people were the new residents in the area, closer to the train station. Women in these areas knew even less than men or nothing about the NRRC. The men who commented on the NRRC from this area said that the public meetings held every second week were not useful. Interviewees agreed that there were definite discrepancies between matters decided upon in meetings and follow-up action. Both new and established residents agreed that the Disciplinary Committee was at fault in this respect. This committee tended to dominate meeting procedures and matters relating to disciplinary issues were discussed more frequently than issues related to the work of other committees.

A diagram drawn by a Project Committee member also showed the complex process required for information to be relayed to people in general and to the various committees. At present the only local group communicating effectively with the Executive Committee is the Disciplinary Committee. Members of the Disciplinary Committee<sup>8</sup> have originally formed part of the Executive Committee operating in New Rest. As such it is thought that the members have greater experience of the process required and the individuals to be targeted for an issue to be taken seriously. The

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<sup>8</sup> c.f., later discussion on the actual exercise of power by the Disciplinary Committee

other committees, such as the Youth Committee and area committees do not have this experience and their members are not formally from the executive committee. The following comments demonstrate these experiences:

(1) There is a lot of confusion about who is part of which organisation. The Disciplinary committee seems to take over each meeting that we set up, even if that meeting is not for the discussion of disciplinary matters. I think that this is because there is a lot of crime in New Rest even though we have good area committees who are supposed to deal with these problems.

(2) There are many people on different committees in New Rest, what we need is some clarity about who is doing what. I think that there are some people who want to be everything to each committee, they take on too many roles and they each want to outshine the other. There should be no politics in development, here, everyone (the agencies) has his own interest at heart and the community is the one that loses out.

The other problem is that it is clear there is regional suppression of the development process especially regarding the release of funds. It used to be said that SANCO controls the funds, now I am the vice-chair of SANCO for section three and despite my negotiations, I still do not see these funds. Because of this, it is difficult to report on progress to the local people because there is no progress.

Going back to the development agencies, Holistic Settlements (SLP) promised to meet with us but three months have gone by and we have not heard from them. For us to speak to the local people, we need to get those agencies to make clear what their role is.'

The second meeting of CUSSP with the NRRC (at the CUSSP office in Cape Town) provided an

initial glimpse of this confusion. Of the nine New Rest representatives that were present, half of them did not know which representatives were sitting amongst them. During my conversations with one of the NRRC members at tea, the following comment was made, 'we don't say who should be part of it and who should not be part of it, everyone gets a chance'. As such the NRRC changed every few weeks to allow other inhabitants take part in local leadership.

### iii. Assessing Community Leadership Characteristics

As the comment 'we don't say who should be part of it and who should not be part of it, everyone gets a chance' about the NRRC suggests, it seems as though a participatory approach to leadership in the area is highly valued. Closer observations revealed that people in the area are very careful in making choices on the part of others as this is perceived as an attempt to take power or gain political advantage over established local leaders - a dangerous thing in an environment where any form of relative advantage is seen as a threat to personal/group power. The following statement made by one of the NRRC members confirmed this:

'People are powerful assets in a place like New Rest, many people here follow a certain leader because of the person's skills. That power can be gained through political knowledge, [social] prestige or by force; In New Rest all of these apply equally'

A further example of this can be seen in local perceptions of the Disciplinary Committee. A man recently accused of rape in New Rest was 'disciplined' by the committee instead of being transferred to the local police station. Men and women interviewed said that it is not certain whether the man had committed the crime, there had been rumours that the charge was orchestrated. The accused was stabbed fourteen times in the thigh and waist, he also had a serious axe wound across his forehead. Events like this mean that some people will not attend NRRC meetings or other public meetings out of fear for their safety. Conversations with an old man in the 'established' area further confirmed the use of force by the Disciplinary Committee. He explained that another man recently accused of theft was severely beaten so that he would

confess to the crime. According to community defined procedures for these matters, he is supposed to be tied to a pole at the center of the settlement until the police arrive to investigate.

In the section entitled 'Defining Community', it is suggested that community leadership characteristics may change depending on current and local socio-economic circumstances affecting leadership style. In New Rest, it is very difficult to distill specific leadership characteristics in identified local leaders. Leaders spoken to and observed during this research period seem to embody traditional, authoritarian, positional and representational characteristics (c.f., Jenkins 1995), manipulating these to address the situation at hand.

For communication strategy purposes, it will be important for fieldworkers and community development advisors to be aware of the fluid nature of community leadership in order to promote better relations between local leaders and residents.

#### **iv. How Context affects CBO effectiveness**

In their ideal state, (for various development agencies and projects) CBOs are seen as organised entities which can engage with its development partners in a controlled and productive manner. In reality, CBOs affect and are affected by the political, social and economic contexts which they exist. This can prevent or worsen community participation and representation. As CBOs do not exist in static and controlled socio-political environments their ability to assess needs, increase their representation and sift priorities depends on their interaction with their development partners and their relationship with community residents. As CBOs are organisational bodies which grow out of a local population<sup>9</sup> with a sense of community, and because CBOs often have to accept (for reasons of financial support) the proposals of their development partners; Such interactions may affect the CBO's ability to seriously consider the priorities of residents and affect the potential of

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<sup>9</sup> With time, increased organisational potential and changes in leadership characteristics within the CBO, it becomes discernable from the local population c.f., the section on 'Assessing Community Leadership Characteristics'.

its members to 'hang-out' in the area. A series of events following the election of a potentially conservative council in Franschoek for the first local government elections and conversations with local inhabitants illustrate this clearly:

(1) Two shacks were burned down during the early hours of the morning in [squatter settlement] 412. When the fire started one of the neighbours saw two children at the window, as though they were trying to open it. He did not realise that the children wanted to get out of the shack. Later on, the neighbour's house caught fire and as he got outside he saw the roof of the other shack collapsing. Luckily the two children from the first shack managed to escape. The neighbour only managed to save his bed, everything else was gone. Afterwards, the people came to us and asked us what we [the HAC] were going to do. They expected us to have fixed the situation before the shack had burned down. We have tried to approach neighbours to get some things together for the family.

(2) We had our first meeting with council since the [local] elections. It was terrible. The Finance Committee accepted the Social Compact document without examining its contents. Part of that document questions the legitimacy of the HAC and its potential to represent the squatters. This is totally out of order. Either council does not want us [squatters] to settle on communal land nearer town (at Mooiwater) or they do not understand the finer details of the document. We have worked with the council on different committees and they even held a workshop with us.

As the previous (and following) extracts show, local political changes have a significant effect on the work of CBOs. A week after the first Local Government elections, the MSHC staff met with HAC members to discuss ways to increase HAC capacity to negotiate with a (potentially) politically conservative council:

We discussed the following issues, the fieldworkers were to strengthen the HAC by educating and training HAC members to become aware of the political dimension of their work with the council.

Added to this, an awareness campaign will be launched in the area to make the local people aware of the power of their choices.

It was agreed that the HAC should be empowered to negotiate with the Rate Payers Association which seems to oppose the settlement of squatters on communal land. It is alleged that the association does not believe that squatters will pay for basic services and both the association and the National Party supporters oppose the move of squatters for alleged economic reasons. It is claimed that the lands surrounding Mooiwater will depreciate in economic value with the building of low cost housing in the area.

Thirdly the MSHC aims to build stronger relations with the Paarl ANC office /Boland civics. It is hoped that this will enable the local CBO to have support in time of need and that this will discourage dependence on the MSHC.

### **3. Needs Assessment and Information Transfer, Procedures and Problems**

Community based organisations which are aware of approaches required to reach local inhabitants also need to assess local needs. It is important for CBOs to improve their ability to assess needs and priorities in the community as this will increase their local representation and help communities take part in addressing local inequality. To achieve this, one must question whether needs assessments in and substantial interaction with the community has occurred, how this is (or has been) done and who decides which needs should be prioritised.

In Franschhoek, more than half of the HAC actually come from the squatter settlements, the two RDP officers who are also part of the HAC live in the squatter settlement. In communication terms this means that the CBOs are supposed to develop a reciprocal relationship with local people and that they should be able to carefully decide whose priorities they have chosen and how

that will affect the majority of inhabitants they represent. As the following comment shows, because HAC members have first hand experience of community needs they are willing to make this knowledge count in their work:

(1) We are living in the communities and every day we see the things that are happening. We can't stand back and say we are not part of it when you or I visit this family or that family, eat with them and talk with them. Those who are not squatting don't know about how these people suffer. Just because we are poor doesn't mean that they should stand on our necks and crush us, we [the HAC] won't let that happen.

Given the number of people in the communities and the different actions required of local CBOs, it is important to improve the outreach mechanisms used by these organisations. The work loads of CBOs are considerable, Franschhoek consists of 850 families and its' HAC in Franschhoek consists of 8 members. In Franschhoek an attempt is made to report on local developments on a house to house basis this is a more common for community outreach than public meetings.

As the resident population in New Rest is at once temporary, mobile, consolidated and newly established, it is very difficult to transfer information about current and future development in the area, let alone assess local needs. In New Rest, needs assessment takes place in an ad hoc fashion and on a continuous basis. In the first instance people verbalise needs through their area committees who report to the executive committee. Needs assessment also takes place on a continuous basis. Most of the Project Committee members live in New Rest and as such they have real experience of local needs and priorities because they live with the community. Further conversations with people from New Rest confirmed the importance of local experience for relevant needs assessment. All the Project Committee members live in New Rest as do the NRRC members. Most of them live in similar socio-economic and political conditions as the residents. In spite of these experiences however, their ability to activate the process required for information transfer and needs assessment is blocked by perceptions of relative advantage, the transient nature of the resident population and the absence of guidelines for meeting procedures.

### i. Defining Community Needs

One of the most important aspects to consider is the fact that community needs are often defined (rather than refined) by local representatives. In New Rest, several powerful individuals (in the NRRC) control whose name appears at what level on waiting lists for important resources, and how finances are utilised. The first meeting with New Rest's Project Committee and interviews with various residents confirm the centrality of powerful local leaders in decision-making, the following comments illustrate this:

(1) A., was supposed to chair the meeting but B., took over the meeting. The other men hardly spoke and the only woman present as part of the Project Committee did not speak at all.

(2) We've spoken to the committee about the untidiness around here but they do not answer us. They tell us they must speak to this project or that project and then a few months later we see things happening which are not so important for us. You see, if there is a 'big' man talking during the meeting everyone will listen to him and no-one will question his words.

It would be absurd to claim that these leaders are bent on gaining greater political advantage, the fact is that they have sufficient advantage - they know which individuals and agencies to contact to get resources for the area, they have detailed knowledge of the process and skill involved in accessing these resources. As such it seems natural for them to define which needs are important and how these needs should be addressed.

Such action seems justified in that some people have only been in New Rest for a few weeks or a month. These people have no knowledge of the NRRC. Project Committee members also confess that it is difficult to reach people in New Rest because 'people are already moving out'. The fluid nature of the resident population is as such directly opposed to the ideal of community

participation which suggests local solidarity and is concerned with achieving a common purpose (Thornton & Ramphela 1988). Given these conditions, report-backs are only effective with established residents, a result which is cause for division between new arrivals and 'consolidators' (Jenkins 1995).

## **ii. Assessing Meeting Procedure**

The absence of specific guidelines for meeting procedures is another source of conflict which prevents effective sharing of information in New Rest. The following comment illustrates this:

(1) At present we are scared to criticise one another in meetings. Last week, I made the mistake of putting up my hand to ask the chairman if we could have some guidelines for the meeting so that everyone can talk. He threatened me, telling me 'you think you are clever, I've been watching you', imagine, I had to humble myself even though I knew he was wrong.

Members of the Project Committee and the NRRC have suggested that a workshop on guidelines for meeting procedures and workshops to clarify the roles of each committee would be important to create the right climate for productive discussion. At present it may be difficult to address the political, social and economic micro-dynamics of New Rest as it is uncertain which people will move out and how this will affect resident characteristics. It may be more useful to address the issue of community development in a broader sense and as such improve CBO communication skills, by strengthening NRRC and Project Committee capacity to work effectively with external decision-makers.

## **4. Building and Maintaining Productive Relationships in New Rest and Franschoek**

An unobservant stranger entering New Rest for the first time may be struck by the general apathy of people in the area. At first glance it seems as though the inhabitants have given up on trying or

are not interested in changing their environment. Closer inspection reveals that various residents are actively involved in creating viable economic niches.

For example, women in New Rest are involved in a variety of activities, cooking and selling meat, hawking vegetables, operating shops for their husband and child minding. Of the men spoken to, it seems that some of them have temporary jobs outside New Rest - although there is a high rate of formal unemployment in the area. In spite of these activities, the viability of such niches are often undermined by random acts of violence and crime in the area, and severe economic reversals. As such, it will be very difficult to build productive relations between CBOs and residents in the area without addressing crime, an important catalyst in economic instability.

Current initiatives by the South African Defense Force to create a locally based primary crime force in New Rest, aims to address the issues of crime and violence. As in Franschhoek, there is a need for increased clarity about the actual role of CBOs, the potential contribution of these CBOs and there is a need to explain the disparity between local aspirations and the constraints within which projects operate.

In contrast to New Rest, the HAC in Franschhoek seems to have established a relatively productive relationship with the local inhabitants, although this was not demonstrated in my interviews with local inhabitants. Interviews with some women in the community revealed this. One of the women working at a creche in Phase 2 said that she thought the HAC was doing a 'good job' with the people in Phase 2 and that they worked very hard to get their messages across. In contrast to this initial comment, she also stressed that it was important for the HAC to intensify their one-on-one approach in the area as she felt that this was a more useful way of reaching each family. As a person working in the creche, she said that some of her friends in Phase 2 felt that the HAC were supposed to tell them when to take the initiative but she felt that the HAC were there to help and that it was up to the community to take action. The emphasis on the HAC taking initiative for the community stresses the expectation on the part of local inhabitants that it is 'authority' which decides and imposes rules for the process of development in the area.

Another woman in Phase 281 (or Mooiwater as it is more commonly called), also expressed similar sentiments. She attends most of the public meetings and she felt that the HAC were 'working hard' in the area even though they had not seen many (physical) changes in Mooiwater since they approached the area. Yet another interviewee living in Mooiwater said that she too attended meetings and she felt that the role of the HAC is to support people as changes in the area could only take place if undertaken as a joint venture. When asked what she thought the HAC should be doing to help develop Mooiwater, she (and her friend) explained that people in the area should have more information about what is happening and what is being discussed for their area. After a long pause, she said 'People should be allowed to say what they want to say'.

Such a comment reveals that despite the existence of a strong community based organisation in Franschhoek, there is still a need to improve the relationship between the HAC and the local inhabitants through (amongst other channels) the creation of a participatory context for development.

##### **5. Improving Technical Assistance Workshops by Teaching Participation**

In this section of the report, I attempt to assess the two Participatory Urban Appraisal Workshops carried out during the course of this research period and, which aim to influence technical assistance workshops initiated by CUSSP.

Participatory Urban Appraisal (PUA) is taken from the term Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), which is based on a set of techniques originally designed for needs assessment purposes in community development. The use of these techniques are also useful for information transfer to local people as the principles of PUA involves a careful assessment personal approaches and attitudes towards the intended beneficiaries of development agencies.

As previously mentioned, two Participatory Urban Appraisal workshops were carried out during the course of this research period. One workshop involved the technical staff and advisors

attached to CUSSP. The second workshop involved extension staff (of the MSHC) for New Rest and Franschhoek. Each workshop attempted to achieve the following: Familiarising attendants with the principles of Participatory Urban Appraisal (PUA), assessing personal attitudes to field realities, differentiating between workshop environment and field reality (ie implementation of techniques and approaches in the field), assessing how to build local capacity through the improvement of local communication strategies and introducing PUA techniques for needs assessment purposes. Each workshop was more or less unique in terms of content and approach.

The first workshop initiated with CUSSP technical staff revealed that it is quite difficult to convey the importance of full community participation in development projects without setting this up as an ideal rather than a necessity. Those attending this workshop tended to stress the importance of control management (c.f., Analoui 1994) as the only means to achieving responsible community effort. For example, in response to the statement 'allowing for creativity', most of the attendants agreed that the creativity and initiative of local beneficiaries should be given direction and should be 'managed to prevent loss of funds'.

In response to the discussion around the importance of role reversal and active learning from the intended beneficiaries, the attendants submitted that it was important to actively learn from the intended beneficiaries, but they did not see role reversal (as in attempting to empathise with the people) as an crucial aspect of this. In Chamber's article 'The Realities of the Poor', the author explains that 'Self-critical analysis, sensitive rapport and participatory methods can contribute some valid insight into the values, priorities and preferences of poor people. We can struggle to reconstruct our realities to reflect what poor people indicate to be theirs. But there will always be distortions.' (Chambers 1994:14). In this light, it is important to at least attempt to empathise, despite the project constraints within which one works. The responses of technical staff to the workshop clearly demonstrated the precarious balance required (c.f. Korten 1990, Bryant & Allen 1982) to achieve project aims and to empower people in the process of development, in conflict with the attendants' needs to satisfy multiple and personal priorities.

The second workshop initiated with the Mobile Self Help Centre (MSHC) fieldworkers from Franschhoek and New Rest was quite different in content to the first workshop with CUSSP's technical staff. The workshop stressed the importance of self-critical awareness in the approach to and work with communities. The attendants were encouraged to provide examples of their personal experiences in the field with regard to the lack of local participation in local development processes. For example, the fieldworkers explained some of the problems they faced in the field with regard to distorted perceptions (on the part of local people) of their role in the area, the adverse effect of specific leadership on development facilitation in the area and the need to increase the awareness of fieldworkers to the multiple (and fluid) contexts in which they work. The attendants explained that this workshop was useful to them in that it dealt specifically with the areas in which they work and helped them to put some of the problems they were facing into perspective, while indicating potential means to solve these problems.

The responses of fieldworkers in this workshop indicated both a recognition of the need to learn from the communities in which they work and frustration with their inability (as part of CBOs) to deliver after having fostered local expectations. This type of workshop might prove difficult to implement in groups which assume (through familiarity with some of the themes explored) that the problems of participation have already been identified and that there is no means of alleviating these problems. In such a situation, it is difficult to suggest ways forward, especially in the improvement of local interaction with or communication strategies used in local areas due to the perceived intractability of the situation in which these groups work.

## **6. Defining Community**

Any attempt to initiate development in designated areas by development agencies or projects, should involve a critical assessment of what is meant by the term 'community'. In established development fora, the term is often defined for use by the agency and tends not to fit the reality in which the population targetted for development exists.

The term 'community' has been debated, used and abused in differing contexts for a variety of political reasons. In most cases it remains 'one of the most stereotyped and obscure' terms. In South Africa the term community has been used to describe an aggregation of people who may share a 'common residence, geographic region, and shared beliefs, or who claim membership in a common lineage' (Thornton & Ramphela 1988:30).

Given the nebulous nature of communities and their populations, development agencies have attempted to define community, organisation and leadership characteristics in an attempt to create logical frameworks within which they can work. But as this study has shown, it is very difficult to isolate these characteristics. Although 'communities' can be conceptually divided into three types namely: transitional (assuming that the population is not interested in investing in the development of the area), consolidating (meaning that the majority of the population is interested in investing in the development of the area) and established communities, in reality they can possess all three characteristics (or more) and any one of these can prevail depending on the current and local socio-political climate.

Moreover, in recognising the internal heterogeneity of communities, it is also important to note that resident characteristics are subject to change depending on current and local socio-economic conditions. For example, a person can be differentially identified as any (or a combination) of the following: brigeheader, consolidator, status seeker, marginalised or transitional (c.f. Jenkins 1995), depending on unique circumstances shaping his/her current experience of life. In examining the communication strategies of Community based organisations, this paper also illustrates some of the problems associated with using the term community uncritically, or intentionally imagining community (or attempting to create community) in areas where there is no real sense of solidarity or agency.

## **7. The Issue of Lasting Empowerment, a Tentative Conclusion**

Like the expressed difference in ideas about what constitutes participation, Robert Chambers

emphasises (in a policy paper written for the World Summit for Social Development<sup>10</sup>) that the 'views of the realities of the poor and of what could be done, are constructed mainly from a distance, and can be seen to be constructed mainly for our convenience' (Chambers 1994:7). In various community development fora, lasting empowerment is at best seen as an unattainable ideal and at worst as a goal that can be achieved through the collection and blend of the right ingredients. These ingredients often manifest themselves in manuals, hand-outs and checklists (amongst others) and it is hoped that these sets of materials and techniques can deliver the goods.

However, the changing environment in which extension agents and community development advisors work is often directly opposed to the idea of field learning as a rigid science rather than a flexible art. In sum, it is difficult to suggest that the analyses made in this paper will or can hold true for the improvement of communication strategies in other communities with which CUSSP works. As the aim of this paper has been to critically assess the communication strategies employed by two CBOs working with CUSSP, it stresses that any improvement of communication and interaction should also entail a holistic approach to the empowerment of the poor and marginalised in these communities. In practice, the empowerment of CUSSP's intended beneficiaries rests on a continuous effort to assess and monitor the interaction of its community based partners and, the emphasis on improved quality of fieldworker rapport, behavior and attitude towards local inhabitants.

The proposals made in this paper are by no means definitive, instead they hope to elicit constructive criticism from those making use of them, in order to actively consider the realities of the poor.

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<sup>10</sup> The World Summit for Social Development took place in Copenhagen (Denmark) in March 1995 in a bid to increase international development cooperation and bringing to light central issues for social development.

## 8. Potential Recommendations for Improving Communication Strategies in the Field

1. Recognise the importance of improving outreach to communities as a necessity for project access to and for the implementation of development initiatives.
2. Recognise and assess the internal heterogeneity of the communities that the project works with in order to increase project awareness of significant minority aspirations as well as considering majority needs.
3. Be aware of imposing a solidarity and agency in areas which demonstrate little sense of solidarity and/or agency.
4. Encourage CDAs and fieldworkers to increase their knowledge<sup>11</sup> of local leadership characteristics in order to help create responsible local representation.
5. Encourage CDAs, technical staff and fieldworkers to adopt a more self-critical approach to participatory development even within the realistic framework of project aims and constraints. Encourage awareness of approach, prejudice and the effect of role playing.
6. Assess and contribute to the improvement of existing (and potential) organisational structures by actively considering the concerns of these groups and decentralising the decision-making process for development in the area.

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<sup>11</sup> Through emphasising the 'value of field residence, unhurried participant-observation, and conversations'. (Chambers in World Development vol 22, No. 7, 1994:955)

- 23
7. Carefully consider and encourage suggestions around the issue of lasting empowerment in order to gain a detailed understanding of the changing contexts in which CBOs work.

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