Who Holds the Keys to Development? Unlocking Development Communication Strategies in Umzimkhulu

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Abstract

This study aims to explore to what extent claims to include participatory planning in the Umzimkhulu Town Urban Regeneration Plan 2007 are occurring in reality. In order to establish whether the development completed so far and that underway has been and will be beneficial to the average person on the street, the study investigates the life experiences lived by seven members of the community, what developments they want to see in the town and whether they feel they have been consulted. Through the use of open ended and structured interviews and photo-elicitation, the study gathers a set of views and universal needs from the participants with regards to development that were compared to the actual developments taking place. The study attempts to understand what participation means in the context of development in Umzimkhulu.

Introduction

Within the Umzimkhulu Development Manifesto – amongst the various normative and positive principles outlining the ethos and approach of the project – is a commitment to participatory planning. This notion is expressed in both the methodology and in the implementation of planning outcomes, which reflect "both the needs and aspirations of the community and the municipality, and the realities within which such development takes place, ensuring ownership of the plan and its development *by* the community" (Umzimkhulu Town Urban Regeneration Plan, 2007: 5). The manifesto claims that the needs of the town residents will be addressed as a result of communal empowerment in the decision making process. The paper explores to what extent this premise is materialising in reality.

I do not wish to provide an arrogant, lambasting critique of development in Umzimkhulu. Rather, the main aims of this project are to investigate whether community participation is taking place and how people feel they are being affected by development; and to discuss this in light of the hybridised, inter-paradigmatic concepts of development communication which have informed and reflected "Third World" development since its inception. The study will investigate the instruments of community participation and attempt to understand what participation means in the context of development in Umzimkhulu. This project will, furthermore, consider the elucidation of information from the community to explore alternative channels of grassroots community expression.

Historical Context

The town known as Umzimkhulu is located on the southern flood plains of the Umzimkhulu River about one hundred kilometres from the coast. There are only oral histories to shed light on the earliest historic beginnings of any kind of settlement in Umzimkhulu, which prescribe that it was first inhabited by the Bhaca Tribe, although there are two conflicting stories as to why they settled. One legend tells of how the Bhaca tribe, led by the supposedly great warrior Madzikane, fled the reign of Shaka during the Mfecane era and came to inhabit the area. When Shaka's impi pursued, they were convincingly and utterly obstructed by a river flowing at its most ferocious. One of Shaka's warriors then shouted the coining words: "Umzi-omkhulu!" – "the kraal [of water] is too big!" The other legend prescribes that Shaka encountered the Bhaca Tribe in his pursuit of the AmaMpondo – so named because they were the thieves of Shaka's cattle "with the great horns". Shaka acknowledged them as Zulu, and asked why they were hiding. He came to name them Amabhaca meaning "the hiding ones". In time other tribes also came to inhabit the area. The intercultural contact resulted in a degree of conflict, yet it does not seem to have been major enough to merit elaboration in the official town history. Among these other tribes were the Nhlangwini, the Chunu and the Imithwane. The Nhlangwini originated from Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique) and were descendants of the reigning Swazi Royal Family. The Chunu arrived from Umsinga, north of Mooi River, the exodus of a sour dynastic quarrel and the Imithwane were allegedly of San

lineage and admired by Shaka for their hunting ability. Their skill and subsequent admiration resulted in Shaka ordering they take Zulu wives, to bear his kingdom the children of future elite warriors.

While these movements were unfolding in the area labelled on maps at the time as 'Nomansland', the Strachan family from Scotland was in the process of emigration – arriving in Natal in 1850 under the Byrne Scheme, which aimed to populate Natal with British citizens. They settled in Durban until the father of the family was killed in a building accident in 1852. The family accumulated considerable tracts of farmland (one plot of which was bought from the Strachan's by Trappist monks in 1887 for nine thousand pounds – Mariannhill, upon which was built a monastery still in operation today). Another of these farms was Clydesdale, very near the vicinity of the present day Umzimkhulu town. By 1958, the orphaned Strachan sons established a trading store at a ferry crossing between Natal and East Griqualand, on the south bank. This trading store became known unofficially as Madonela (the place of Donald, one of the Strachan sons). As the area gained a greater degree of importance, it was labelled as Clydesdale on maps of the 1880's, after the farm, before this too gave way to its contemporary name of Umzimkhulu, after the river (Strachan; Rainier, 2003).

Donald Strachan's chains of stores were found at many small, strategic drifts throughout the greater region, and were, by all accounts, a profitable business. By the late twentieth century however, Umzimkhulu and its stores and hotel were sold to African proprietors because of the racial configurations espoused by the Homelands policy of the Apartheid government. In 1986, Umzimkhulu was a part of the Transkei homeland, and incorporated back into South Africa, into the Eastern Cape Province, after 1994. In 2006, when provincial borders were redefined, Umzimkhulu was ceded to KwaZulu-Natal (KZN); a largely lauded decision as KZN is regarded as a superior organ of service delivery. Yet despite the province's superior ability to deliver services and upliftment, it inherited a barely functional town with massive service backlogs.

A 2007 study providing data for a 2008 urban regeneration plan found the town to be a harsh location within which to live, despite the fact it is the economic hub of the surrounding rural hinterland, the Sisonke District, which includes the towns of Ixopo and Kokstad. The town was generally found to be dysfunctional due to its lack of economic, social, cultural, environmental and recreational opportunities. Moreover, the administration was found to be marred by a lack of shared vision and developmental incoherence (Umzimkhulu Town Urban Regeneration Plan, 2007: 4). Just over seventeen percent of the population were found to have no form of schooling; fifty five percent had dropped out of school by the end of senior primary school and only four percent were found to have a matric. This shocking picture manifested itself in an unemployment rate of sixty eight percent (*ibid:* 20).

A Word on Post-Apartheid Development

South Africa's place in the world system is the result of huge inequalities of wealth within the state. Highly developed industries and extremely productive mining and commercial services coexist with half the population living in poverty. When, in 1994, a democratic government was elected with the aim of uplifting the historically exploited and marginalised masses, it implemented a series of development programmes which in time became increasingly more neoliberal (Mubangisi, 2008). Economic development programmes, like GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy, 1996) increased the market-orientation of the economy. This discourse prevents leftist initiatives such as dependency discourses that view poverty as the result of historical structural inequalities (*ibid:* 176) to come to the fore and instead views social security as "the best and most direct means of lifting people out of poverty" (*ibid:* 177). Although the government has stipulated a commitment to participatory planning in The Municipal Systems Act (32 of 2000), rural development has continued to circumvent these structural causes of poverty, does little to empower local citizens, and excludes the beneficiaries of development in programme design and implementation. This has maintained a tendency for the poor to view "such programmes as privileges bestowed on them by the state rather than as rights to which they are entitled as citizens" Mubangisi (2008: 179-180).

Literature Review

Since World War Two, the development of the Third World has been a priority of the donor/rich states. This literature review will examine three paradigms of development (modernisation, dependency and participatory) which will frame particular development initiatives as an expression of a paradigm, allowing one to draw conclusions about development strategies and shed light on development in general. This literature review is intertwined with a conceptual framework that assists an understanding of the analysis of development in Umzimkhulu.

A History of Development Paradigms

As the era of empires began to emerge in the eighteenth century, the European powers extended their influence into, what is best known today, as "the developing world". The technological advancements associated with the industrial revolution demanded an ever increasing supply of raw materials from unknown, mysterious continents that were smeared with myths of cannibalistic, tribal inhabitants. Over time, these vast regions were permeated with European influence, expressed by the construction of the industrial means to extract these raw materials (like mines), as well as the construction of the indigenous inhabitant as a worker, a slave – they created a vast, cheap labour pool out from original inhabitants of the land. Of course, there were reasons other than those economic that hastened the long process of industrialisation and modernisation in these "backward" continents; for example the spiritual/religious, and later, ideological development of the inhabitants therein. As these spaces were carved up among the industrial European powers, the colonial economy was geared towards the exporting of extracted raw materials to the respective nation. Only during the twentieth century did these colonies and dominions emerge from such control. The nature of events to this point, such as the erosion of colonial hegemony, the abolition of slavery, the emergence of human rights, increasing political suffrage, as well as the ravaging of the European powers in the First and Second World Wars, resulted in widespread independence amongst particularly African states from around 1960.

What the native leaders of these countries inherited were states whose then-contemporary nature and appearance in the world was utterly contrived and reflective of years of colonial subjugation. Yet these states were still nevertheless embroiled in the ideological east/west Cold War. In fact, it is in these parts of the world that the Cold War unfolded (Huntington, 1983). Also in this context was the term 'Third World', perhaps not coined, but indeed popularised with its present meaning. The 'three worlds' typology was a less value laden approach[1] to categorising states, dividing the world's states into: a capitalist 'first world', a communist 'second world', and a developing, neutral 'third world'. The three world's typology had "economic, ideological, political and strategic dimensions" (Heywood, 2002: 29). The third world states were sponsored/propped up by either capitalist or communist bloc; these were the parts of the world that "both the First and Second Worlds wished to conquer" (Melkote & Steeves, 2001: 22). Communist-inclined countries were nationalist and were supplied weapons and financial donations. They encouraged national development, revolution and national sovereignty. Indeed, dependency theory, to be discussed below, emanates from Marxist ideas.

The capitalist-inclined countries underwent strategies of 'modernisation' – a paradigm informing most capitalist development design from around the 1950's to around the 1980's, yet which has its primary theoretical foundation in the work of Max Weber (1864-1920). 1949 saw the implementation of the Point Four program – a development program very much in the mould of the Marshall Plan, implemented in post-war Europe by then US president Truman (Melkote & Steeves: 50). Truman described the Third World as "primitive and stagnant" (Dyll, 2009: 8). Central to the modernisation theory was an insistence that association between the first world western country and the third world developing country was beneficial for the developing nation. Western leaders, led by the USA, pledged their support to developing the Third World. Foreign aid came to be seen as the remedy for the undeveloped state of the Third World (McKenna, 1988: 289). The prevailing view on poverty and Third World development was that it was somehow the fault of the inhabitants of the Third World, that, through the prolonging of their traditional ways of life, they had prevented themselves from economically, socially, and politically advancing; they were kept, by their own practices, in a pre-capitalist, traditional state (Kidd, 1982). They were blamed for their own "undevelopment"; they lacked the "civilised mind" required to develop. The discourse of the west defined terms like "development" with (generally, at first,

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[1] Preceding the 'three worlds' typology, states were grouped within ideological constructs, in accordance with their compliance of either democracy or totalitarianism (Heywood, 2002: 29).

unnoticed, uncontested) qualification. Modernisation, or "development" (or indeed industrialisation), was measured by the developing nation's degree of appropriation of western institutions and innovations (McKenna, 1988: 287). The rapid growth of developing nations' economies was measured in terms of that state's Gross National Product (GNP). Modernisation was driven by neo-classical economic theory, and social-Darwinist social theory (Melkote & Steeves, 2001: 75-79). This entailed, in the economic dimension, capital-intensive industrialisation, private ownership and a laissez-faire approach to state involvement; and in the social dimension, the traditional-modern dichotomy was popularised, as well as the focus on *attitudinal qualities* that were conducive to societal change, for example Daniel Lerner's (1958) identification of empathy (*ibid*). Modernisation also prescribed an aspect of discourse – a textual and symbolic web, by which the inhabitants of the Third World, by virtue of their place in the myriad of global political economic power relations, "started imagining their own 'underdevelopment'" (*ibid:* 101).

The relationship between first and third world states at this time was such that, the then-hegemonic modernist view prescribed that development in the Third World follow the same pattern as the countries of the first world – rapid industrialisation; and that attitudinal traits that were favourable to modernisation should be diffused to these poor people (McKenna, 1988: 289). The developmental path of Third World states was "assumed to follow a uni-linear course...from traditionalism to modernisation" (Dyll, 2009: 9). It is evident that modernisation, as a paradigm, is wholly western in conception; that it entails top-down dissemination of ideas and innovations; and that is predisposed to, and increasing of, the ubiquity of, western goods and thus culture. It also reinforces an international development status quo of giving and receiving; it has a negative view of traditional/native cultures; and it's dynamic unfolded with – and also guided by – ideological undertones, as the first world fought for ideological supremacy with the second. These partialities of the modernisation paradigm are referred to as a series of biases, namely, the pro-source bias, the in-the-head-psychological bias, the pro-innovation bias, the pro-persuasion bias, the pro-top-down bias, the pro-mass media bias and the pro-literacy bias (Melkote & Steeves, 2001: 53-59). There were also biases in other dimensions, such as a religious bias. These biases were both reflective and informative of modernisation.

The media in development played a crucial, and particular, role in this paradigm. Communication was seen as an expression, and a reinforcer of development in the Third World. Media and communication was seen as essential for people, and thus states, to modernise to a level where they could participate in the global arena (*ibid:* 103-104). There were four conceptually interrelated approaches to communication for development within this paradigm: the communication effects approach, the mass media and modernisation approach, the diffusion of innovations approach and the social marketing approach. While this space does not permit an individual discussion of each, a few points should be said. The media was said to create a climate of modernisation amongst the traditional population targeted. Psychologically mobile individuals would modernise first, and spread modernisation as others became aware of innovations. Communication models that were popular at this time were fundamentally, one-way linear sequences describing the life-cycle of messages. Models developed by, for instance Harold Lasswell (1948), David Berlo (1960) and Wilbur Schramm (1964), were all distinguished by their linearity in approach to communication. Additionally, they emphasised and reinforced a deemed passive receiver (*ibid:* 105-108). Succinctly, this implies that receivers ('readers') consumed the preferred reading/meaning of the text, that their own cosmologies were "left at home", so to speak; that they agreed, or saw the logic, in the (western) values espoused by the media. So the media in the modernisation paradigm was employed to aid, speed-up and smooth modernisation amongst 'traditional' societies.

By the 1970's, questions were being asked as to why development was not occurring in the Third World. In fact the so-called decade of development – the 1960's – had led to increasing levels of plight for the poor (Melkote & Steeves*:* 61). Small, but wealthy elites emerged because of development transactions. However, the masses continued to live in hardship. The gap between rich and poor increased. Theorists within the modernisation paradigm had previously responded to criticism by developing new models as the theories evolved. But by the 1970's, academics and other actors responded to the western contrived, neo-classical modes of development by bravely asserting that the Third World is kept in a perpetual state of un-development due to the unfair power relations that exist between states that are rich, and states that are poor. They argued that developed countries attain such a status through the exploitation of Third World states, beginning in the colonial era (Dyll, 2009: 22). The roots of this paradigm, importantly, derived from the Third World itself, principally Latin America in the 1970's.

The foremost theories are neo-Marxist critiques of development and modernisation – dependency theory, advocated by, amongst others, Andre Gunder Frank (1969), and world system theory, by Immanuel Wallerstein (1974) (Graaff & Venter, 2001: 77). Frank utilised terms like "metropolis" (core) and "satellite" (periphery) as two necessary bodies in the process of development, two sides of the same coin. More specifically, the core states (wealthier, industrialised countries) actively under-develop the peripheral states through surplus extraction in a global capitalist free market. Occupying favourable positions in the world trade configuration, core states exploit raw materials in peripheral states, purchasing them cheaply, and selling them expensively as manufactured goods (*ibid:* 81-83). The professionals of the core states often managed the more senior positions in multi-national corporations, meaning lower paid jobs were reserved for the native inhabitants, who thus remained relatively unskilled, while the educated professionals lived quite comfortably. In the same vein, dependency formulated a criticism of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP's) which explained the failure of political conditionality (namely the liberalisation of the economy – for instance, the eradication of protectionary tariffs on imported goods and a slash of government subsidies) in a Third World context, and highlighted how such reform allows developed nations to enter the Third World more directly and efficiently and ultimately produce their economic ascendency (Manyozo, 2008: 33). Additionally, local sectors could no longer compete against cheap "global goods", especially without the support of government subsidies and other assistance[2]. Dependency theory described development as freedom from capitalist exploitation and enforced dependence. World system theory is theoretically linked with dependency theory. The world system is divided horizontally between the core, the semi-periphery and the periphery. The core is made up of rich states which have developed and mixed economies. They have high levels of technology, and occupy a central role in global affairs – they are powerful states. Periphery countries are the countries, as elaborated by dependency theory, on the bottom levels of surplus extraction. These economies are dependent on the export of raw materials, which are then imported as manufactured western goods. The text-book example of a peripheral state is also characterised by an authoritarian government. The semi-peripheral state is between the core and periphery insofar as they are exploited by core states, yet are exploitative of peripheral states. They provide a stabilising body in the world system (Graaff & Venter, 2001:88).

The world systems theory advocated other dimensions too. Perhaps its utility over dependency theory stems from the fact that the assembly of three groups of states in a cycle of surplus extraction allows for countries to jump and progress through the order of states on the aforementioned criteria. In a capitalist world system, there are inevitable, cyclical periods of economic expansion and contraction. In periods of contraction, says Wallerstein, peripheral states with strong institutional design can advance their economic standing in the world order. The successful manipulation and extraction of local raw materials does not simply yield progress (*ibid:* 89).

The dependency paradigm (including world system theory) deconstructed the modernisation paradigm in practice, advocating that capitalist societies maintain other societies in a pre-capitalist state, which is in the economic and political interests of the first world. While world system theory avoided the stagnancy of the theory of dependency by proposing that peripheral and semi-peripheral states could progress up the international developmental order of states by the triumph of their internal state institutions in times of capitalist economic upheaval, the paradigm has, like the modernisation paradigm it succeeded, faced popular attack and, ultimately has failed to be dominant any longer. Dependency and (arguably, and to a lesser degree) world systems theory are theoretically passé, and have been replaced/annexed by other Marxist developmental theories, for example, modes of production theory (Graaff & Venter, 2001: 78). By the late 1980's and 1990's, many developing countries were crippled with debt and often war-torn and/or witness to major pestilence. Additionally, this period marked the end of the Cold War and thus global east west polarity. As aforementioned, post-colonial Third World states were of strategic importance to both the capitalist and communist bloc, as both powers attempted to spread their ideological, political influence. Thus, as such idealist writers as Francis Fukuyama (1989) announced the ideological victory of liberal democracy (capitalism), the strategic role of the Third World dissipated. By 1980 though, the Non-Aligned Movement (those countries which considered themselves as neutral during the Cold War) came to voice issues over unequal global media relations and the inequitable role of media in the Third World. This led to the creation of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), which is

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[2] For a real world example of such a structurally affected economic collapse, please see Shantha Bloeman's (2001) article "T-Shirt Travels: The Story of Second Hand Clothes and Third World Debt", which describes, firstly, the success of the imposition of certain "nationalist" measures in Zambia, 1964, by then-president Kenneth Kaunda; and secondly, deals with the effects of economic liberalisation, including the collapse of industry, the drastic increase in debt, a flagging economy and massive social issues.

theoretically linked to dependency theory, because of the imperial and hegemonic values it sees as inherent to the western media.

As of the 1990's, the postmodernist 'participatory development' paradigm has gained much popularity (Manyozo, 2008: 34). This paradigm marks a fundamental shift in development strategy, as it has an ethical stance that places the rural "traditional" person as the knowledgeable source – which is a sharp contrast to the modernisation social-Darwinist inspired conceptions of traditional culture. Indeed the focus is to empower the people, to promote plurality, and to create an organic "pool" of knowledge which is contextual and familiar to the population. William Friedland and Carl Rosberg, Jr. (1964: 2-5) claim that the body of thinking truly African, African Socialism, cannot be seen as a complete "ideology". It is a pragmatic approach of "muddling through" – a contextual approach inherently entailing a great deal of experimentation. It has no great symbolic "prophet" or figurehead, and no concrete discourse. So a strategy of participatory development seems to be more suited to the African context. Participatory means those people for whom such a project is aimed, are influential in creating a development project – they have a say in the construction of knowledge. So knowledge in participatory development is inherently horizontal communication being informative from the bottom-up. It is development meeting the needs prescribed by the grassroots. Communication plays a massive role in this paradigm, because, fundamentally, the paradigm recognises that the failure to bother about power relations and indigenous systems and knowledge, which was reminiscent of top-down dissemination theories, was a major blow to the likelihood of success in previous development paradigms. It should be noted, though, that there is always an element of participation in all paradigms (cf. Schramm, 1979: 9-14; Melkote & Steeves, 2001: 62, 348-352). Communication empowers the indigenous population, and allows for the formulation of an organic knowledge, that is "based on human dignity, and respect for other's culture and diversity" (Manyozo, 2008: 34). It has economic, social, political and cultural implications. The ideal climate for participatory development, according to Cees Hamelink (1994: 284-316), is where there exists a culture of service, of dialogue, of community, and of human rights. The concept of human rights is a cornerstone of development because in cases of abuses of power, states are criticised and condemned on the basis of human rights agreements, that they are signatories of (White, 2004: 22). Also, 'participatory approaches' is somewhat of an umbrella term[3]. There is not the space to discuss all the theories of participatory development (although, specific cases will be discussed further on), so just a few central point's will be mentioned. Participatory development strategies entail grassroots empowerment, which upsets the status quo, and thus is likely to be attacked by powerful elites. There is a belief in the masses, given the opportunity, to develop themselves. Dialogue and face-to-face interaction is essential to the strategy. Development workers, unlike under the guidance of modernisation, respond to received information, rather than dictate information (Servaes, 1996: 75-77). Denis McQuail (1983: 97) asserts that roles of information sender and receiver are interchangeable. Other points of departure from other paradigms are the pro-poor bias, group-action in problem solving, group-analysis of the underlying causes of the surface issues, ecological sustainability, a favourable view of cultural pluralism and identity, and a non-teleological perspective of human development – that is, no linear path of development (Hettne, 1995: 177-186; Servaes, 1996: 80-82).

The above account of historical development paradigms is not an exhaustive view of development and communication, rather an attempt to be a concise, succinct overview of the main points of debate within the paradigms. It is important to note that the theories within the paradigms commonly overlap – indeed, much development takes place across the paradigms.

Inter-Paradigmatic Development

The above paradigms do not materialise in such an overt guise. As stated in the preceding paragraph, it is not correct to assume that the modernisation development occurred before 1970's, dependency around the 1980's and participatory development from the 1990's onwards. Developers (whether private, state or NGO) are not bound by protocol in their strategies. While participatory development is seen as empowering, humanising, relevant, and promoting of "local-level ownership of the development process", it is incredibly difficult to achieve (Nelson *et al*, 2009: 386-387). It is easier for

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[3] Including the theories of Paulo Freire's dialogical pedagogy, and approaches that are articulated within the language of the UNESCO debates (Servaes, 1996: 78).

developers to contract specialists to decide development goals and means to achieve them than it is to create a culture of participation, to decentralise policy making and to forge an institutional design that merely runs participation practices. Additionally, donors want immediate results "as measured by goods and services delivered. [This] drives out attention to institution building and makes it difficult to move beyond a relief and welfare approach to poverty" (Korten, 1980: 486).

Although the early ideas of the big and powerful media were deserted in western society, it continues to "pervade much discourse regarding the nature and role of mass media in developing nations today" (Melkote & Steeves, 2001: 208). World development most commonly occurs through capitalist countries (principally the United States of America) and regimes (like The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank). The personnel involved in initiating development is most commonly produced, trained and educated by a western value-based system. McKenna (1988: 291) offers two related hypotheses for explaining what he calls the persistence of paradigms that are generally regarded as flawed, namely the modernisation paradigm, in development schemes. The first is that the modernisation approach conforms to the popular perceptions of development, as elaborated by "particular development planners" (*ibid*) – that is, a planner's views and ideology is *permeative*, and comes to be hegemonic and prescriptive of the strategy in general. The second addresses the perpetuation of modernisation programmes that are already in place. This occurs, because those that are content with the present set of relations are generally those who are in position that benefits from its maintenance (*ibid*).

Research Methods

How can one come to understand the meanings and significance of representations of those governed by ontologies different from our own? Because culture operates as the device whereby objects of the world become represented to us (intelligible to us through social rule following associations of signifier-signified), different cultures have different conceptions of the world. The world, as it becomes known to us, is inherently governed by culturally specific meaning. For a culture to describe and define another ontologically governed culture in terms of belonging to the former is to commit a methodological error. In *The Idea of a Social Science,* Peter Winch (1958) would liken the only possible role of the social scientist to that of the *apprentice* engineer, because a natural scientist (engineer) understands the constituent rules of the "community" (of scientists), through his adoption of that particular science's prescriptions of phenomena. The *social* scientist, conversely, is merely an observer of expressions of rules – he cannot understand, or even observe, an exogenous culture's rules, only expressions of them. To judge expressions (in behaviour) according to the rules (ontology) of the social scientist is to contrive an erroneous conception of the 'Other' culture. Yet, such nuances are missed, overlooked, or dismissed as subjective, biased data by those researchers occupying the more positivist, empirical domain of science.

This research project occupies the qualitative domain of methods. This paradigm is concerned less with quantifying and presenting a breakdown of results according to their frequency and nature, without elaboration and qualification. The intrusion of elaboration and interpretation is rejected by quantitative methodology advocates as unscientific, explicitly biased and skew. Employing methods from the quantitative paradigm would not be applicable for this project. There are three methods of research employed in this project: the open-ended interview, the structured interview, and photo-elicitation. Each method has its respective advantages and limitations. Although these methods are sometimes very similar and related, a multi methods approach of triangulation allows for different viewpoints of the observed, as well as supplementation and cross-verification of data (Gordon, 1980: 12). In this project, however, different methods are aimed at different research subjects and employed for certain germane ends.

The Open-Ended/Discursive Interview

The open-ended interview is a conversationalist method of interviewing, rather than a strictly yes/no affair, or a predefined interview course. Essentially, this entails the preparing of a set of core questions by the researcher; which are formulated on his/her own terms. The merit of this type of interview is that an answer can quickly lead, or be formed, into a question by the researcher. Thus it is a flexible, open method which is sensitive to new, unforeseen, yet relevant data which may only reveal itself in the interviewing process. The open-ended interview also serves as a cathartic process for the research subject, where the expression of oneself releases internal emotional tension. However, the problem with this approach is that it can be abused by a researcher's own agenda by pushing the interview in a certain, obtrusive way so that it affirms or supports the researchers own beliefs and lends itself more usefully to the researcher's

hypotheses. And a novice interviewer may attempt to impress a respondent with his knowledge of the subject matter under discussion, resulting in the respondent feeling threatened and consequently guarding his comments, eroding the possibility of the uninhibited expression of thoughts and feelings (Gordon, 1980: 20-22).

Open-ended interviews were employed in the extrapolation of data from two of the research subjects: my sister Liz, the economist tasked with work relating to the town of Umzimkhulu in 2008, as well as a Community Liaison Officer, Mini, who works for the town administration. I interviewed Liz to ascertain her views, as a highly qualified economist, on the nature of development in Umzimkhulu and on her dealings with the administrative and planning bureaucracy. She was outspoken about the nature of development during her short specified tenure. Although, as her role was to merely provide economic approval of plans; she was not involved in the more fundamental aspects of planning. Being my sister, she was easily contactable. I was able to interview her by telephone and record this conversation to a .WAV file on the computer, allowing for an interview not obstructed by the time it takes to scribble down data. Employing an open-ended interview seemed to be the most suitable method to gauge knowledge from Liz because of its inherent ability to serve the process of knowledge creation, rather than define its limits within a rigid design. Employing an open-ended interview with Liz; allowed for the greatest wielding of rich data.

Secondly, Mini, who has lived in Umzimkhulu for most of his life and is now employed by the town municipality as a field researcher involved in community liaison. Due to his employment, Mini is one of the luckier members of the community. The first time I met Mini was in 2008. Dressed in a formal khaki Umzimkhulu Municipality uniform, he became the target of some initial contextualising questions of mine, before I knew anything about the town. Quite talkative, he informed me of his need for a "real" office, as the municipality had not granted him one and how most of his administrative work was materialised in his motorcar. Another trait of Mini's was his ambition to help people and his wish to teach his fellow people how to grow their own food. After this initial meeting, Mini was – after some time, predictably – hard to contact, whether by email or phone. Nonetheless, I was able to speak to him again over the phone, although he did not seem to remember who I was and was clearly puzzled or did not see the value of why I wanted to know about the nature of his work. The reason being, to determine the objectives, methods and intensity of his community liaising, as elaborated in Samuel Paul's (1989) article *Poverty Alleviation and Participation* (please see Results).

The Structured Interview

Unlike the almost self-regulating and self-determining properties of the open-ended interview, the structured interview entails a more fixed form in which there are more distinct lines dividing the researcher and the researched. Whereas the open-ended interview construct informal boundaries between the two actors, the structured interview is set of questions which are not "open" in the sense that questions are not elaborative, discursive or meandering but rather point to informational specificity which narrows and confines the answers. The design of the interview is such that it cannot be sensitive to unforeseen information. It is, to an extent, more scientific in that it can be used within a quantitative analysis – that is, a counting of regularities. However, the nod to positivism is retracted when the results are interpreted within a theoretical framework, as is the case in this project. The structured interview also has advantages over its open-ended sibling. Employment of this method allows for greater control over the flow of the interview and answers are more black and white. The interview is also a faster means of extrapolation, allowing for a greater sample of interviews within the same amount of time. Furthermore, the results are less open to interpretive skewing, although this can be a depending variable. In addition to this, because answers are shorter and more contained, less 'sifting' of information needs to be conducted. This kind of interview differs from a questionnaire most essentially in that an interview is exchanged orally, while a questionnaire entails the reading and writing of questions and answers by the respondent (Gordon, 1980: 48, 60).

In order to establish a picture of the needs and dispositions of the town people, I interviewed seven members of the community. Although this is by itself a tiny sample, which cannot possibly speak for the entire human condition, nor does it pretend to, it offers some kind of block by which some views are fore-grounded. The study adopts a process of simple random sampling (Burgess, 1993: 25), entailing the selection of research participants without social or physical discrimination; although language constraints and subject willingness did play a part in the selection. Identifying research subjects was done within the town by merely asking for participation. If they were unwilling, sceptical or disinterested, or unable to speak a certain level of English, they could not be a subject.

Photo-Elicitation/'Specified Generalisation'

In 2008, research I was doing for the Communication, Culture and Media Studies (CCMS) Visual Anthropology module entailed a photo-elicitation involving five members of the Umzimkhulu community. That project explored the role and potential of the visual in postmodern social research, arguing for a release of the visual from a positivist captivity and arguing that a photograph can not only increase the possibilities of empirical research but that it can produce an alternate form of information – a sensually holistic recapitulation of reality (Rose, 2006: 246-248; Harper, 2002: 13). Essentially, a photo-elicitation entails the insertion of a photograph into the research process where it becomes a source of enquiry. Knowledge about the imaging is constructed by the 'researched'. As such, it empowers the (traditionally conceived) 'research subject', allowing him/her to produce knowledge relating to their own representation as ethnography, making this method a highly reflexive form of representation. My original study dispensed five disposable cameras to willing research participants, allowing them a few days to take photographs before collecting the cameras and developing them. The photographs were then returned and the subjects were asked to pick their favourite three, give each a name and to explain to me why they had taken those photographs, how and why they had come to choose their best and why they had named the photographs as they did.

The use of the 2008 photo study in this project is not an attempt of mine to recycle data. Instead of inserting photographic material into the research process, this project will merely use the records to illustrate alternative forms, or channels whereby the needs of the poor/the researched/the inhabitants of Umzimkhulu can be fore-grounded. The study employs the photographs as an example of locally conceived knowledge and is conducted against a backdrop of the limits and the incompleteness of literate data extrapolation. So the methods of photo-elicitation are not used directly in this project, rather the photographs come to act as, what Gillian Rose (2006: 246) refers to, as 'specified generalisation', implying that photographs, instead of subordination to the text, should be read "on their own terms". Within this vein, the photographs give a 'textured' depiction of reality, a holistic account provocative of, for example, sounds and smells – the triggering of synaesthetic and kinaesthetic effects (*ibid:* 248). Photographic material, in particular, has several advantages over oral or literate representations (of reality): including the ability of the photograph to record an accurate slice of reality, the ability to store a large amount of information in a single image, the ability to convey "real flesh and blood" and the ability to inherently involve the viewer in its depiction – the 'hailing' process, or event, of interpellation (*ibid:* 238).

RESULTS

The Nature of Developments

The study found that some very sensible decisions had been taken by the municipality on a number of key issues. Firstly, the CBD is located on the south bank of the Umzimkhulu, a river that periodically floods. Secondly, due to the natural northern boundary and the fact the centre is located on the periphery meaning the wealthiest live near the centre while the poorest live on the outskirts and pay more to travel, the Development Agency was found to have plans to build a new CBD in a more central location on the R56. A large portion of this road has been, or is in the process of being, completely resurfaced, with pavements (previously unseen) and storm water drains.

However, the study also found a few less sensible decisions in the new developments taking place in the town; one new municipal building, which the municipal administration claimed they needed to help them plot the saviour of the town and a brand new (2008) tourism and arts and crafts centre, based on the belief that tourists would flock to this township since the town had been marketed as a destination for tourists visiting: the Mpindi Renaissance Project (an umbrella project including, and probably relying on, the main residence of the Bhaca tribe), the Entsikeni Game Reserve, the Silahli Falls, Isinuka – a Healing Water Spring and an indigenous forest. It became clear during the study that that the identity of the Bhaca tribe was being used as a commodity due to their "historical role in the creation of Umzimkhulu" so that tourists could visit the original dwelling of the tribe in the nineteenth century and think: "Ah, yes, *these* are the descendants of the Bhaca tribe, who were led so fiercely by the great and mighty warrior Madzikane! And look at how close to nature they continue to live, even today. *These* are *true* sons of the African plains!" Thus the Bhaca tribe have been mythically mobilised by the municipality to serve as a source of revenue in the town and the tribe has been constructed as members of the genuine indigenous to appease tourists in their search for authenticity, the *real* "African"

experience. Although there is some potential for tourists in the area it does not guarantee that they will flock to the sprawling town of Umzimkhulu. Liz (interview, 2009) pointed out from her own travelling experience, that a viable means of tourism for a place like Umzimkhulu, which has good arable land, would preferably be educational tourism. A great deal of tourists travel "for a purpose", that could be to learn. If Umzimkhulu could establish a viable community upliftment project (like permaculture – see below) with an educational branch, then it could attract travelling niches, who want to learn about social projects, thus bringing in income.

Another flaw with this new tourism centre was found to be its small arts and crafts market. The market consists of a group of small open air "indigenous" huts, each of which contains one curio shop. The shops are in a different world to that outside the perimeter in that they have neat, well maintained grassy verges and a general placidity in stark contrast to the populous buzzing found outside the fences. The solitude is a bane for those traders trying to earn a living within this formalised space. Not only is this space devoid of direct customers, but it is free of general passers-by, who may – through word of mouth for instance – lead to future potential customers. The municipality argue that it is a tourism node, that it is a place offering foreign tourists a chance to capture a piece of authentic Africa. While this may be true the market does not act as a spur to tourism, merely a capture zone of tourist's money and it will not succeed if there are no tourists.

In addition to the completed developments listed above, the study found that there was an impeding construction of a Thusong Centre and a Traditional Leaders' Chambers. There also appeared to be a large-scale delivery programme of low-cost housing, sewage systems and other basic needs in which case development in Umzimkhulu could also be described as infrastructural.

A Polemic Conception of Needs?

In order to establish whether the development completed so far in Umzimkhulu and that underway has and will be beneficial to the average person on the street, I needed to ascertain the kind of life lived by these people and what development they wanted to see in the town. This data was used to form a set of universal needs that were then compared to the actual developments taking place.

Against my expectations, I found that only some of the respondents actually lived in Umzimkhulu – only three of seven. The other four lived in surrounding villages, travelling into Umzimkhulu to shop, look for work and socialise. For those living in the hinterland, it took between six to thirty minutes to travel into town. Two respondents living in Highlands travelled to town in the back of a van, costing twelve rand (return) for a six minute journey, one respondent walked from Sisulu Town, which took thirty minutes and the three other respondents living in Umzimkhulu walked to town.

Only one respondent was formally employed – the others were involved in informal trading or unemployed and relied on government handouts. Most respondents were found to prefer shopping at stores, rather than street traders, citing reasons of quality and variety. One respondent claimed that street traders were more expensive. Purchasing from street traders was done on the grounds of compassion, a will to support them, or that they, very occasionally, have fresher produce.

Surprisingly, the respondents interviewed had education levels higher than average. Three had a matric, one was doing a course in office administration and the other three had eight to ten years of schooling. One of the respondents (in his early twenties) who did not have a matric said he did not see the point in finishing his last two years because of the perceived lack of opportunities in the region. Passing school would, judging by his experience not be advantageous. Thus the study found that lack of employment opportunities in Umzimkhulu has a negative effect on learners' perceptions of school. Three of the respondents had access to a computer but only two of them knew how to use it.

When asked if the re-zoning of Umzimkhulu into KwaZulu-Natal had been positive, the responses were quite interesting. Six of the seven respondents believed that it had brought positive changes such as an improvement in roads, while the other merely asserted a small improvement in general quality of life. One respondent, who had a job in a school in

Umzimkhulu, said it was slightly better; claiming schools had received more money for equipment. Another respondent asserted that there had been a great improvement recently. One person claimed that there was a minor improvement – there was no Spar before, fewer tarred roads, and no shelters in the taxi rank. Another respondent, however, said things had gotten worse lately, that roads had not been maintained and that the water supply was intermittent. It was interesting to gauge the opinions of these participants as they are the bearers and are directly affected by governmental decisions. The redefining of borders was found to be an event which they had absolutely no power to influence, there were no referendums and it had been a governmental (top-down) decision. However, it is generally considered that the KwaZulu-Natal province has a superior capacity to effect social and economic development. It is towns like Matatiele, who were ceded to the Eastern Cape in the same process of provincial redefinition that will be more likely to suffer, due to the reduced capacity of that government to deliver.

The most beneficial developments, according to the participants, have therefore generally been infrastructural. The tourism node has not benefitted any of these people and it is hard to guess how a new municipal building would benefit them either, save by providing employment for low-paid jobs like cleaners and security guards. The respondents had no hesitation about what kind of things they would like to see materialised/developed in the town. The first respondent felt there should be an increase of facilities, particularly educational (including libraries) and recreational (sporting facilities and other facilities of entertainment). The second respondent felt there should be a centre for career guidance. The third respondent advocated childcare facilities, like crèches. The fourth advocated a sports ground and jobs. The fifth would like to see a public swimming pool, increased general security, and publicly accessible computer facilities. The sixth respondent claimed he would like a community meeting space and entertainment facilities. The seventh respondent would like to see a new, proper community hall, as the current hall was filthy with no proper entrance and a great deal of puddles around the vicinity; as well as a soccer field with goals.

Thus the study found a popular desire for sports facilities, varying educational facilities, places of entertainment, centres for career guidance and networking, security and a community commons. Town aesthetics and community spirit were also considered to be severely lacking. One of the respondents additionally mentioned; "the need for a place to direct complaints. The municipality is not good. We need a community meeting with the Mayor present. The Mayor stays in Sisulu, and the roads and everything is better in Sisulu." This interviewee was clearly frustrated at the inability of the community to communicate with the more senior bodies (namely the local municipality), which were supposed to help them. When asked if he had tried to complain he answered that even if they heard him, they would still do nothing. This depicts an unhealthy relationship of communication between the grassroots and the "agency", whereby there seems to be no channel for individuals to voice their concerns unless approached by the government field workers themselves. And the common view of the municipality/agency was found to be that it is rotten and ineffective and that it is futile trying to fight against the bureaucracy, thereby nullifying any potential grassroots politics.

While the government is delivering on infrastructure, neo-liberal economic development and tourism development, the community would like to see an increase in sports and recreation grounds, education and careers guidance and networking, security, community spaces and aesthetic upliftment. There also appears to be a rupture in the communication process between the authority and the grassroots; which could be improved by a well managed Thusong Centre (a GEAR instrument), housing representatives from specific governments departments to serve as a faciliatory place between government and community. However, historically they have proved to be poorly run offices of state bureaucracy (Liz, interview, 2009).

The Nature of Community Participation and Communication

The development of the poor, as viewed by most donors, cannot be achieved through economic and material appeasement alone. If this *was* the case, donors would have "won convincingly in this game" (Paul, 1989: 100). What is as important is the ascertaining of the needs of the poor, as elaborated by the poor themselves, and the donor's ability to respond to these needs. Furthermore, weak public accountability and unscrupulous management severely cripples the ability of change to be affected from above. Also serving as a stumbling block to development is the aversion of politicians and bureaucrats to mobilise demand at the grassroots, that is, pushing the "public interest" from an elitist position is endangering and contradictory for those who occupy positions of power. The poor, inherently, have a lack of political and organisational power. Giroux (2004: 74) claims that the poor living within (the periphery of) a neoliberal,

capitalist state are depoliticised due to hegemonic vessels, like media and education, (predictably owned and employed by capital) by which capitalism maintains itself. These are depoliticising vessels in that they create a public sphere which is governed by private practices and utopias. Neo-liberalism creates a climate of actualisation through the market. Thus it is self regulatory by coercing the poor that participation in the market can solve their problems. Viewed from this angle, most development initiated from the top cannot grapple with the real needs of the poor without having some implicit self interest. The presence of grassroots organisations can offset these problems, yet the existence of such organisations are difficult to fund and organise (Paul, 1989: 100). Grassroots organisations can only function in favourable circumstances, which are not always found in poverty stricken rural areas.

In areas such as Umzimkhulu, where education is a luxury and finance is an elitist possession, grassroots, bottom-up politics are difficult to achieve. In order for such bodies to exist, there needs to be a, somewhat universal, conception of 'the better life'. If poorness is a collective, ubiquitous way of life that exists without the knowledge and image of prosperity, comfort, and always having food, then politicising economic progression is a somewhat futile activity. This is not to say that the poor are incapable of politics. Without grassroots politics, the only way for the needs of the poor to be explicated, is through the channels provided from above – government channels designed to reveal the needs of (and also appease) the beneficiary of development, the poor. Community participation in developmental planning entails that the beneficiary of proposed development was somehow empowered and influential in the development design, which aims to enhance their well-being in some manner (Paul, 1989: 101).

Community participation occurs at Umzimkhulu through the structural channels provided by the municipality. There is a structurally defined sector dealing with the needs of the poor – a Community Liaison Office. This role acts as the municipal organ supposedly creating dialogue between community and municipality – the 'development agency'. It is the means whereby the community "has a say" in the defining of not only problems but solutions. That such a branch exists is of course a positive development, yet one needs to investigate the intensity of community participation espoused by it. Samuel Paul (1989: 101-102) identifies four general descriptive levels of the intensity of community participation. The most basic is information sharing. This entails the sharing of information with regards to development. The second level is that of consultation, which entails the consulting of the community with regard to key issues (although it does not guarantee the utilisation of the results of consultation). The third level of intensity is that of decision-making. This level of community participation may be said to occur if the community itself plays a deciding role in the course of design and implementation. The fourth, most intense, level of community participation is that of initiating action. This only occurs when the beneficiaries monopolise the development initiative. This is of course the hardest level of participation to achieve, yet also the most empowering.

Mini (interview, 2009), a Community Liaison Officer working for the town, describes the nature of his work as interacting with the community and establishing their condition; as well as (to a lesser extent) informing the community of government work and plans. This takes the form of a somewhat 'interactive' monologue, and in the former case, an interview. His sample and research design is determined by the municipality, in terms of what their own plans are. He is sent into a particular zone with instructions specific to that zone. Although he did not say it explicitly, my view is that he basically gauges opinions and answers, by posing relevant questions designed to extrapolate relevant information relating to that zone. A zone might be defined by its collective lack of access to a nearby communal tap, for example. The nature of his work appears to be not so much a to-and-fro communicatory vessel between zone (community) and municipality, but rather a once-off extrapolation mission for the municipality. Also, his role is not affiliated with external contractors[4]. In terms of the four levels of intensity of community participation in developmental design, as detailed above, the role embodied by Mini seems to produce an intensity between a level of information sharing and that of consultation. His role does entail the relay of information from community to agency (the converse is true of the most basic level of intensity) yet it hardly empowers the community to produce and promote their own solutions. When Mini's role is limited to that of state monologue, though, it could be compared to that of a change agent in the diffusion of innovation approach, that is, he is an agent creating awareness of state (that is, exogenously conceived) innovations (Melkote & Steeves, 2001: 103-104). Furthermore, Mini's role as a 'Community Liaison Officer' can be described as a field worker role (Paul, 1989: 102), operating at the grassroots level. Other instruments of community participation, as defined by Paul (*ibid*), are community committees and user groups. The committee is formed by volunteers among the

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[4] Outsourced economic evaluations groups, for instance, who also collect data.

proposed beneficiaries, that is, community members. User groups generally occur when the number of beneficiaries is a manageable enough number, as would be the case in, for example, a community of farmers. User groups generally rely and thrive on internal leadership. Importantly, where groups are "energised by local leadership, the intensity of community participation is likely to be high" (*ibid*)

Economics

Within the Umzimkhulu development plan, the study finds that there is an implicit bias towards big corporations, privatisation, and a hands-off regard to state interference – this, they see, as the direction which will lead them towards development. The development of primary activities, like agriculture and forestry, similarly takes place within the ideology of neoliberalism. As such there is, to name a few policies, focus on intensive land use, the replacement of natural vegetation, mono-cropping, and laissez-faire approach to privatisation and external investors (Liz, interview, 2009). However, the potential benefits that development within such a framework can bring are questionable. If the market is placed in the hands of capital, it results in the rich, through their greater financial standing, purchasing the more profitable entities. This illustrates the true meaning of 'investment'. External sources may develop certain industries providing, what seems on the surface as, greater economic benefits due to spin-off. However, the external nature of these investments means that the investors extract profits, which may not necessarily be poured back into the economy. In fact the converse is truer. This is indicative of the dependency paradigm, as described earlier, where richer external investors enter the profitable areas within developing regions and capture the economically viable opportunities, preventing the indigenous populations from becoming profitable themselves (save for a tiny elite). The result is a configuration of self-reproducing dependency.

Similarly, when big corporations, like Spar, enter settlements like Umzimkhulu, there is an overall negative drain of locally produced income. While the community is better served, in terms of (westernised) commodities, the town people spend their locally generated incomes on furthering the profits of a multi-national or national corporation which results in a general, perpetual economic drain from the community. The surpluses of market exchange are not captured by the local population and thus the multiplier effects (so crucial and assumed to automatically materialise within neo-liberal economics) do not occur. The appearance of a number of multi-national or national corporations illustrates quite effectively the relationship proclaimed by dependency theory between core and peripheral regions. Umzimkhulu certainly occupies the latter, while the corporations are mechanisms of extraction utilised by the core. The intrusion of the core depletes the incomes and actively under-develops the people of the periphery, thus reproducing and reinforcing dependency.

When asked about any suggestions Liz had during her brief tenure with the town (although her main job was limited to providing a viability study of already conceived development plans), Liz (*ibid*) asserted that the land surrounding Umzimkhulu was extremely fertile with good rainfall. Due to this, she suggested introducing permaculture schemes and worm-farms. 'Farms', which decompose certain kinds of trash as well as almost all off-cuttings of flora and vegetables; that are fed into a trough of composting Australian Red-Wriggler worms to produce an incredibly potent supply of compost of which even one cup can support an incredibly large area. This amazing project, which is both sustainable and environmentally beneficial requires dwellers to convert at least a patch of their gardens to 'farms' to achieve a reliable, constant, varied food supply. As it is not a money making scheme (produce is not meant for sale, merely to live on), it would also loosen the grip of dependency which dominates the people's lives[5]. The large scale materialisation of permaculture schemes would be a bottom up form of development, a case of the poor helping themselves.

What was also quite disturbing and frustrating for Liz was the lack of any medium or long term industrial or agricultural plan (save a neoliberal, laissez-faire attitude of self-correction). Instead, the municipality held the belief that the building of a "strong" retail sector would act as a powerful stimulation of development. While the upliftment of retailing does provide employment (albeit generally quite low-level employment, like cashiers) it cannot be seen as an engine of development. Organically, retailing develops to service (and is the result *of*) certain consumer niches (like the provision

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[5] This is reminiscent of a liberating, grassroots scheme which occurred in India with incredible success. The Indian National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) was a large cooperation of village milk producers, benefitting the poorest of the poor (who could at least own once cow). The poor were given a chance to produce milk, regulate it and sell it to the urban areas, resulting in massive economic benefits for the poorest of the poor (Korten, 1980: 484-494).

of bread). In this sense, retailing comes last and does not serve as an effective impetus to development. Liz (interview, 2009) adds; that retail activity is in this context, also inherently private. The role of the municipality is essentially reduced to that of facilitator/accommodator. The municipality can create a favourable environment to investors, but it cannot guarantee fervour by which investors will invest as this is done on a formula of profit making. Instead of creating an environment conducive to beneficiary self-help, the attitude is to allow foreign investment to capture the market thus perpetuating the poor's role in engaging in informal selling and generally low level jobs. Liz (*ibid*) further asserted that "these policies are consistent with the more macro level orientation of national economic policies", specifically referring to the pre-Zuma government.

Alternative Channels of Communication

When an attempt is made to elucidate the needs of the poor in order to establish an understanding of their lifestyle, it comes to be, essentially, ethnographic; at times even auto-ethnographic work. Although when it comes to be, for the purpose of development planning, the lifestyle of the targeted beneficiary is generally empirically measured in positivist terms. Within this framework, planners/economists/developers can deduce such information as: there are exactly 2.76 elderly people per household or there are exactly 18.32 people per tap. This data then becomes weaved into a generalized, quantified, statistical database from whence development plans are designed (as is discussed in the succeeding section). One of the problems with this is that all the initiatives which may flow from this database rely and expect absolute validity in the results of extrapolation work to be successful. However, rural areas are a difficult field in which to do research and there are many obstacles to elucidating entirely accurate results (let alone logistical considerations), for instance language and cosmological barriers, distrust or hostility towards the authority, the occasional tendency to exaggerate in order to make the household look in like it is in a worse state with the belief that this will have the desired results of faster, greater upliftment and so on. Generally, the agency works within the westernised, exogenous understandings of poverty, so they might fail to capture the holistic texture of poverty as it unfolds and is embodied by the poor.

To counter the shallowness of positivism in this regard, more recent postmodern techniques have explored alternative means of ethnographic work, in an attempt to offset the distortions which result in and accompany the structurally biased positioning of researcher and researched. Unlike the positivist paradigm, this relativist paradigm does not dispute the subjectivity of the research, rather it acknowledges and does not necessarily attempt to conceal the presence of the researcher, and the role he/she plays in the forming of texts, of bodies of knowledge. Such reflexivity has also led to the traditional 'researched' to have an active hand in the production of knowledge about himself and his community. Forms of knowledge are always inherently constructed by the research apparatus that is employed in the making thereof. When innovations are used in the study of groups from a differing social context, the resulting knowledge will be contrived, shaped – by and *in* – the employed technology, and thus in the mould of the researcher's social context. A positivist conception (which has its roots in Enlightenment philosophy and values) produces a positivist body of knowledge. These kinds of considerations should be considered in any study of the poor. While dismissed as intellectualist, relativist, and subjective – considering the hope and importance that is attached to precise formulation of data for development and considering the unpredictability's and alien environments and cosmologies associated with the rural and the poor, these points should be considered. Can the targeted beneficiaries really communicate effectively and fairly in the research process? Are they really adequately served by the channels provided by the agency?

One of the most common instruments employed in this kind of research is that of the photograph and to a lesser extent, the video camera; although, as Douglas Harper (2002: 13) asserts, "there is no reason studies cannot be done with paintings, cartoons, public displays such as graffiti or advertising billboards or virtually any visual image." When one gives to someone living on the social/political/economic fringes the means to make some kind of visual record, it is "empowering for the participants – since they have a creative opportunity to express and explore something as part of a project that is interested in what they have to say" (Gauntlett, 2006: 82). The fact that the technology that can be employed to conduct, for example, visual research has become more accessible due to a decrease in cost favours the possibility of auto ethnographic work, although its cost would, admittedly, still be somewhat prohibitive. However, the employment of auto ethnographic means, like photo-elicitations, and other forms of "indigenous media production…[permits]…a self-conscious expression of political and cultural identity" (MacDougall, 1999: 284).

Yet alternative forms of expression need not even necessarily involve the use of technology. Belinda Kruiper (2002 in Dyll, 2007: 121) who lives on a farm in Blinkwater, for example, claims that in their particular context (involving the Bushmen who are not part of a western educated culture); "the Bushmen [should] draw in the sand to explain how they feel and what they want. They are not stupid or illiterate, they have different ways [of expression] and one is drawing in the sand." The closeness of the Bushmen to the sand, upon which their lives are lived, has also resulted in the sand becoming a channel of communication, one not inferior to the spoken and written language. The point is that alternative channels of communication can result in more accurate descriptive texts, and this alternative media should be explored. The following collection of photos has been presented without the interpretations and elicitations provided by the researched that should be a part of any photo-elicitation study. This is because it is not the aim of this project to provide the auto ethnographic work as a basis of needs, but rather, merely to both provide an example of some materialisations of alternate forms/channels of media/communication and to provide an example of some of the textual, holistic and supplementary understandings provided by more equitable means of research.

Achieving "Fit"

David Korten (1980: 496), who, in his paper *Community Organisation and Rural Development: A learning process approach*, discusses the nature of five successful development projects in India in the latter twentieth century, claims that successful projects "achieved a high degree of *fit* between program design, beneficiary needs, and the capacities of the assisting organisation." So *fit* needed to be achieved between three dimensions: the programme, beneficiary, and organisation. Between beneficiaries and programme, there must be fit of the needs of the beneficiary and the services delivered. Between beneficiary and organisation, there must be fit of the communication of needs and the process of organisational decision making. Between programme and organisation, there must be fit of task requirements and competence of the organisation (*ibid*). If fit is achieved in these dimensions, the project will be more successful.

In Umzimkhulu, the needs of the beneficiaries, as attained by interviews with people in the town, were principally with regards to education, entertainment and sports facilities, security, career guidance and support, and publicly accessible computers. The needs as deemed by the municipality (organisation/development agency), and embodied as 'the programme', are those of big, external shops (corporations), an increase in the extraction of raw materials, and tourism (although the government has also provided a considerable degree of infrastructure – roads, houses, and water). Although the development agency states a commitment to participatory planning, and employs field workers (embodied by Mini), a participant asserted that he had not been approached, that there was no channel to communicate with government, and even if there was, his view of the government's ability to respond effectively, was very pessimistic. One has to question the degree to which the beneficiaries were involved in the decision-making process, and the materialisation of a set of needs. Between programme (development plan) and organisation, there needs to be a fit of task requirements, and the capacity to deliver (competence). In Umzimkhulu, there seems to be more than enough economic capacity to deliver on the goals, and hopefully the development funds will not be squandered.

Conclusion

Although the small sample, which elicited the opinions of people on the ground, cannot claim to be an accurate universal sample, it was surprising to find that most of the participants interviewed listed similar priorities of what they would like to see developed in the town. And while those interviewed were happy with the benefits from advances in infrastructure, they could not see the value of development in tourism (as yet). It should be mentioned though that those interviewed do not know about the intricacies of neo-liberalism and the unfair contest between capital means that they get sidelined in their endeavours to survive through the market (which is the modernisation line walked by the municipality). As such, the neoliberal policies could be said to configure, and henceforth recycle dependency in Umzimkhulu. The inability of the inhabitants of the town to effectively communicate with the agencies means that the participatory development, which is stipulated in the development manifesto, is not materialising. Although the government does have instruments of community participation in the form of field workers, this was found to be a generally basic communication instrument, which entices a moderately low level of intensity of participation. While investigating some of the issues with communication in the town between the grassroots and the 'development agency' the study also explored how else data may be extrapolated from a poor, rural community governed by differing cosmologies. By using visual images that

were constructed by the people of Umzimkhulu themselves, one can begin to expose the feeling of those who bear and are affected by structural policies still employed from above.

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