

Excerpt from

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## **Chapter 6: Organization in the civil domain**

Let us briefly review progress in our enquiry into popular development organization (PDO), and my argument in connection with it. Up to this point we have considered facilitation of PDO by traversing two of the broad areas set out originally as requiring exploration, (or put differently we have looked through two “frames” or windows in order to see what affects facilitation of PDO) viz. conceptions and practices of *governance and accountability*; and *methods of work and participatory learning*. The third area, around *linkages needed to inspire aligned activity by actors beyond a locality and across social chasms*, has been touched on at some points but never examined in any depth, and becomes the prime focus of this chapter.

We examined governance of a membership organization, CORDE, which sought representation of and direction from its development constituency, and saw that social energy was harnessed through the democratic imagery and practice, and the belief in participatory democracy. But we also saw that the formal governance structures were only one part of what shaped the governance process or system, and we saw that this system itself deteriorated over time, perhaps because of an inadequate understanding about what exactly needed to be maintained. In cross-reference with other cases we saw that we need to think differently about organizational governance. This has extra-structural and “unbounded” aspects linked inexorably with the discourse prevailing in the broader society. Different internal and external accountability drivers affect governance sensibilities and create *de facto* governance patterns and dynamics – which sometimes only enter the organization’s semi-consciousness – even though governing boards customarily and correctly hold on to *de jure* responsibility and

power to think for the organization. We need to recognize this interplay of internal and external accountability drivers to understand organizational governance systems. Further it becomes lucidly clear that good *governance* of isolated organizations cannot alone ensure facilitation of PDO; though it might be useful to think about the way that single organization governance informs discourse in the organizational ecology and beyond it. We need to look at other factors in PDO, other catalytic influences. Having momentarily suspended enquiry in this area, we thus turned attention to *methodology*, the methods of work and participatory learning employed by practitioners; our second “window” into PDO.

When considering “methodology”, we looked for the process of cognitive development amongst grassroots actors, and an increased capability for autonomous development organization. We considered in depth the Moraisean methodology used by CORDE, and noted at the conclusion of chapter 4 that “several compelling pointers... suggest that the OW methodology was an exceptionally powerful driver within CORDE and might have contributed more to shape its development and organizational capability than did the formal governance structures”.<sup>149</sup>

The Organization Workshop methodology interests us in its own right, as a social scale method for entrepreneurial literacy – which, moreover, imparted a capability in societal organization to CORDE for a while. It is doubly interesting since it renders visible an alternative social psychology, which illuminates behaviour of social strata, brings potentially new nimbleness to OD and expands our theory of organization. Finally the cognitive theory that underpins the OW, *activity theory*, offers potential for other applications and so a way of “doing development” that may dramatically shift our praxis.

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<sup>149</sup> And since we had become accustomed to looking into organizational governance, we noticed easily how governance of each of the participants enterprises in the OWs reviewed were definitively influenced by the shift in its activity patterns.

## This chapter

Even while we looked through each of these first two windows we started to see outlines of the terrain that we need to traverse in this penultimate chapter, as we climb through the window that casts light on the ways organizations communicate and act in collaboration with others. As phrased in our opening chapter, we now look at *what linkages are needed for popular initiative to inspire aligned activity by actors beyond a locality and across social chasms*. At various points we have touched very fleetingly on these issues, but we now pay more considered attention to them.

How do we take on so vast a topic? We are referring after to all to interactions in a “space” that may only tangentially be affected by the rules systems and self-definition of individual organizations. We are in that space which falls outside the normal boundaries of an organization. In this sense we may think about these linkages and collaborations, and their overall alignments, under the rubric of *unbounded organization*: including interactions across organizational boundaries, explicit and sometimes implicit agreements between organizations (each of differing size playing a different role and with potentially very different reasons for engagement); individuals linking between their “own” organizations; development partnerships, alliances and coalition-building; and involvement by organized segments of society in various forms of “inter-sectoral collaboration”. Unbounded organization may involve parts of the long-established “sectors” of government and business as also actors in the social domain of the family and household, and what David Sogge (2004: 5) refers to as the “civil domain: a social realm or space apart from the state, familial bonds and for-profit firms, in which people associate together voluntarily to produce, promote or contest the character of social, cultural, economic or political rules that concern them”.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Sogge follows the same trajectory as Friedmann (1992: 26-31) in preferring to talk about a *domain* instead of a *sector* and indeed chooses to think of the civil domain in preference to *civil society*. One virtue of this treatment is that we do not slip into thinking of civil society as an undifferentiated or homogenous force. Implicit in the definition provided here by Sogge is a notion, again similar to that of Friedmann, that there are four domains: that of the state, that of the household and family, that of

Given this wide range of potential actors, and the varying circumstances in which they might organize together, what do we choose to look at? And what might we consider to constitute useful detail when we do so?

## 6.1 Selecting “moments” of PDO

Our units of analysis must in the first place address all three conditions of the definition of PDO set out in Chapter One viz. grassroots actors become actively involved in self-organization; efforts of technical support personnel are directed by people’s organizations and grassroots actors; and there comes to be support for and alignment with this process across society. Here we assume the involvement of some “catalyzing” organization, and the implication is that we should examine *what it does*. But to heighten the opportunity for learning it is useful to seek instances where a) there is a great deal of cross-organizational activity – even if only through discourse; b) where people outside the individual organizations involved (and here we include government agencies within the array of bounded organizations) are drawn into the process of learning, so that it acquires a “societal” dimension; and c) new patterns of organization are revealed or suggested, which go beyond an existing “repertoire”.

We defined PDO in such a way that it may be thought of as experience, or as “moments”. This treatment recognizes that while we may hold PDO to be worthy aspiration, in real life it might have a fleeting chronology. (If this book has contented itself with an enquiry into facilitation of PDO, it does this in light of the fuller question and challenge around facilitation of *durable* PDO.) At any rate I tend to think of these moments occurring when collaborative action amongst a range of social actors *brings “the future” sparking to life in their activity* – brings an awareness of how a different activity system might feel; where for a brief moment it is possible to experience how grassroots actors become actively involved in self-organization, harness resources and technical services as they create a work process, and start to have an

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business, and what is here dubbed the “civil domain” but in Friedmann is referred to as the “political community domain”.

influence in the wider society. This scale of organization, this mobilization of social energy, this “infectiousness” of purposeful activity, is surely the dream and inspiration for much micro-development organization and indeed the best of international development co-operation is also beckoned into being by this “future possibility”. Yet we may only momentarily apprehend it, and it is thus fitting to think of PDO moments.

I have selected three “moments” of PDO that I suggest meet all the criteria set out above. These have occurred in different socio-cultural contexts across southern Africa at different times – and lasted for differing durations of time. The first, the People’s Housing Process in South Africa, has gathered pace and strength over more than a decade. The second, Iso Lentuthuko’s Anti-Hunger Campaign, has sputtered and sparked for more than five years. The third, the extended “incident” of the Gantsi Farms – once again featuring CORDE, our “central” case study – lasted perhaps eighteen months but, I will argue, catalyzed the emergence and assertion of a strong civil voice in Botswana. I shall say during the presentation of each case why I suggest PDO occurred and in the course of the analysis consider factors that affected its durability.

It is surely not possible to look at *linkages* in abstract; we need to consider the way they emanate from and are reflective of ongoing developmental process and organizational activity, the “development dynamic” infused by particular methodologies into popular organization. We therefore apply some of the elements of activity theory in a light touch way to analyze these case studies – and in fact this is a “test” of the utility of the theory that we surveyed in Chapter 5.1. We shall see that other insights about *governance* or *methodology* are useful to inform our discussion of *linkages* in this chapter, as are specific concepts introduced by Moraisean practice, such as the special understanding of *enterprise*, the notion of *organizational awareness* and the idea of *capacitation*. We consider at every point whether responses to organizational challenges draw on an activity-imagery of bounded organizations, and whether this might work to the detriment of PDO.

This section of the chapter thus sets out to achieve a lot, in learning about *the nature and quality of linkages* while looking at “the development dynamic” in the chosen moments of PDO. There are formidable challenges in choosing to use no less than three major case studies to allow contrastive inference, and to facilitate this we have adopted an approach that draws on the theoretical insights we have already gained, and which will be discussed below. This provides a means for short presentation yet, hopefully, meaningful insight.

### ***Social mobilization and development advocacy***

Neil McKee has defined **social mobilization** as “the process of bringing together all feasible and practical inter-sectoral allies to raise people’s awareness of and demand for a particular development programme, to assist in the delivery of resources and services and to strengthen community participation for sustainability and self-reliance” (McKee 1992:4). This definition embraces notions of community participation and social marketing, and is entirely consonant with our understanding of development organization. It thus provides a useful launching point for our discussion of the nature and quality of linkages in PDO, and alignment for change across society. Apart from anything else, this definition draws attention to the fact that organizational linkage and alignment for social change is seldom accidental: it is achieved in most cases through painstaking effort. At its core is also the recognition of the need for *development advocacy*: the quest to mobilize social and political commitment for a programme or change process, often using some *activity-imagery* to inspire the attempts at synergy by social actors whose everyday function and mode of operation is not to work in partnership.

We mention this here simply because it provides a way of thinking about *linkages*, and another argot, which is relevant to our purposes.

## 6.2 Assessing PDO linkages, and the development dynamic

*“We turn now to address the nature of change in a living system. Using a way of seeing which foregrounds relationships and the whole, and backed by a certain sensibility and appreciation for the patterns governing social systems, we must enter the actual process of change itself. It is at the coalface that acts of intervention are performed”* Allan Kaplan (2002: 115).

As a means to present the selected case studies briefly and yet make sure not to neglect any meaningful detail, we employ the device referred to earlier: Burke’s dramatic pentad (as discussed in Wertsch 1998: 12 – 17). These help to “set the scene” for the reader, and perhaps it is necessary to say that we should regard the pentadic elements as “tools for interpretation rather than reflections of reality” (ibid: 17), given the differing possible perspectives on each one of them. This is the first strand of our effort to present development organization as *process*.

As a second strand I shall use Moraisian insights and activity theory more broadly as a means of examining the nature of the developmental process, and what I refer to above as the “development dynamic”. *Once we appreciate this we will be better able to understand organizational linkages*.

Given that Burke’s method is designed to enable learning about “mediated action” there are inevitable overlaps with any discussion of “activity”. I have chosen to be succinct within the Burkeian analytic frame, and instead observe detail using elements of activity theory.

After presenting each case through these means, I am well-positioned to reflect on organizational linkages, since we know a little bit about the motives of the various actors, their role in the activity system and the ways they are engaged and influenced.

*An activity optic*

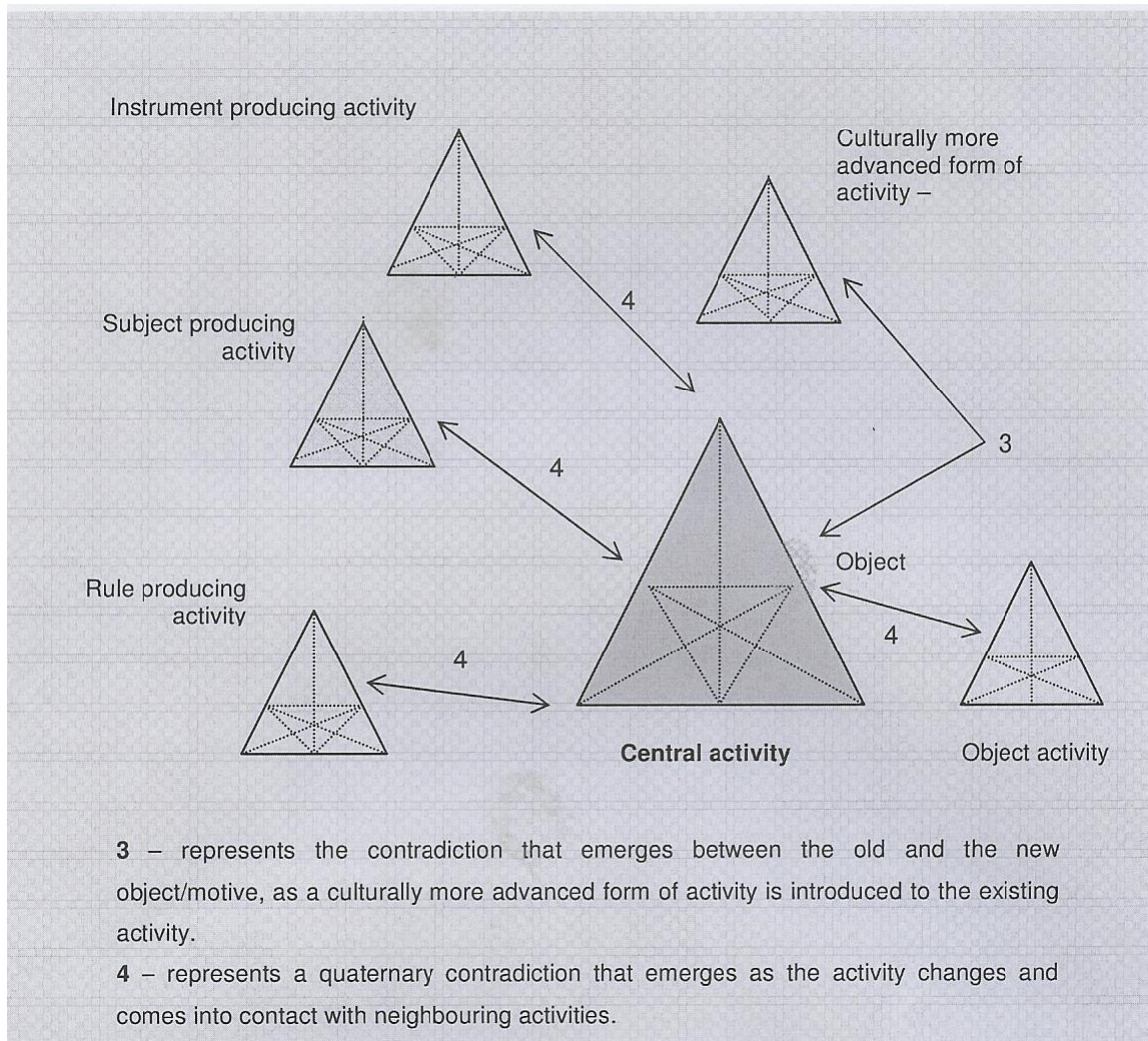
In introducing the activity optic used in these case presentations, we return to the questions asked by Engeström: how do development interventions make visible the contradictions or

limitations of current activity and challenge the actors to find new conceptual tools leading to a redesign of practice. *What is it that the intellect “rubs up against”, where is the sand grain that irritates the oyster to make pearl?* How is the existing activity a springboard to more systematic changes? In Vygotskian jargon, where/what is the scaffolding within the zone of proximal development brought into being by the intervention, which enables a glimpse of further activity shifts? What is it about this activity that nurtures “full systems” understanding rather than reinforcing the “bounded” organizational imagination?

In discussing each intervention/case study below, I shall hold in mind Engeström’s image of a “culturally more advanced form of activity” being introduced, and its “object”/motive linking with the “object” or motive of the existing activity; in essence “bridging” between the existing and future activity systems. This “object” can be a vision/goal, or organizing proposal, or new tool, or following Vygotsky closely, tool-and-result. (See Figure 6, which reproduces figure 5.3 here for ease of reference.)

As the broadest possible descriptor of our focus, we seek to discern *how new forms of purposeful activity emerge or are engendered*. In Engeström’s formulation (1987: 69 – 70) we seek to understand how “societally new activity structures” are produced “out of actions manifesting the inner contradictions of the preceding form of the activity in question”.





**Figure 6. Engeström's representation recalled**

This could be a very complicated exercise, but to simplify it we may consider a) how the existing activity system is “illuminated” and those in it gain broader perspectives (cf. de Morais’ Theory of Organization) b) what new “object” or motive creates the dynamic for change, and c) the extent to which a chosen methodology (i.e. instrument or mediational means) enhances the capacitation process (i.e. engenders holistic learning-skilling – what Engeström calls “activity learning” – of those engaged in this dynamic) towards d) emerging and embedding the new activity (perhaps through one or other of the “neighbouring activities”). We can put this more fully thus:

- *“Illuminating” (socio-cultural and historical frames of reference)*
  - How/whether internal contradictions/tensions within an activity system are made evident;
  - How/whether a “script” or narrative (or any other semiotic corpus) is introduced/evoked that enhances meta-cognition; what is the perspective that helps to construct “reality” and negotiate meaning.
- *“Object”/Motive discovery*
  - How/whether “objects” and motives for activity are discovered or posed;
  - How an organization comes to consider its *macro-management*<sup>151</sup> tasks
- *Mediatory means*
  - How/whether a repertoire of mediating artefacts/processes/signs/knowledge becomes appropriated;
  - How learning conditions are created e.g. whether a collective zone of proximal development is constructed, and what scaffolding is put in place;
- *Emerging/Embedding the new activity system*
  - How/whether new activity is learnt (cf. de Morais’ organizational awareness) and “neighbour activities” emerge around it;
  - How/whether this new activity system copes with the workings of inhibitory power, so that it becomes embedded over time.

Rather than dwell on a greater elucidation of this optic, or way of seeing, I hope its central tenets and overall utility will become evident through the following discussion of PDO “moments”.

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<sup>151</sup> I use the term macro-management, following Fritz Glásl (CDRA Consultants Seminar, Cape Town, March 1993) to refer to the challenges of positioning an organization with respect to its eco-system. This implies looking at the multiple relationships and associations to be formed with other organizations to achieve optimal impact.

*A research note*

We here introduce tools and a conceptual framework for *presentation* of case studies, which amount to a means for *retrospective analysis*. In other words, the interviews with actors in each of these social dramas did not proceed from an introduction of the analytic perspective we now employ, or even refer to it; there has instead been a “retro-fit”. We thus incur a double risk: the investigator “disappears” from the descriptions (as indeed happens in most presentation of case studies) while much more problematically the real life actors might find it difficult to comprehend the terms in which their actions are described. As justification for this unusual treatment we may only offer what has been suggested already: we are looking for ways to present “process” that was sometimes chaotic and certainly not planned or executed in the linear manner implied by most narrative forms; and we seek a means of communication that can best convey the energy that awoke at specific moments and which spurred collaboration. After this lengthy introduction, we now go to the case studies.

### 6.2.1 The People's Housing Process

“In the old days we lived in beautiful rondavels and went to toilet in the bush. Now we live in the bush and shit in beautiful toilets” (South African Homeless People's Federation National Convenor, Patrick Maqebhula Hunsley, commenting on site-and-service “toilet towns” in 1994).<sup>152</sup>

“On Christmas day, I couldn't believe I woke up in my house. If you want to close the door you close it. If you want to open a door, you open it. You are free. It is such a joy. I knew that day that if I were to die tomorrow that at least my children were in a house” (Charlotte Adams, once a landless shackdweller, 2003).<sup>153</sup>

**Scene:** In the 1980s, accelerating through the breakdown of the Apartheid controls on influx, South Africa's urban areas become ever more densely populated. This flow continues into the period of the new Democracy, where a dream of people-centred development and reconstruction influences every public conversation. Unemployed and poor people hang on to the fringes of the city; driven by the poverty of a rural existence and pulled by the imaginary of a city life. “Informal settlement” proliferates: millions improvise from whatever materials are at hand to build shacks, crowded next to each other to form unserviced shantytowns. These harsh living conditions and these crowded spaces see boundless social energy, and even optimism, resultant on victory after long years of struggle against political enslavement.<sup>154</sup>

**Agency:** People's Dialogue on Land and Shelter is started in Cape Town in 1991, and the South African Homeless People's Federation (*uMfelandaWonye WaBantu BaseMjondolo*) is formally launched some years later in 1994.<sup>155</sup> The Federation is an umbrella body of local

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<sup>152</sup> SA Homeless People's Federation Conference on Housing Finance, Johannesburg, June 1994.

<sup>153</sup> Taken from Wilson and Lowery (2003: 12).

<sup>154</sup> I am relieved, to a degree, of my task of providing meticulous footnotes by the reminder that we are here finding tools for interpretation rather than asserting particular reflections of reality. I would however recommend that those interested in South Africa's first decade of democracy read: Pieterse and Meintjies (2004). Our bibliography also provides details of work dealing with housing policy and provision in the new South Africa. See Huchzermeyer (2001); Jenkins (1999); Tomlinson (1998); Bond and Tait (1997); Bond (2000); Lalloo (1999); Swilling (1990).

<sup>155</sup> Information in this case study comes from five principal sources: a series of interviews conducted in April/May 1999; Philisiwe Bulunga's interviews and field notes from the same period; correspondence and interviews with Joel Bolnick the founder of People's Dialogue in 1994 and 1995, a lengthy

savings associations, and enables the homeless to find solutions to their problems. People's Dialogue acts as the Federation's secretariat, fundraising for it, linking it with Government where necessary to lobby for land or access to subsidies, and providing legal and technical support. This is accomplished with a very small core staff.

**Act:** The People's Housing Process ("Homes for the homeless"). Figures since 1994 show the efficacy of this process, more cost-effective than any other method for housing delivery. Moreover each home is partly owners-designed and built, and represents a real asset in that family; it tends by the way that it emerged to become a family home and node of communal interaction.

**Purpose:** People's Dialogue 1991, "to assist poor homeless people". Homeless People's Federation 1994, "to enable poor homeless people to find solutions to their own problems".

**Agency/Mediational means:** Savings schemes: *every member saves some money every day*<sup>156</sup> (even if only one cent).

This achieves an initial outline of this social drama. Now we can use the categories developed earlier in the *activity optic*, drawing on Moraisean insights and activity theory, to look at the development dynamic at play:

*Illumination: frames of reference, perspectives, and new possibilities*

A narrative is present: a "semiotic text", providing a means to think about organization and "activity-imagery". This supports a theory, practice and language of purposeful activity. The

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discussion/interview with Bolnick in October 1999; the cassette tapes distributed quarterly by People's Dialogue to Federation members; and an academic literature that has emerged about the Federation which will be referred to at several points. At the time of writing People's Dialogue was in some difficulty; it must then be stressed that this "moment" of PDO relates to its heyday through the late 1990s.

<sup>156</sup> Huchzermeyer (2001) cites these savings schemes as an important component in the successful community-based housing provision brought about by the alliance of the Homeless People's Federation and People's Dialogue. This is confirmed by Bolnick and other informants.

source is the experiences of millions of other homeless people, learnt about in grassroots visits to India and Cambodia, and other countries. “Break poor communities’ isolation through exchange; [organize] constant activity around this”.<sup>157</sup> Between 1992 and 1994 eight exchange visits were organized with *Mahila Milan* (“Women Together”) a network of women pavement dwellers from India (Wilson and Lowery 2003: 8). By June 1994 the Federation’s network, as shown through attendance at its conference on housing finance, includes partners from Mexico, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the UK, France and India.

Contradictions become evident in the course of organizing, and stimulate innovation from the federation. As an example, when the government subsidy scheme proved impossible to access for poor people<sup>158</sup> the Federation and People’s Dialogue created the Utshani Fund to provide bridging loans.

#### *Motive / “Object”*

With the discovery of a viable “future” activity system (A more culturally advanced activity system, in Engeström’s words), an imaginary of organization that is *both elegant in its simplicity and detailed in the tasks for its execution*, the homeless people’s federation find the “object” to consistently stimulate a development dynamic. Its core strength is creating proactive communities through *mobilizing savings*. The daily activity around maintaining the savings groups, together with horizontal exchanges creates a participatory process that is central to what came to be called “deep democracy”. This a) brings communities together; b) enables them to meet individual and family finance needs; c) is the source of loans for enterprise development or land/housing acquisition; and d) provides an education in household and community financial management.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Joel Bolnick, the founder of People’s dialogue in an interview on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1999. All uncredited quotes in the paragraphs that follow in this section come from this same interview with Bolnick.

<sup>158</sup> Since subsidies were only paid once a house was completed, which meant that those not deemed credit-worthy by the banks were unable to access funds. (Wilson and Lowery 2003: 9).

<sup>159</sup> Bolnick, October 1999; see also [www.dialogue.org.za](http://www.dialogue.org.za)

The object is the new activity system itself, and learning commences about the contradictions within it by experiencing them. At the same time this new activity system creates its own “neighbouring activities” each of which provides motive for further activity e.g. in the realm of culture, the production of cassettes, poetry.

Celebration: “The practitioner helps create *rituals of celebration* at achievements – accessing land, building, savings – and these also help to maximize opportunities”. “The grassroots have to start to believe they have discovered ‘the way’ if they are to be successful in future”.

### *Mediatory means*

The operation of savings schemes requires skills acquisition (each group has three treasurers), rules formation (the scheme makes decisions) and – since there is a “rule” of saving every day – continuing organization and discussion with those unable to raise even one cent. This “creates communities; people manage social relations [at the same time as] finances, and there comes about an extraordinary social accountability”. The savings schemes form the base units of the Homeless People’s Federations. “It is at the level of group process and relationship-building that the building blocks of deep democracy can be found” (Wilson and Lowery 2003:3). The “tools” thus bring results, the results form new motive... “These [schemes] are not political but development instruments... here there is a shift from representative to participatory democracy” (ibid). Each cluster has someone taking loans; savings schemes congregate around flagship schemes at regional level; there are loans between groups; the Utshani Fund, including a “Granary Fund” receives a percentage of all schemes’ savings, and into the Granary also goes any donor funding. “The cold money of aid gets blended with the hot money from members’ savings, gets ‘warmed’ ”.

The intervention by People’s Dialogue organizers is towards the creation of collective zones of proximal development and “the relationship [between technical support staff and homeless] becomes two-way learning”. “Poverty is about the lack of choices; the practitioner merely provides options”. In an appreciation of the nature of whole-system engagement, practitioners are urged

to “stay with it, reinvent yourself, don’t [as is frequently enjoined on NGOs] ‘work yourself out of a job!’ ”

A core challenge is described as “the ability to become a learning organization by *reflecting on action from a whole systems perspective* — i.e. with the needs of the whole in mind, rather than individual interests or positions” (Wilson and Lowery 2003: 11).

### *Emerging/Embedding*

As happens in the case of planning that emerges out of Appreciative Inquiry,<sup>160</sup> we see that it is a “future imaginary” that motivates PDO, but an *activity imaginary* rather than the *results imaginary* that is the customary product of objectives oriented planning.

The new activity system is “tied down” in repeated rituals, in the production of cultural artefacts, in the ongoing learning programmes for staff and grassroots actors; and in the organization of nursery schools.

### *Linkages, networking, societal alignment*

People’s Dialogue (PD) and the Homeless People’s Federation (HPF) have exerted an almost incredible policy influence in the years since South Africa’s attainment of democracy. The first Housing Minister of the democratic Government, Joe Slovo, met with the Federation leaders in 1994, and in 1998 his successor announced changes to government policy with the adoption of the “people’s housing process”. This phrase now appears as a guiding aspiration (new object!) on government documents, and although various scholars have commented on the contradictory nature of South Africa’s housing policy, which attempts to implement a people-centered approach through developer-driven strategies (e.g. Wilson and Lowery 2003, Huchzermeyer 2001, Jenkins 1999, Tomlinson 1998, Bond 2000), this palpable achievement of systematic development advocacy is no small feat. In this ability to bring about an

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<sup>160</sup> See Odell (1998) for a description of activity-based planning through an application of Appreciative Enquiry



alignment of public policy with its own recommendations and everyday practice, the alliance of PD/HPF fulfill the final characteristic we listed for PDO. It is worth considering how this happens.

### *Development advocacy*

Let us rephrase some of the points that have been touched on already. Rather than building an advocacy campaign around a desired (but abstract) arrangement the Federation has here set out merely to communicate its own success in achieving a grassroots-led housing process, and the reasons for its success. “We have proven our partnership model to be more efficient than the old urban services delivery paradigm” (Bolnick quoted in Wilson and Lowery op. cit: 11). A first condition for success of this development advocacy by these grassroots actors is pride in their achievements – from the everyday mobilization of savings to the delivery of thousands of houses – and the self-confidence that derives from this continuing success. A second is undoubtedly “big-picture” clarity enabled by the “horizontal learning” resultant on the exchange visits, and later between different regions in South Africa. A third is the unusual relationship with People’s Dialogue, which we shall discuss presently.

Moyo, in his study of advocacy amongst NGOs in Zimbabwe (1992), defines four major strategies, postures or *stances* adopted: *Entrist strategies* seek to influence policy from within the state machinery in various ways, such as drawing government functionaries into relationships with NGOs in various capacities, or by providing services on behalf of state agencies, and using interactions as occasions for “quiet bargaining” (Moyo 1992: 8). *Complementary strategies* augment state or donor agendas and on the one hand seek to merely provide support where there is little existing capacity (op. cit: 9) and on the other to “work with the stated logic of the idea until its internal tensions become apparent” (Moyo talk in Gaborone, October 1994). *Passive resistance* strategies are evidenced by apparent quiescence

but non-compliance with stated policies, while other alternatives are explored (op. cit: 9-10). *Oppositional* strategies involve criticism in the media, demonstrations and mass protest.

The Homeless People's Federation *stance* fits none of these but is rather a fifth stance, a *demonstration stance*, where a successful experience/approach is presented as viable, at a scale that goes beyond that normally envisaged by "pilot projects",<sup>161</sup> and assertive lobbying for its wider application. (At times of course, particular actions that are undertaken could be classified as resembling one of the other stances suggested by Moyo.) We may point out that in the manner in which this was achieved, the HPF did not follow the "classical" advocacy approaches advanced by institutions such as the U.S.-based Advocacy Institute, which commonly involve formation of pressure groups, mobilization of a broad base of allies, and sometimes formation of a coalition and the use of a variety of "tools" and communications strategies. Indeed at moments the Federation has declined "easy" linkage with potential allies – as at the conference on housing finance in June 1994, when it resisted arguments that it should join the National Housing Forum, together with SANCO.<sup>162</sup> Instead it opted to "develop...strength through experience" (SAHPF/PD 1994: 18) and to eschew alliance with those who did not have the same perspective with regard to "the meaning and practice of people-driven development" (ibid). The stance with regard to government is a nuanced one, based on experience over a period of years: on the one hand the Federation has reacted constructively to all initiatives by the new democratic Government and related to it as citizens claiming rights, but on the other hand – in the words of People's Dialogue – it is wary that "the delivery orientation of the State narrows the space for civil society to operate" and that "in the act of bestowing entitlements, Government cannot help but reinforce bureaucratic control".<sup>163</sup> This tension is managed by increasing the interaction between the Federation's CBO membership and all levels of Government. There is also a continuing and systematic effort to engage government officials

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<sup>161</sup> In 2003 the Federation membership embraced more than 530 000 people, through more than 15 000 active savings schemes, while the Utshani Fund contained around R77m. Source: [www.dialogue.org.za](http://www.dialogue.org.za), accessed on 17vii2003.

<sup>162</sup> "The People Meet the People's Minister" – report of the conference on housing finance, June 17-18, 1994. SAHPF/PD internal document (1994: 17-18).

<sup>163</sup> Bolnick interview, October 1999.

in aspects of Federation work and “ritual”, e.g. inviting local functionaries to cut the ribbon at exhibitions of houses built by the poor. There is also – through People’s Dialogue – meticulous documentation of the process and costs of housing provision in comparison with develop-built housing, and this is consistently made available to Government. This *demonstration stance* in development advocacy is then a continuing process involving thousands of people in their organizations, interacting regularly with all levels of Government and finding multiple ways of pointing out the benefits of people-led development process.

*Constituency and Professionals Organizations Interaction.* The “big-picture” clarity mentioned as a corollary of this stance indubitably derives from the learning processes undergone by the Federation, and here it is pertinent to look at the relationship with People’s Dialogue. We have already mentioned the encouragement of national and international “horizontal learning” and indeed the facilitation of learning is seen as one of the main functions of People’s Dialogue (together with raising funds, assisting interaction with formal institutions, co-ordinating documentation and research and analyzing and distributing information). There are two striking aspects of the PD approach however. The first is intimated already in the previous pages: the organization creates conditions for learning that engage both sets of actors (PD and the Federation) as co-learners; there is certainly a collective zone of proximal development. (And this, as with the Moraisean method, is “object-stimulated” learning and “learning by doing”, starting from the activity around saving, and broadening to managing meetings,<sup>164</sup> planning the acquisition of land and building of houses – or creation of enterprises – in a process that involves each member of every savings scheme.) The second aspect relates to the organization’s governance, management and operating principles. These are unique, and designed to ensure absolute fidelity to the requirements of the Federation, and a minimization of “expert power”.

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<sup>164</sup> Wilson and Lowery provide insights about the empowerment of individuals within the savings groups and the process of trust and confidence building, and in reading about the examples they mention we are reminded that this is indeed “own-powerment”.

As with any professional organization engaged in a job of work, organizational structures develop inexorably, as they become necessary, in People's Dialogue. But here is where there is a break with any pattern in other organization. Every two years or so the alliance "kills structures; [and this] stops an emerging bureaucracy. We create "flimsy structures", just enough to keep things going". All emergent organizational forms are simply discontinued, and the organization starts afresh, guided by discussion within the Federation.

Bolnick refers to a "core group" of passionate and committed individuals from the Federation and People's Dialogue who discuss strategy and are self-selecting, but suggests their collaboration might be thought of as anarchic organization rather than formalized structure. This is in contrast to the Federation proper, which has a classical representative structure where perhaps six savings groups (CBOs) constitute a network with a network committee, which in turn elects members to city or regional federations out of which national leadership emerges. This core group will never seek to take decisions for the Federation, and in fact a principle of People's Dialogue is to support any decision emerging from the Federation despite any reservations about it; the key issue rather becomes the way that it stimulates reflection on action and so due learning process by the federation. (This is akin to the Moraisean principle that "it is better [for strategists] to err with the organization than to force a decision" through the organization.)

Wilson and Lowery (2003 :4) quote Arjun Appadurai's (2001) use of the term *deep democracy* to mean "the effort to reconstitute citizenship" as a way of explaining what is accomplished through the Federation's organization: "He identifies three distinct means for disenfranchised individuals and groups (here, referring to the poor) to build deep democracy: 1. the poor themselves direct their own development initiatives and organizations through active internal debate and the commitment to transparency and inclusion; 2. the poor themselves engage with key actors, notably in the state and local administrations; and 3. individuals and communities achieve solidarity and are empowered through horizontal connections to other individuals and local groups".

In their reflection about what is required of a supporting NGO in enabling “deep democracy” these two researchers also set out five steps (op. cit: 18) which we may appropriate as guidelines for PDO:

1. Create the conditions for change, a safe space that allows the grassroots organization to make the changes;
2. Facilitate horizontal learning so grassroots groups can learn from each other’s experiences, rather than depending on the experts;
3. Let go of outcome, let go of control, and let whatever emerges from the process belong to the participants;
4. Add value by doing only what would be too difficult or time-consuming for the grassroots organization to learn to do; and
5. Learn from practice through reflection on action and *thinking from the whole* (emphasis added).

#### *Note on Governance*

This absolute indifference to creation of representative structures, or maintenance of any form of governing board represents a singular departure from all other organizations studied in the course of the research process leading to this thesis. Yet, as is suggested by Wilson and Lowery’s comments on deep democracy, there is no sense in which the people’s housing process could be described as anything other than fully transparent, with sound stewardship of assets and meticulous procedures by the Federation. People’s Dialogue holds itself fully accountable to the Federation, in much the same way that CORDE set out to hold itself accountable to its members.

This process followed by the PD/HPF alliance can be dubbed “activity-led governance”.

We may recall the second proposition made in Chapter 2, with regard to the PD relationship to the grassroots groups who make up the Federation: *Developmental governance is constituted in the forging of accountability arrangements with multiple stakeholders and the enacting of repeated smaller acts of reflection, communication, learning and adaptation.*

## **6.2.2 Iso-Lentuthuko's Anti Hunger Campaign**

**The Scene:** KwaZulu Natal in the early 1990s is the scene of some of the worst violence to rack South Africa, and is a society marred by cleavages. The political expression of the divides in the province is a conflict between the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the ANC; the former's stranglehold on Bantustan power and assumed guardianship of IsiZulu culture enabled it to forge firm alliance with the traditional authorities during the 1980s, and to align with the Apartheid forces in suppressing some forms of popular organization. In some regions this exacerbated an existing vendetta culture with its roots way back in the migratory labour system. A history of Black African/Indian tension contributes another undercurrent to an increasingly volatile province, where loss of life is a matter of weekly headlines in the run-up to the first democratic elections in 1994. In the development realm, a very small coterie of (mainly white-led) NGOs receive the lion's share of donor funding through the second half of the 1980s and start of the 1990s.<sup>165</sup> By the early years of the 1990s, with the dawning of hope for a democratic dispensation, many of the hundreds of Community Based Organizations (CBOs) have developed an intense antipathy to the NGOs and their dominance of the development arena.

**Agent:** *Iso Lentuthuko*, the KwaZulu Natal CBO Network, is formed out of a "project planning workshop" facilitated by the Community Internship Programme (CIP) of the University of Natal in 1992. The major impulse is to find ways to support the fledgling community based organizations and enterprises across the province. The CIP in time changes

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<sup>165</sup> Sam Moyo in *Evaluation of the Community Internship Programme* of the University of Natal, 1992. Also interview with Doris Sikhosana, October 1992. The story of Umthombo Pride will surely be recounted by another scholar at some point, but stands as symbol of massive inequity in development funding, to the acute embarrassment of the European Union.

its name to the Community Internship and Development Centre (CIDC) with its own board and relative autonomy from the University, and with a principal objective of providing support for Iso Lentuthuko.<sup>166</sup>

**Act:** In 1996 Iso Lentuthuko launches an Anti-Hunger Campaign, a proposed collaboration against hunger involving civil society, business and government agencies. This will involve partnerships in every locality, and at every scale of organization.

**Purpose:** The immediate and stated goal is eradication of hunger. A long mission statement shows that this is seen as a holistic challenge, with 4 “pillars”: social mobilization, food security, primary health care and small business development. I suggest that there is another immanent purpose, a tacit collective self-understanding that may not always find its way into the organization’s documents: to ensure stabilization of communities across the province, to foster peaceful activity and instill a culture of political tolerance especially in the deep rural areas.

**Agency:** The building of organizational structures, within every community, through sub-district and district to regional and finally provincial levels, in order to funnel government and donor resources to community-based organizations.

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<sup>166</sup> Information in the paragraphs that follow is drawn from my own research, since Iso Lentuthuko was identified as a case study in my original research plan from 1993. I have collaborated with co-researchers Sam Moyo, Cindy Futhane and Phili Bulunga in this time, and have periodically conducted focus groups and interviews, and reviewed documents of the network. I enjoyed regular access to leadership of the network and the CIDC until early in 2000, and have depended on interviews over this period with Doris Sikhosana, Jane Ngobese and Patti Joshua. In 1997 I was invited to evaluate the network with Cindy Futhane and focused on the three pilot regions for the Anti Hunger Campaign viz. Midlands, Qophumlando and Senzokuhle, and in 1999 looked at Senzokuhle again as one focus of the study on Government-Civil Society partnerships.

Let us now look at the Anti-Hunger Campaign from an activity theory vantage point.

*“Illuminating”* (the frame of reference; socio-cultural and historical perspective):

CORDE in Botswana is evoked by the CIDC as an inspirational narrative, as is ZERO in Zimbabwe, but these organizations are not understood through their activity i.e. through their work and the methodologies they employ. Instead their experiences are contextualized in light of the immediate challenges of creating a democratically run and community-based organization. The dominant discourse is around grassroots-based governance and intellectual support for community development process.

*“Object”/Motive discovery*

The notion of collaborative action to eradicate hunger – and in so doing combat HIV/AIDS, build enterprises and strengthen rural livelihoods – fires the imagination of a wide range of societal actors. A grassroots constituency responds to the challenge/opportunity and initiates organization; it draws down resources from across society; and the momentum created starts to affect the broader society. Government departments at provincial and national level, companies, NGOs and individuals from all walks of life, all express support and their willingness to get involved. This is the moment that suggests PDO. All three characteristics of PDO are present: CBOs organize on their own behalf; CIDC energies are directed towards the anti-hunger campaign; there is mobilization of the business community to “sign up” to the idea, and the government department of health agrees to align its programmes with it. This is indeed ever-quickenning PDO.

*Mediatory means*

There is no common approach to community-based organization. For several months the dominant activity is construction and maintenance of the network itself. Then, unevenly across the province, some projects emerge. In one “region” of the network – Senzokuhle –



youth organizations mobilize around theatre, and this leads to work in the field of AIDS education; the region wins a prestigious AIDS Pilot Project Award. The department of health provides small amounts of funding for pilot schemes in agriculture and around the Primary School Nutrition Programme. Projects proliferate and after a year 550 projects are listed, mostly vegetable gardens, sewing groups and poultry projects. A small eco-tourism enterprise is established. The activity in this part of the province is advanced as an example of what the network can achieve; a new “motive” for organization.

However *the individual contribution* of the extraordinary social entrepreneur who provides the inspiration and driving energy for most of the new initiatives tends to be downplayed, most of all by the person concerned. As a corollary, there is no systematic documentation of the methodology she employs, the cultural tools that render her work so effective; it is a kind of ineluctable magic. This “region” remains an isolated example of exceptional prowess by the network. Through flow-time a dominant activity remains the maintenance of the network itself.

#### *Emerging/Embedding the new activity system*

As we noted under Motive Discovery, the proposal for an Anti-Hunger Campaign initially attracts the interest and commitment of a broad range of actors. However it also raises suspicion and antagonism from a range of others. And here is the rub. In a fractured politico-social milieu the emerging enterprise becomes a site of contestation. So even as PDO needs to *learn activity* it becomes tremulous, since it can be perilous to act decisively at local level. Indeed the contested terrain and the network’s own structures also now become inhibitions on PDO: Iso Lentuthuko tends to/needs to be vigilant about what kind of interests and enterprises assert themselves, if there is widespread take-up of the idea. Without such vigilance a possible result of such take-up could easily then be destruction of the network itself.

There is a contradiction between the search for new “division of labour”/ways of organizing on the one hand, and on the other hand the rule systems (with associated political power and

patronage). In this context the indeterminacy and vagueness of a developmental methodology has the result that the “fallback mediation” is network structures building rather than popular development activity. We may state the contradiction more simply thus: in order for wide scale organization to occur, there has to be willingness to allow many local partnerships to blossom, and to be self-managing, reaching agreement about their own goals and means of work. However, the implicit theory of change of the network balks at this. Its representative hierarchy aims to amplify grassroots voices and counter violent tendencies, and thus there is explicit need to mediate engagement by particular NGOs and businesses, and certainly to harmonize or counter some political voices. All this means that *the creation of autonomous partnerships is viewed with caution*. The unstated imperative of preventing fiefdoms emerging, or political “capture” of emerging organization means that the network has to keep an overview on and a measure of control of everything that is happening. The structures need to work. Iso Lentuthuko paradoxically becomes an organization that is exceptionally tightly bounded – even though it is formally described as a network – and this constrains the degree to which it can catalyze PDO.

The alternative/future system that drives daily reflection and action and which is “presenced” in discussions has more to do with mediating power imbalances across the province than societal action against hunger (though theoretically these two “objects” are not contradictory). As corollary of the inchoate nature of its development methodology, the discourse around building a democratically structured network starts standing for development organization, and the rhythms of democratic governance come to constitute the principal activity of the network. Just as happened in CORDE at another time.

There is another respect in which strength easily switches to weakness. Iso Lentuthuko’s historical aversion to NGO-style development professionalism means that when activity starts to take off in the anti-hunger campaign, it is loath to employ a huge staff. Instead organizers of regions and district network structures take up the increasing workload. The skills for organizing against violence and for peace, for democracy rather than autocracy, these are only

a part of the skillset for learning development activity. For months the executive committee and the CIDC try to get on top of the many proposals and initiatives from different quarters – and succeed in some instances – but are unable to systematically do so. Energy wanes in potential partners, and some become openly disillusioned.

The language about a campaign against hunger is still used for several years by the CBO network. In April 2000 the notion of an Anti Hunger Campaign indeed spurs formation of a Community Organizations Regional Network (CORN), drawing in CBOs and their support organizations from five southern African countries.

In summary we see here a mobilizing “object”, able to inspire participation across society, but no mediatory means that provides a development dynamic intrinsic to the activity system, and thus no “working imagination” of the societally-new activities and linkages that would eradicate hunger (i.e. no activity-imagery). If the imaginary that mobilizes members of the Homeless People’s Federation concerns everyday savings, here the imaginary of development is around *representation*, and grassroots rights-claims.

### *Linkages, networking, societal alignment*

But let these paragraphs not give the impression of creaky organizational machinery bereft of social energy, or unable to enter collaborative relationships. Network leadership and the staff of CIDC – which supports the network - work long hours every day, on projects and programmes that make a difference to quality of life of CBO members. Iso Lentuthuko mediates power conflicts at several points in the province. It does realize an aim of ensuring the take-up of government programmes. At the time of the 1999 survey of Government–CSO partnership,<sup>167</sup> Iso Lentuthuko is distinctive amongst KwaZulu Natal development organizations in having forged working relationships with government departments, notably the Department of Health, which finds expression at several sites in HIV/AIDS programmes

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<sup>167</sup> Conducted as part of USAID’s research under its Civil Society Support Program, by a team led by Joe Thomas of IGI, Florida.

and primary school nutrition programmes (J.Thomas 1998: 79). It enjoys a range of other partnerships, with private sector and other NGOs, and is able to pull national ministers, and even the country's Deputy President, to address its functions. And it shows remarkable entrepreneurial drive, even in the arenas of high finance. Its efforts to build an endowment see it buying shareholdings in the Women's Investment Portfolio Holdings (WIPHOLD), a new vehicle for women's engagement in mainstream financial markets.

What is most of interest, from the vantage point of Appreciative Inquiry, is the manner in which partnerships are forged. Interviews with all partners immediately cast light on the matter. In every case this is a result of what Moyo calls "interpersonal lobby": a small leadership group in Iso Lentuthuko's executive, and most notably, the CIDC director, interact with individuals in the business and political arenas, and at various levels of Government. Here they are able to speak with confidence about the network, as the vehicle for CBO collaboration. This confidence is born of familiarity with the political process and their "big picture" understanding of national policy stance towards the troubled province, and they are rendered strong in every discussion by the self-evident value of mobilization of a grassroots constituency. At any rate their description of organization, and portrayal of what is needed from Government, feeds the imagination of government functionaries, suggesting opportunity for them to engage with civic associations around concrete projects; the same governmental "culture of delivery" that the Homeless People's Federation observed can constrain civil society (as discussed above) after all requires community partners. The network is able to set itself a task to ensure a "trickle-down" of governmental resources to the CBO membership of Iso Lentuthuko.

The same abilities to engage in one-on-one networking and influence with Government provoke a negative reaction in several NGOs across the province. They carp about the network really depending on three or four people's political clout, and argue that it is no more representative than their own organizations. This may be seen as a logical consequence of the image of a representative organization that is the core of Iso Lentuthuko's discourse around

development: to the extent that it asserts its legitimacy, accountability and overall effectiveness in these terms, it will also encounter a reaction from those who feel judged by the criteria implicitly asserted. But at any rate the attitude of other NGOs over time compounds the “boundedness” of the network: it is able to address certain advocacy “targets”, mostly in Government and to a lesser degree in parts of the private sector, but is unable to forge coalitions drawing in a wide range of development organizations; arguably a key step linking development advocacy to wide-scale social mobilization. The “full-system” appreciation of the network is aligned to and consonant with the political realities of the province, but an alignment of energies for popular development is still elusive.

### *Agency and Structure*

It is certainly not uncommon that a small group of actors within a network or organization plays an enormous role in its programming, or in creating and maintaining relationships with other actors. Informal conversations may point to a kernel of people – or even one person – when looking to reasons for strength or fragility of a development organization. But it is striking how seldom the explanations advanced by development organizations themselves deal with *agency*, in contrast to the common practice of reflecting on *structural reasons* for particular courses of action. Interviews with the CIDC and Iso Lentuthuko leadership evidence this explanation; progress is invariably ascribed to the deliberations of one or other region or “the CBOs” more generally, while those who have shouldered Herculean burdens modestly neglect to dwell too much on their own role. Those who evaluate them in positivist mode fall into the same weakness, and we see evaluation reports that painstakingly record progress against goals, and look carefully at the network structures. On the key activity learning – on *what it is that the development practitioner actually does* – there is silence. It tends to be ignored.

Our own exploration of these moments of PDO could run foul of the same problem, and indeed in talking about *Agents* in our Burkeian introduction or *subjects* in the Engeström

schematic, we have moved comfortably to discuss the agency of organizations to the neglect of the individuals in them. It is then worthwhile to note how individual agency emerges so strongly as a factor in this case study both in enabling PDO at a few sites and in effective advocacy over a period of years. In fact in each of our chosen cases we see a few individuals based in NGOs having a huge effect on the strategy, programme implementation and learning of grassroots actors, including the ways that they forge working relationships with other parts of society.<sup>168</sup>

We have already seen that Moraisean insights about the behaviour of social strata provides a starting point for us to consider the influence of development professionals on popular organization, and that this is helped by Crossley (2002: 171-191), who draws extensively on the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1993) to provide nuance to this starting position. In the course of the final case study we find occasion to make brief comparative comments about the role and power of individual actors in each case.

### **6.2.3 The Gantsi Farms: the RADs vs. the Rich and Powerful**

In this case from Botswana I go into greater depth on issues of context, and document closely the course of organization. I seek by doing this to establish quite precisely what happened at this moment in history, even while recognizing that “social facts” might vary according to who tells the story.

I am interested to do this because I suggest that this “incident” or drama was a turning point for the emergence of modern “civil society” in Botswana. This assertion connects to my central argument about policy process: *I hold that this occurs as an emanation of development activity, and so the skill-sets of advocacy are a lower order of “tools” than the real activity of development.* I would go further, to suggest that development organization

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<sup>168</sup> The “ghost question” about development practitioners (that appears briefly in the discussion around their role in CORDE, and is then ignored) now gives a wintry smile.

always involves the mediation of power. A first requirement for those involved in popular organization is that they are aware of this, and can take a stance with regard to the dominant tides and (in Bourdieu's conception) across various "fields" in society. We shall come back to these assertions towards the end of this chapter, but first consider our final case of PDO. We consider linkages, collaborative efforts and the waking of synergy in the case of the Gantsi Farms and the San people.

We will become engrossed in detail in this case study, as already mentioned, but as with the other cases we start with a brief introduction of the scene, the actors and their motives, and the costumes and swords they wear. Then we go into a more textured discussion of what happened using the same optics as we employed with the previous examples.

**Scene:** At the end of the 1980s the Gantsi District Council in Botswana allocates three farms in remote and arid desert areas to three San (known also as Bushmen, or Basarwa, or in government parlance "remote area dwellers", usually abbreviated to "RADs") communities. These are intended as some measure of compensation for the alienation of the land that the San have historically occupied and from which they had drawn their livelihood (see Silberbauer 1965; Hitchcock and Holm 1985). This land has been turned into private cattle ranches – contributing a major share of Botswana's beef export industry – which causes dramatic constraints to the San access to wildlife and veld products<sup>169</sup>. At the time of the allocation a condition is set that is common to all allocation of state land: the farms will revert to the State (for re-allocation to new farmers) if they are not developed within five years.<sup>170</sup>

The process of modernization has been destructive of San culture, and they exist at the periphery of society, with high rates of alcoholism and joblessness. Most RADs "have become

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<sup>169</sup> By 1989, the 43% of the Gantsi district population who are "remote area dwellers" live in settlements that constitute 1,2% of the land area, and land in these settlements is thus overgrazed and eroded. (Source: *NGO Co-operation in Ghanzi District, September 1989: 4*)

<sup>170</sup> This case draws on minutes of meetings of the Gantsi District Council, a series of interviews with all major protagonists, newspaper archives, the (1991) report by Mbere and Matsvai on the Gantsi NGO Consortium (Gangoco), Alice Mogwe's (1992) report on the situation of the San *Who was (T)here First?*, correspondence from council, and a review of all documents of the Gangoco – to be discussed in these pages - as provided by Thusano Lefatsheng, which held the secretarial role of the consortium.

passive spectators of the development process, dependent on government officers for ideas, organization or inputs” (CORDE 1989: 4). Unable to mobilise the vast sums of money required to sink and equip boreholes and fence the enormous properties, these people in transition from a hunter-gatherer mode of existence are ill equipped to meet the condition set. After three years there is no movement regarding farms development. After discussion on the full council, the Remote Area Dwellers Officer and the District Officer (Development) within the Gantsi District Council invite a small group of NGOs to interact with the San communities, and this happens in August 1989.

**Agents:** Four Botswana NGOs and a parastatal development agency<sup>171</sup> form the Gantsi NGO Consortium (*GANGOCO*) dedicated to assist three communities of *San* people. They interact closely with the *Gantsi District Council*, and more distantly with central government departments. The organising structure adopted by the consortium is a simple one. Each NGO will allocate sufficient staff to contribute in its area of expertise, following plans drawn up by Gangoco in collaboration with the San communities and the District Council. The director of one of the NGOs is appointed as Co-ordinator of the consortium, a staff member from another chairs all meetings, a third organization is responsible for financial management and a fourth provides a secretary in meetings and undertakes all correspondence on behalf of the consortium.

In Act 2 and Act 3 other agents appear: *staff of Gangoco, national government, the media, two syndicates of “progressive farmers”, international governments and development agencies and – for her first-ever appearance in post-Independence Botswana – a newly emergent civil society voice.*

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<sup>171</sup> Co-operation for Research, Development and Education (CORDE), the Forestry Association of Botswana, the Permaculture Trust of Botswana, Thusano Lefatsheng, and the Rural Industries Innovation Centre.



**The Act:** This is a play in three acts.

Act 1: Lines in the Sand: dreaming farm development.

Act 2: “The Gods Descend”: Central Government takes back the farms

Act 3: Pyrrhic Victory: Government is forced to return the land to the San people

**Agency:** In the first phase of the programme, lasting 15 months, the NGOs use techniques akin to those used in the PRA/PPPA<sup>172</sup> methodologies, and techniques emanating from the Training for Transformation school. After this time they propose an Organization Workshop. Throughout the period of engagement in the district there is an informal collaboration with a group of development agencies practicing an integrated process approach.

**Purpose:** All those involved (in Act 1) state their intent to empower the 3 San communities to develop and manage the farms.

We can go straight into the use of the activity theory optic to capture some of what happened.

### **Act 1: Lines in the Sand**

*Illuminating and Contextualising: exposing contradictions and posing new possibilities*

The first year of Gangoco’s existence is spent in intense interaction with the communities. The cultural tools used to enable San to set out their first ideas, and for NGOs to learn something about that imagined future are PRA-type techniques, such as participatory land use planning exercises. Representations of the land area (“Maps”/models, with lines drawn in the sand and design elements shown by twigs or pieces of grass...) focus discussion in each settlement. Peer learning occurs through exchange visits with San from Namibia who have

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<sup>172</sup> Participatory Rural Appraisal is well known within the family of methodologies now known under the rubric of Participatory Learning for Action. People’s Participatory Planning for Action is the name given to the methodology developed by Asian activists following their rejection of rapid planning techniques and the logical framework analysis tool.

organized a development trust, and this way of working excites interest. Over the course of time it is possible to speak frankly about the San's difficult and even precarious relationship to the wider societal system, and constraints experienced within the kinship bands designated "communities" by policy. There is a growing conversation about what each farm could be like.

### *Motive/ "Object"*

The idea of the farms becomes a powerful attractor. Since recognition of indigenous knowledge<sup>173</sup> is implicit to the NGOs' approach a frame of reference is found that kindles further discussion and a growing portion of the San communities start to engage in farm design, interacting with "modern" expert knowledge drawn in by Gangoco. The NGOs undertake examination of viability of various farming systems approaches, following the San directions; as they report back this information contributes to the "future-design". After 14 months there are detailed discussions about what organization will be required, from Gangoco and from the San communities, in order to develop the farms, and where there is a need to draw down support from other agencies including Government. Some groups engage in study of work process on established farms and it is recognized that the crucial success factor for the enterprise will be organization of the San themselves.

### *More cultural tools: mediatory means*

It is agreed to use the OW method for the erection of fences, tanks for borehole water, creation of firebreaks and building: each farm is 10 km by 10 km and the regulations state that in addition to the perimeter fences each must also be internally divided into four "paddocks", in which there are tanks holding water pumped from boreholes. Each party seeks to ensure that the "rolling OW", going over several months, will "capacitate" the workforce and management of the farms. This is discussed as the means of achieving the vision of farm

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<sup>173</sup> See Catherine Odora Hoppers (1999).

development, so the OW becomes a new (and immediate) “object” of organization: preparations commence in the communities and amongst the NGOs.

*Learning from the work: being guided by the new activities*

It is the NGOs who have the steepest learning curve as they learn about what is needed to establish ranches in the remote areas of Botswana. The “central activity system” for farm development – viewed from the perspective of critical path analysis – is *at this stage* agreed to be outside the farms, in the district council, the exact space where “the RADs” have a rather restricted ability to communicate. NGOs divide tasks amongst themselves: they seek clarification of legal requirements for farm development and cost these inputs; undertake research into potential land use, interact with the District Council to access all possible information about underground aquifers, survey soil and plant types. International agencies are approached to fund development of the farms. Test drilling of boreholes is arranged, and an application for funds to equip these boreholes is made to the relevant ministry, which is approved and money voted to it.

In negotiating the tricky politics of the many district council offices and central government line ministries, the NGOs enter an un-publicized alliance with international development agencies, involving an *integrated process approach*. Here the Dutch SNV, a development agency that places professionals in posts on request from Government, undertakes to align each of the individuals in its country programme – each working in a different kind of position, in different ministries, and at district or central government level – to support the emerging plans for farm development in their sphere of influence, perhaps simply by ensuring that procedural wheels do turn. It also speaks with other officials and development agencies with which it has influence, and over time a broader support network is created.

### *The future activity driving the present*

As the communities mobilise, and Gangoco preparations and requests for support start to bear fruit, it becomes evident that the development deadline will be met, and that an historic achievement is imminent: there will be three fenced farms equipped with boreholes and tanks for water storage, and it will be possible to stock them with animals (or encourage inflow of wildlife<sup>174</sup>), nurture the plant life and establish other non-agricultural enterprises.

There is intensive discussion within the communities about modes of organization and management of the farms. It is recognized that a corollary to farm development is organization within the settlements – for otherwise all those associated with them would simply decamp to the new farm land, putting it under pressure from the outset – and this also enters planning. All agree that the greatest risk is collapse of management. Preparations intensify for the OW, which is seen as providing the means for development of each farm as an enterprise with a management cadre, as well as settlement organization.

### **Act 2: The Gods Descend**

In a period of just over two weeks in 1991 there is a dramatic shift in the situation. To tell this story it is sufficient to provide excerpts from a leading newspaper in Botswana, *MMEGI*:

#### **Exhibit 6.1 Extracts from MMEGI Vol.8, #4-13**

*MMEGI*, Vol.8, #4 8-14 Feb. “*Basarwa lose land to big guns*”: 3 farms allocated to RADs in the Gantsi District will be taken back and sold to a syndicate, which includes a senior cabinet minister. Background: the farms were allocated in 1989 and NGOs have been working with Government in facilitating development such as commercial cattle and game ranching, forestry, agro-forestry, other job-creating initiatives.

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<sup>174</sup> The map created by the community of East Hanahai –lines on the sand, with twigs and leaves and carefully broken stems of grass representing different elements – showed that where the boundary encroached on the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, here no fence would be created. Game would wander in; the reserve would flow into the farm space... .

*MMEGI*, Vol.8, #6 22-28 Feb. ***“Farms not lost yet say NGOs”***

*MMEGI*, Vol.8, #7. 1-7 Mar. Editorial: ***“The RADs vs. the rich and powerful”***: There is disquiet in the donor community about the RAD farms... [which may be lost to] a syndicate of farmers composed of some bigwigs in Government. Donor: “It would be sad if the Ministry would go back on its earlier decision of supporting the project...this could well lead to a reassessment of our activities in Botswana...” “We are very interested in helping in Gantsi... the people are living on a knife’s edge... the project held so much promise...”.

*MMEGI*, Vol. 8.#12, 5-11 April 1991. Front Page: ***Tshipinare hits out at Gantsi Councillors***: In the face of an open war of words between the Gantsi District Council and its parent ministry, the future ownership and development of the 3 farms reserved for use by RADs...lies in the balance. Minister Tshipinare...said the council has flouted all rules in the book...failed to follow basic administrative procedures...complicated the problem by inviting the NGOs...asking for funds from outside donors without authority...NGOs adopting politically motivated ideas...Government will not abdicate its responsibility just because of these NGOs...

After the Assistant Minister’s vitriolic speech, the councillors, who had been reduced to timid images of themselves, said they thought the NGOs and other people were well meaning... [Council] would go into closed session to resolve the issue.

*MMEGI* Vol. 8 #13. 12-18 April. Front page: ***NGOs booted out of Gantsi Project!*** The Council Secretary has instructed NGOs to discontinue their involvement while council figures out “where it can appeal for help”. This order means that the NGOs can no longer participate in the development of the farms.

Pages 14-15: Two syndicates are to benefit from the farms, not the RADs. Pelonomi Venson, Permanent Secretary, told members of the diplomatic corps that, “only limited developments can take place with fenced ranches, because there would be no room for long term development, and hence farms would not be used for RADs”. She also said that the Gantsi District Council had “asked the ministry to consider syndicates... these have already been recommended”.

P14: *“They said it’s our farm”*. Interviews with San.

### Act 3: Pyrrhic Victory: civil society joins the cast

#### *Exhibit 6.2 Extract from MMEGI Vol.8, #15*

MMEGI Vol. 8 #15 *“Government backtracks on San Farms”* The farms will remain reserved for RADs by the Gantsi District Council as planned since 1989. This decision was taken at a very high level in Government. Overseas donors were threatening to pull out if Government could not explain fully the reasons for reversing the Gantsi District Council decision of 1989. A special council meeting this week decided the farms will benefit all the RAD community... but who will develop them? ...the consortium of NGOs has been asked to keep out of the district... The Council Meeting ran from morning until early evening... was much more free than in last month’s meeting which had the forbidding presence of a piqued Assistant Minister... MMEGI learns... that “junior officers may have misled their superiors in the Ministry”.

#### *Illuminating: construction of a new narrative*

The weeks and months following the Government “taking back” the farms see a hitherto unknown phenomenon in Botswana: citizen challenge to Government across traditional party lines and rank or station. The newspaper *Mmegi* leads a campaign for the return of the farms, following a powerful editorial entitled *“The RADs versus the Rich and Powerful”*. It also reveals that senior members of Government are part of the syndicates to be awarded the farms. The Botswana Christian Council commissions an assessment of the human rights situation of Basarwa in Gantsi District,<sup>175</sup> which leads to further anger and concern about policies affecting these people. A range of organizations, and notably women’s rights organizations, questions the Government decisions and pledges solidarity with the NGOs and the Basarwa. International aid agencies take firm stances against Government’s edict, an unprecedented event. The international media shows keen interest in this story emerging from a country revered as Africa’s oldest multi-party democracy. President Masire’s co-chairman

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<sup>175</sup> *Who was (t)here first?* by Alice Mogwe, eventually published in 1992.

in the Global Coalition for Africa, Jan Pronk, is reported to have raised the issue in a flying visit to Gaborone (*MMEGI* Vol. 8, #8 1-7 March 1991). After several months the Government goes back on its decision, and returns the farms to the San people! But as the *MMEGI Vol 8 #15* excerpt shows, organization around the farms has been effectively smashed. A tremulous victory by actors in the civil domain does not mean that they have the confidence to restore what was at best emergent organization between communities, NGOs and the district council. Their “bolt is shot”; notwithstanding the important and seminal achievement of asserting civic principles there is no denying that organization “on the ground” has been smashed.

### *The “Object”*

A new “object” has been re-created in society’s mind, rooted in immediate post-Independence imagery: the idea of a clean government; “government of the people for the people”. And a new motive is created in many development activists’ that now starts to affect the wider societal discourse: a strong independent civil voice.

I suggest that the Gantsi Farms drama crystallised awareness of the importance of *civil voice* and *civil regulation*, though the language of the time referred to “NGOs” and “NGO influence”.<sup>176</sup>

After 25 years of hegemonic influence in the ordering of society, Government found itself dealing with the reality of a strong, active and confident civil society.

Powerfully shaping the notion that independent citizen voice was possible was the fact of women’s organizations mounting legal challenges to the gender-biased provisions of certain acts. This unprecedented action attracted attention across the country and across all rungs of society. Then within months of the Gangoco blow-up, residents of Maun working with a local NGO rejected Government’s proposals to dredge the Okavango.<sup>177</sup> The independent media

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<sup>176</sup> Within a little while, as alluded to briefly in the opening chapter of this thesis, Botswana academics came to refer to civil society, in common with development agencies in most parts of the world.

<sup>177</sup> See Alan Thomas, Onalenna Selolwane and David Humphreys (2000).

reported this with zest, and in the months thereafter took to its investigations with increased zeal in the afterglow of its successful intervention around the Gantsi Farms, and its coverage of the Maun incident. Its investigation of the Botswana Housing Corporation revealed scandalous mismanagement and corruption in 1992, and it was also instrumental in the revelations around the National Development Bank later that year. Exposures of corruption saw two Ministers being forced to resign (including the assistant Minister mentioned above), while the Permanent Secretary who had been the instrument in the lashing administered to the NGOs was asked to leave her position.

Several of the NGO activists associated with the Gantsi issue were part of a group that formed Ditshwanelo, the Botswana Organization for Human Rights, itself given impetus by Mogwe's (1992) report on the San. Later another organization of San people emerged in the Gantsi region, The First People of the Kalahari, which was to become a powerful pressure group in the years ahead.

*And the "old" object, and the agents pursuing it?*

The object of "the Farms" had been destroyed in this period, with the consortium rendered a spent force.<sup>178</sup> Indeed, no work was done in Gantsi district by any NGO in the consortium from the second week of February in 1991; all efforts focused on seeking audience with key decision-makers in government.<sup>179</sup> The damage to individual NGOs made some of them averse to continuing any collaboration, while the personnel of others found it prudent to concentrate on other tasks.<sup>180</sup>

Within a short while Gangoco was forced to disband by the tensions around the issue, while CORDE as its co-ordinator became a lightning rod for Government wrath at the

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<sup>178</sup> As of the time of writing, in 2004, there has been no development of the farms.

<sup>179</sup> Francis Johnstone interview, 12 March 1995.

<sup>180</sup> RIIC pulled out of Gangoco immediately, and the Permaculture Trust accepted a council invitation to set up a project in one of the settlements with the proviso that it worked alone and not with the consortium.



unprecedented degree of public criticism and opposition.<sup>181</sup> There was a systematic attack on CORDE and its leadership, which lasted for many months.<sup>182</sup> A many-pronged collaboration with the parastatal that had participated in the consortium and which had been central to several other organising initiatives was frozen. A process towards employee share ownership purchase of a factory with a concomitant move towards self-management led by CORDE was cancelled by the parastatal, which was the majority shareholder, and P38 000 already paid for equity was returned.<sup>183</sup> The Southern district council intervened to take control of a CORDE-organised community based wildlife management project at Mabutsane, while discussion around partnership for another natural resource management project in the northern Kgalagadi involving Government and CORDE was abruptly terminated. In a salt-works project at Zutshwa the cordial relationship with government agencies and the parastatal evaporated overnight, and it was to be two years before these actors re-engaged with the project. Government departments started to withhold co-operation at all levels and the simplest administrative interactions became tedious and difficult.<sup>184</sup> Representatives of government who had served on the CORDE Consultative Committee failed to arrive for meetings, or formally tendered their resignations; the efforts of CORDE to revive the committee at this point, as mentioned in Chapter 2, were thus doomed to failure. Personal smears of CORDE's leadership in various social circles, combined with subtle threats, served to create a climate of fear within the organization.<sup>185</sup>

But let this detailing of the effects on one organization not render invisible the issue that provoked this intense attention. At the time a shift of gaze to the national and metaphysical space – and the corresponding shift in activity – was a major part of the reason why the San

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<sup>181</sup> See Mbere and Matsvai: *An Evaluation of the Gantsi NGO Consortium*, October 1991

<sup>182</sup> See CORDE Strategic Planning document 1994-1998: 10

<sup>183</sup> Letter from MD of RIPCO August 12 1991 evidences the final breakdown of this relationship. This came after two years of effective co-operation, increased profitability and the expansion of the factory infrastructure – documented in the annual report of Makwati (Pty) Ltd 1991.

<sup>184</sup> Interview S.G.Sekate November 1993. Also CORDE Strategic Planning Document 1994-1998 page 10: review of the first seven years

<sup>185</sup> Interviews in November 1993 with D.D.Makwati, S.G.Sekate, G.Lesiela, D. Madigela. Reflection notes by M.Bruijn and interview in September 1999. Personal notes.

people were ultimately let down by those who had undertaken to help them. We should not now repeat the same mistake, so rather than restricting our analysis to the emergence of civil voice and a “civil regulation” of public affairs we consider other factors that contributed to the failure to develop viable farms of the San communities.

*Learning Activity: reflecting on failure*

The focus for reflection has less to do about an ethical judgement of the NGOs for failing their “development constituency” and more about where their intervention could have been better designed.

In the first place, it becomes clear that there was a complete misapprehension about who was involved in decisions and actions around the farms: this was initially taken to be the communities near the farms, then the district council in its interaction with the “RADs”. As it turned out a broader activity system incorporating the national Government was to determine the long-term fate of the intervention. This point speaks to our earlier arguments about the ways that organization is instinctively bounded or confined to particular enterprise or community boundaries. It suggests that *engaging with the microcosm still requires an awareness of the macrocosm, and activity to mediate its effects as necessary*. Put another way, development praxis requires an unbounded gaze and awareness, and activity across the unbounded realm, and after that the attention to particularity of the intervention that is normally seen as the “space” of micro-development. This is the essence of a radical localism, a way of working that it is mindful that the values expressed through purposeful action in any locality affect a network of activity systems across various “scales” of engagement.

This intervention failed to change power relations between San communities and the local government because there was no change in their respective quotidian activity, and no change in the ways that they interacted around it. The division of labour between NGO and San activists meant that NGOs “learned activity” in their engagement with Council, while the San “learned activity” in their discussions in the settlements. Greater attention to the “fine-tuning”

of the division of labour might have led to capacitation of individual San to interact with their local power system (instead of relying on this happening in the course of the OW).

The instinctive “time-linear” planning implemented by the consortium assumed that each step would be achieved in due course, so that a holistic development process would be achieved by the end of the plan period. (This faith in the critical path set out in the plan derives doubtless from the same weakness mentioned as our first point: power relations were analyzed within the “activity system” represented by local and district spaces; there was no appreciation that another layer of powerful people could sweep aside all decisions made here.) As a result when activity was suspended through the ban on the NGOs, there was not any “development dynamic” *within the community*; no process pulling actors into a future reality.

#### *Linkages, networking, societal alignment*

Although rules, instruments and societal roles are placed at different corners of Engeström’s activity triangle, it is of course their inter-relationship that is of most interest. Here we may first consider the way that mental constructs (instruments, cultural tools) provide the means and justification for a particular interpretation of rules; exemplified by the ways in which an ideology of superiority mediated consideration of issues around the San. Second we should consider how Government made a particular assertion about NGOs’ proper role and “place” (i.e. a normative assertion about the division of labour in society) so forcefully that this was portrayed as a reading of law. These points demonstrate that the activity triangle is useful only with an appreciation that there is invariably contestation about ideas and concepts within an activity system. But from this also flows an assertion made in other ways through this chapter, about societal learning: since all knowledge is relational<sup>186</sup> then the praxis of development advocacy is nothing other than a search for a *common frame of reference*. This “consensually validated perspective”<sup>187</sup> enables the continuing negotiation of meaning. I suggest that the

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<sup>186</sup> Holzner and Marx (1979: 107) work easily with insights first associated with Vygotsky to speak about collective construction of “frames of reference” with which individuals make sense of the world.

<sup>187</sup> Alejandro Litovsky (2004: 11).

emergence of what we have come to term “civil society” can be seen as the interaction of the efforts of different citizen groups to create a common frame of reference. (I make this point now merely to maintain a cognitive interest in the linked topics of civil society and societal learning while we move to conclude the discussion of the Gantsi Farms drama.)

As remarked already the agreement to form a consortium was an unusual innovation. It brought to bear a range of competences and technical skills that would otherwise not be available to the San communities. This collaboration had a distinctive characteristic however: it was forged amongst *development practitioners* working for each of the member organizations and merely ratified later by the organizations’ respective governance structures. In fact only in three cases were the executive directors of the organizations abreast of all arrangements. This had an immediately positive effect in that there were minimal bureaucratic delays in agreeing work plans and assigning tasks; the loose division of labour agreed upon meant that the consortium did not have to spend much time in meetings but instead was able to immerse itself in work. However there was a longer-term weakness: once the consortium came under attack, there was immediate disavowal of its activities by the hierarchy of some of the member organizations, causing its collapse.

The sudden collapse also evidences the precarious status of individual practitioners in any situation where political power plays occur. In the example of People’s Dialogue, a strong constituency base “shields” practitioners and in the Iso Lentuthuko case we see how a grouping of practitioners aligns with a national political stance with respect to provincial dynamics and becomes seen as a trusted intermediary. In the case of the Gantsi Farms there is not yet a strong base for the consortium in organization of the San communities, while the individuals in the NGOs do not have strong “own” support bases in the wider society. Any move to end collaboration by one of the consortium members in this circumstance is liable to collapse the entire consortium; individual practitioners in it are exposed and unable to continue alone in the face of state attack.

### *Linkages within “civil society”*

We have already mentioned the response of actors of the civil domain to this incident, and we might discuss this a little further before considering Government behaviour. I suggest that the unprecedented response of what we have called “civil society”, newly aware of itself at this moment, indicates operation of a principle of *ethical alignment* that determines the direction of unbounded organization in which there is no other explicit agreement or tie between organizations.

Consider the situation. After the attack by Government, Gangoco was essentially a spent force, unable to agree on an effective response and with no collective voice. It was certainly unable to stimulate or co-ordinate any of the activities that led to the restoration of the farms to the San, or the exposes that led to the ministerial resignations. Those involved in the consortium were in no position to suggest organising strategies to the many organizations that took up the issue. There was no co-ordinating body for NGOs in the country. Instead, a hitherto silent set of actors found voice and power in spontaneously addressing this issue, and have maintained a critical stance ever since. What caused this to happen? Why is it that this issue catalysed such dramatic action?

There may well be different explanations put forward. I surmise that this action is the consequence of years of work, in which the organizations involved in the consortium were prominent, in building the development sector in Botswana. In the course of this process there was much discussion about why development organization was needed. There was articulation of the bias towards the poor, and assertion of the need to build institutions of the marginalized. The values of development organization within a constitutional framework of human rights were clearly set forward. Leadership development training conducted by CORDE meant that many NGO leaders had pondered on the attitudes and skills needed for community work. The establishment of MMEGI by Patrick van Rensburg and Methaetsile Leepile brought in its early years a distinct brand of “development journalism”, which

ensured that the discourse around development spread easily throughout society (which is after all, rather small in number). It might be suggested that in essence the organizations of the consortium stood for certain positions and values that had become widely accepted in the sector. NGDOs were *in alignment with Gangoco*, and *implicitly supportive* of the San people, and thus prepared to take up the battle when the attack was made. (On a personal level this is perhaps akin to disbelieving gossip about a friend whose moral probity one is confident of.) Of course the issues around the farms were so stark and dramatic that they made it easier for hitherto timid organizations to voluntarily take a position and adhere to it.

Another way of understanding events would be to say that Gangoco involuntarily took up an advocacy campaign with the object of mobilising public opinion around human rights and the Basarwa. Following Moyo's schema which suggests that the most essential aspect of any advocacy effort is to determine the overall *stance*, it could be said that the implicit stance taken by Gangoco was the *complementary strategy*. This means that by working within the logic of the framework adhered to, in this case by Government (democracy, implying freedom of organization and association, and human rights for all including the weak), the consortium unwittingly pushed it to new limits, exposing in organising reality the logic of the idea and the differences between what is espoused and what is actually done. This then provides the energy for change involving many layers of organization, provided there has been adequate communication of the process at each stage. This mode of analysis is not inconsistent with the principle of *alignment* across society that is being suggested.

If it is true that a value-based alignment significantly affects unbounded organization, to the extent where there can be spontaneous support for a social project, then there are staggering implications for organization in the civil domain. Provided communication strategies allow the meaning and precepts of development work to be understood, it may be possible to contemplate a future where there is organization on a scale hitherto unheard of in the field of social development. However there is also a more sombre lesson around the weakness of NGOs as continuing vehicle for or catalysts of PDO; we could argue that accountability to

constituency may ensure individual organization vibrancy, but is inadequate to sustain societal activity-consensus. While the popular development energy would want to shift patterns of interaction (and thus power ultimately), this is not adequate to win over those who are threatened by it, or to shift them.

### *Slanting the rules*

Two “justifications” are employed by Government for its treatment of the consortium and the San, but each depends on a single stance; that of being responsible for the well-being of the San people. This notion far eclipses any “normal” attitude about a Government knowing better than the people. Here we see an ideology of superiority at work, a distinct assumption that the San as a category of people are inferior to Batswana and other ethnic groups. The first manifestation is to be seen in the remarks of the Permanent Secretary; the confident stance of the planner for other people, the curator of their future. These remarks could not be made when speaking of another social group than the San. The second is in the order to the consortium members not to work with the “RADs”. This is unheard of in a democratic country but the implied “twist” to the rules is that Government can do this because it has to play out its other role of protector of the weak (inferior).

### *Curtain closes*

We have argued that “civil society” found its identity and voice at this moment. It must be repeated that while as an immediate effect civil society becomes assertive in the deontological space, the NGOs involved are given a drubbing. So we see an apparent paradox: celebration despite defeat. There is a good feeling across the Botswana civil society; indeed it has risen into view for the first time in the post-colonial period, to voice some of the most deeply held values and convictions of a people. Later that year it does so again, around the matter of dredging the Okavango, and civil society confidence and vitality is enhanced. But here is the problem. The Okavango victory is indeed a “flow-time” victory, because Government would have its work cut out to actually rekindle a proposal to dredge; the immediate victory thus

consolidates a beneficial status quo. In the case of the Gantsi farms, the “victory” that was attained in forcing the return of the farms amounts to reverting to the status quo before the consortium – and this ensures that in flow-time there will be no San farms.

Once the consortium is broken there is no operational vehicle for the vision, and indeed since societal vision is only sustained in activity, it dies away immediately. Popular creativity is blunted cruelly. The “working possibility” of PDO dies immediately one NGO accepts the proposal of council to break with the consortium and work on a project basis in one, and (maybe) “if things go well” two or three, settlements<sup>188</sup>. Perhaps it dies before that: once the centre of gravity of the policy discussion is displaced (Wertheimer and Lewin’s “*Umcentrierung*” in practice) so that the issue becomes the NGOs’ right to be in the district, then imagination of a more empowered and creative future for the San across the Kgalagadi and specifically in Gantsi is definitively stilled. No more future possibilities (“*futuribili*”) that see the OW methodology being adapted in a fencing program of the San people, and a leap in entrepreneurial literacy that would see them move to parity with other farmers and government officials using modern organizational skills. No more possibility of new activity learning.

### *The Integrated Process Approach*

There is one last factor that we have mentioned briefly but not considered fully, which also has to be factored into an assessment of the consortium’s initial progress, and *the continuation of mobilization of societal opinion even once the consortium had been rendered ineffectual*. For as we outlined above, the consortium collapsed within a very short time, while the gathering volume of the civil voice that finally caused Government to “do the unthinkable” and go back on its earlier decision, took a period of some ten weeks.

Earlier we briefly touched on the *integrated process approach* (hereafter IPA) adopted by the SNV in support of the consortium, and in this regard recorded how different kinds of

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<sup>188</sup> Permaculture Trust representative In Gangoco meeting, on 11 March 1991.



expatriate government officials – appointments made as part of the system of development aid – collaborated in a variety of small ways to facilitate the functioning of the bureaucratic machinery. This was not so much an effort to “bias” its workings in favour of the marginalized and dispossessed San people, since the Gantsi Council had already voted in favour of the farms allocation, but rather more an effort to make sure that the decision was not rendered worthless by slow decision-making or incompetence (or individual bias) of officials. For this reason the IPA was mentioned explicitly in SNV work plans, and in other parts of the country SNV officers were similarly focusing on other local efforts to “make development work” and recruiting their peers to this approach as and when the situation enabled it. This “interest in action” by bureaucrats is self evidently a singular advantage for any local level process. However a corollary of this “benign tilting” of the state machinery was that once the national Government pronounced itself AGAINST that which had been facilitated, then this network of sympathetic actors was immediately reduced to an “opposition within” Government. The assistant Minister in attacking Gantsi councillors merely had to mention two or three instances where officials carried out their work according to their job description – as evidence of a “conspiracy in favour of the RADs” – to portray the whole process as being highly suspect, and equivalent to a foreign determination of development policy.

With this governmental portrayal of the IPA in a negative light there are two likely consequences for those who had collaborated within the process. A sensible course of action is surely to lie low and seek to show that there is no malfeasance or witting involvement in the “crime” of making development work. Another possibility is indeed to become a *de facto* “opposition” working for PDO... Interviews after the event showed all those concerned to be rather reticent to discuss the issue at all. As Michiel Bruijn, Botswana director of SNV at the time of the drama commented some years later in response to e-mail questions about the IPA:

“In some ways [your effort to understand the IPA] may provide a good example of complicated obstacles in development processes, useful strategies and the importance of close co-operation, information exchange, etc. But if the effort is meant to get closer to the IPA, you will probably face a

major problem in writing down the things because there was so much (necessary) secrecy involved. Just one small example: One important thing for the Government of Botswana was that the Botswana High Commissioner (HC) was taken to task in Ottawa about the affair. The Canadian HC in Harare (also responsible for Botswana) was bypassed in the whole thing because he didn't feel like rocking boats in Ottawa. So a (very much junior) functionary in Gaborone risked her neck and went straight to Ottawa about this. How could she do this, and why did she? The whole Ghanzi affair is full of such sensitive pieces of information and much of it, of course, concerns people still living and working in Botswana".<sup>189</sup>

The example provided here by Bruijn demonstrates how inventive the network of actors could be, and it becomes easier to understand the lobby of Jan Pronk alluded to earlier, and the donor agencies' unified stand reported in MMEGI. We see here Moyo's *entrist* and *complementary* advocacy stances being played out perfectly, and in a continuation of the correspondence Bruijn points out the need to forge an overall frame of reference, akin to the "illuminating" element in the activity optic used earlier:

"....and the story would almost of necessity also be incomplete in that other events (not directly related to "Ghanzi") played a very important role in the decision of many to stand firm, or become more active, in the case of Ghanzi. e.g. the affair of the waterhole at Kacgae, the new fencing policy proposed by GOB, the de facto discontinuation of taxes on cattle ownership, the discussion on the widening gap between rich and poor etc. It is not that these things just happened to take place around the same time .....a small, but nevertheless important part of the whole story, is that the dissemination of information on these developments/events was consciously geared to building a well co-operating [network]".

One aspect of the *integrated process approach* then is that some "development entrepreneur" takes responsibility for maintaining a holistic awareness of the situation, across a network of actors loosely allied only in their commitment to contribute to development, but working across different agencies and with differing responsibilities. This provides pointers to

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<sup>189</sup> Michiel Bruijn, personal e-mail communication with the author, November 1999. All quotes around the IPA that follow are drawn from this correspondence.

practitioners interested to build similar development “communities of practice”,<sup>190</sup> and it is interesting to set out other aspects of the IPA as gleaned from the correspondence and interviews.

IPA is essentially about “how to help things to get done” by those with only limited amounts of authority or influence. What action is taken depends on individual positioning, and is guided by the overall perspective of challenge. As Bruijn put it,

“the essence of the IPA as I view it, is in ‘your’ unbounded territories, and thus hard to ‘catch’ in ‘organized terms’. Open ended socio-economic processes are very difficult to properly describe or usefully theorize about... the word ‘organization’ may refer to an institution in which people work together, or to e.g. the structure of a text or paper. But as soon as the word ‘organization’ comes in, things like multiple (inter) relations, changing environment or processes of change (the very essence of development thinking!) become unmanageable concepts. If we speak of the ‘Integrated Process Approach’ we may emphasize the two aspects of that approach which were at the same time crucial to the approach and incompatible with ‘organization’: the myriad of (cross) links, and the constantly changing environment”.

But it is in this recognition of the difference between bounded and unbounded organization that we find the means for leverage, to negate overwhelming power superiority:

“If you address an organization (or individual) in its bounded area, you address it in the centre of its expertise, in an area where it has the advantage of information and skills, an area of clarity and relative simplicity. Thus, if you want something different from what that organization/(cultural) rule/law wants, you go for the margins of the bounded area. Good chance you’ll find: blurred responsibilities (on the borderline between organization A and B, who has the final say?); vague, few and/or conflicting sets of rules/priorities; reluctance of parties to get really involved (don’t feel at home – literally – feel insecure, fear of burning one’s fingers – fear of territorial conflicts with the other organization/department, etc.). Once you have the organization acting and thinking in its unbounded area, you’re normally in a strong position: your (personal) goal will be more focused and your

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<sup>190</sup> Wenger and Snyder define these as “groups of people informally bound together by shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise” (2000: 139)

motivation will normally be a lot stronger than that of the organization (if it fails in the margins of its responsibilities it does not risk very much – and in unbounded territory it is a lot easier to fail and put the blame on somebody else); you’re basically on your own, whereas the other side has many others to take into account; an organization forced to its boundaries is more likely to make a mistake in the process, which can subsequently be used against it”.

Here we have the “development insurgent’s” view of the unbounded realm, and it is perhaps useful to recognize that the development advocacy in support of PDO does indeed require struggle, shrewd political calculation and tactical *nous* in carrying out a “war of position”. Most of all it provides a sense of the power of organized communities of practice, or networks, once a joint enterprise has been defined.

With this we may move from the discussion of the particularity of the Gantsi incident to make a broader point: while societal learning for social development is not merely an osmotic process and requires organization, it *is possible* to influence and to organize from the smallest activity system to other activity systems so that an expanding range of actors start to consider propositions and assertions about new ways of being (or maintenance of existing life rituals), and to work in alignment towards achieving them. In turn, as we have seen through these three case studies, new activity itself influences the assessment of *futuribili*: PDO can result from rather small initial interventions provided that cognitive focus is maintained.

### **6.3 Chapter conclusion**

I think that both mobilizing and organizing have in their nature education as something indispensable – that is, education *as development of sensibility, of the notion of risk, of confronting some tensions* that you have in the process of mobilizing or organizing (Freire 1990 quoted in Chapter 1, new emphasis).

I set out at the beginning of this chapter to look at the nature and quality of linkages with other organizations and the creation of an “alignment for change”; the ways in which popular initiative wakes synergy with actors beyond a locality and across social chasms.

We chose three “moments” of PDO , and looked at the dynamic within them, without which there would be no possibility of synergetic relationships with other social actors. We considered what kinds of linkages were present between those involved in the micro-development activity and the ways in which these actors forged organizational and institutional linkages, and how they came to mobilize broader societal opinion. We found that at all times it was necessary to maintain vigilance about the workings of power, or more correctly the ways that development practitioners mediate power.

A first insight relates to the “idea” that is represented by the micro-development activity. Unless the initiative/enterprise resonates with a broader social discourse it is difficult to forge meaningful relationships with those not immediately affected by its activity. As a matter of fact we saw that it is also crucial for those immediately engaged in the enterprise to be able to locate their own activity against a broader perspective, or frame of reference.

We may observe that any “moment” of PDO is also an occasion for societal learning i.e. tends towards the social space and an “unbounded” conversation about purpose, principles and ethics of organization through flow-time. It is hardly surprising that once we consider the possibility of alignment of societal energies – and particularly since our research has coursed across the two decades straddling the millennium – there is reference to civil society, that most evocative of conceptions. We see from even these few cases that organization in the civil domain can unlock apparently intransigent power relationships. Put the other way micro-developmental expressions of the symbolic values of civil society drive further societal learning.

A second insight is that engagement needs to be sustained through ongoing activity, and the learning that derives from it. Development advocacy is an emanation of activity and the establishment or proposal of new relationships as an extension of this activity; a core aspect of social mobilization is the engagement of all possible allies in calling for or delivering resources or services, or strengthening emerging organization. This relates to an earlier

observation about *capacitation*; we learn to walk by walking. Extended organization, the creation of supportive infrastructure and an alignment across society that is favourable to emerging PDO is in the end a very practical matter. Motivating the interest and focusing the attention of a growing array of actors means suggesting activity that they can engage in. In Bakhtin's phrase (1981:259) this overcomes "the divorce between an abstract "formal" approach and an equally abstract "ideological" approach".

A third insight is a direct consequence, or "merging", of these first two, and also points towards the argument for our final chapter. A sound proposal that both evokes and is stimulated by a particular societal discourse or socio-cultural perspective is inadequate on its own for PDO . It still requires particular organizational arrangements, the establishment of rule systems, and instruments/cultural tools that enable activity. Similarly activity that is not in harmony with a coherent frame of reference is ineffectual and will not advance PDO . In considering "linkages" we are not then concerned with creating good will or support amongst particular constituencies, so much as seeking the ways in which they engage in "aligned activity" whether this relates to creation of the "subject" (e.g. education and leadership development activity), or community, or rule systems, or the instruments that facilitate other activity, or indeed in new motivations for PDO. In essence, PDO will prove durable to the degree that it engages societal actors in learning activity that is consonant with their own best imaginations about desirable futures.

## Chapter 7: Unbounded Governance

We may recall the challenges set out in the first chapter, and specifically the suggested need for an *organizational consciousness* across society that enables a far greater scale of organization for social and economic development amongst those presently at the margins of society. Building upon scholarship that asserts that durable development organization of the poor requires “external catalysts”, I argued that for this increased scale of organization to occur, it is necessary to consider both these actors’ accountability and how the methodologies they employ foster cognitive and organizational development. Finally I noted the need to consider the ways by which a development enterprise engages with and influences societal actors outside its immediate organizational framework.

I proposed the concept of popular development organization (PDO), as referring to something that people want to do and which involves many people. I defined PDO very specifically, suggesting that organizational process with three characteristics was the kernel of sustainable development activity at a meaningful scale. These are, first, that grassroots actors become actively involved in self organization, and learn from it; second, that the efforts of technical support personnel are directed by people’s organizations and other resources are marshalled to facilitate the organizing process; and third, that there comes to be support for or alignment with this process across society. I then asked a question about how PDO is facilitated.

The characterization of PDO derives from existing literature about organization and development practice, and I have drawn on this literature as well as empirical research to examine accountability and governance process in development organization; to consider how methodology shapes developmental activity and influences the interaction between grassroots actors and development professionals; and to look at the ways that local organization comes to affect broader societal learning and inspire a greater societal enterprise. The following paragraph sums up how far I have got in my attempt to answer the question about how to facilitate PDO:

*Facilitating PDO in its full sense occurs rarely. Achieving it successfully involves simultaneous consideration of several factors. First, the governance system of the development initiative that is undertaking this facilitation must take account of external accountability drivers, especially those that are relevant to pro-poor societal activity, as well as its own representative structures. Second, the facilitation methodology should engage the actors in “activity learning” towards a nurturant activity system. Third, the development initiative should be designed, developed, managed and assessed in a way that takes account of, and acts in concert with, the full diversity of the organizational context.*

We need to unpick this statement, and look at each of its sentences in turn.

***The Governance system***> Chapter 2 looked at conceptions of governance and accountability and how these influence development NGOs’ praxis. As the first of three sub-questions I had asked *What forms of governance underpin successful PDO?* Here it became apparent that it is not sufficient to work from a conception of governance that involves only the structures, arrangements and processes around governing boards (or representative bodies at community level). Different accountability drivers, external and internal, affect an organization or initiative, and nimble and sure governance requires amongst other things that there is a dialogic interaction between different stakeholder views. This does not mean that there is an attempt to weigh them equally, but rather that there is a process for transparency and accountability in decision-making that honours each one of them, even as it accords primacy to the initiative/organization’s goals and values.

We might begin to imagine a governance system that paid attention to different accountability drivers, several of them associated with the organization’s activity. Governance as process would then involve action reflection cycles, involving different stakeholders in dialogue about the organization’s aims and manner of work, and seeking clarity about what activity and results each would like to see. Crucially such a dialogue would provide the springboard for an explicit discussion about respective roles of each stakeholder; an adjustment of strategy in



light of discussion also has the effect of winning support and engaging different actors in the programme of the organization. Structuring an accountability process involving multi-stakeholder dialogue thus provides for a two-way influence on the broader societal discourse. On the one hand individual organizations – or indeed organizational networks and other unbounded collaborative forms – are held accountable to diverse stakeholders: helped to understand their own impact and the desired shifts in performance. But on the other hand development activity stimulates and shapes the wider societal discourse. The semiotics, or activity-imagery, emergent on this unbounded governance thus influences societal learning.

*Activity Learning*> In the second of my sub-questions I had asked, *What are the methodological requirements for an external “catalyst” (an organization, or individual, or “animation team”) to facilitate cognitive development towards enhanced organizational literacy within a grassroots constituency?*

The core of our enquiry around methodology was the Organization Workshop and the Theory of Organization that underpins it. Since this was the first comprehensive presentation of the Moraisean method in English, significant space was devoted to the exercise. This helped to uncover a body of theory that offers much to development practitioners in pursuit of PDO.

We were able to see how a methodology works as an instrument in the hands of practitioners, but also starts to shape the practitioners themselves, affecting their cognitive development. The Moraisean approach showed the role of metatheory in self-regulation at individual or societal level, and the value of socio-cultural narrative in providing a frame of reference underpinning learning about organization. It also pointed us to literature on activity theory.

The literature on activity theory provided insights about the requirements for cognitive development amongst groups involved in social change enterprises, and specifically showed the degree to which theorization and motivation is affected by activity. Through this exposure it is possible to recognize the degree to which any change in societal activity system must be rooted in *activity learning*: this might be practical engagement in work towards a new

“object”/goal; related work around “subject formation”; development of cognitive artefacts, language, concepts and tools; contestation of rules systems; or experiments with new forms of organization, including tri-sectoral partnerships. Innovation and learning emerging from these “small” activities can combine to create an understanding of new possible activity systems, or different configurations of existing ones. The word *nurturant* here denotes the effort to shape activity systems that give expression to the full potential of humanity, and where there is alignment of different organizing impulses. Implicit in all of this is a recognition that any new way of organizing throws up new theoretical concepts as well as revealing new problems and difficulties. We are then working with a notion of expansive learning where sets of actors progressively “learn the future”. The role of the practitioner, as suggested in Chapters 4 and 5, is to bring about and traverse collective zones of proximal development.

***Context diversity***> As the final sub-question to illuminate PDO as process, I had asked *What linkages are needed for popular initiative to inspire aligned activity by actors beyond a locality and across social chasms?*

Of all the questions this is the one that appears most ill conceived. Despite its phrasing, it is rooted in a conception of individual organizations seeking to forge alliances and coalitions that enable influence across different scales of organization; for micro-development projects to inspire others to support them and to achieve impact outside their immediate locality. This is to apprehend only one aspect of a dynamic relationship between actors within an activity system.

In the preceding pages, I have presented a body of empirical evidence and analyzed it with the aid of theory drawn from the fields of cognitive science, social psychology and OD, to show that the theory of organization informing most development work – which derives from a small groups social psychology and a bounded enterprise theory – is ill-equipped to deal with the contingent and cross-organizational nature of the development process. I showed that organization theory that is exclusively derivative of a small groups social psychology brings a

learned disability for practitioners, trapping them in a language and practice (an activity-imagery) of bounded organizations theory. This constrains linkages across an activity ecosystem, whereas we are able to see that playing a role in stimulating societal learning and social mobilization for development requires attention to and proficiency in “unbounded organization”; the interactions across organizational boundaries, the terrain outside the sway of individual organizations’ management.

All of our empirical evidence speaks for the need for development enterprises to engage with the various actors and organizing impulses within their context, and indeed we have seen the role of a “meta-narrative” in aligning divergent activity. I have pointed to the possibilities for methodological innovation in the discipline of OD, towards a social scale method, where individual organizational identity, strategy and extended structure derives in part from its interactions with a broad array of actors engaged in a “societal enterprise”. This is all a far cry from a conception of a single “initiative” seeking to mobilize others to support its efforts.

As the chapter before this one starts to show, successful micro-level development action both stimulates and depends on a wider societal discourse to some degree; it is difficult to separate these two arenas in our dreaming or theorizing as holistic beings. Whenever we embrace an unbounded gestalt rather than the limited and a-historical, situational gestalt that is at the foundation of most of our concepts of organization, there is a relentless mental urge for alignment of insights and lessons, from one level or sphere of activity to another. As activity theorists point out (e.g. Engeström 1999b: 36), the societal relations and contradictions of a particular society are reflected in each “local” activity of a society, and so too are the potentials for qualitative change. To the degree then that a development initiative is able to engage widening circles of actors in activity that is nurturant of humanity, we are able to learn a future that is worthy of the decades of work and creative endeavour, in micro-developmental contexts as also the higher reaches of society.

If we see society as “a multi-layered network of inter-connected activity systems” (ibid) rather than a hierarchic structure deriving from a single centre of power, then this changes the everyday conception of possibility. The agreements, frameworks and principles that derive from the unbounded realm become relevant in a micro-developmental context and vice-versa. In this way we may think about “unbounded governance” in another sense: as a search for meaning, the assertion of values and the enactment of activity in terms of this across the multi-layered network of activity systems. Rather than exploring many different realms of governance each with its own arcane principles and process - in corporate boardrooms, governmental departments and development organizations – it is possible to contemplate core principles and processes that may guide activity across all these realms.

### ***Practitioner-based enquiry***

The experience of conducting research towards this thesis while at the same time continuing in full time employment has been a salutary one. Some of the stresses involved could not be fully apprehended at the outset. As one example, while we focused in our first chapter on the requirements for robust and rigorous development research, and what this demanded of a practitioner, there was no consideration of the obverse, about how being a researcher can constrain development practice. In pace with the development of reflective practice, the detachment that comes from practising different ways of “seeing” a situation and the careful and precise observation of process, comes a growing inability to engage fully and passionately in the manner required at certain moments; there is an invisible fetter placed on impulsive action and the natural flow of response. In a sense this is akin to being stuck in “critical awareness” when an organizational consciousness might otherwise assert itself. This was particularly evident in the period after I started to apprehend how much of a learned disability I had acquired in immersing myself over a decade in the discipline of (bounded) OD. I began to listen for assumptions about organization by my peers to the degree that every sentence and phrase was loaded with extra meaning, and response near impossible as a result.

But the process of this inquiry has in the end sharpened organizational ability, and I have no doubt that it has rendered me more sensitive to the complexities of development practice, and more capable of acting decisively, with others, when this is required. More than before I have learnt to maintain awareness of meta-theoretical stance, or stance through flow-time and how this affects interpretation and decisions about action.

A key insight is around the effort that is required to translate theoretical and conceptual advances into development practice. In every field I explored, I found that though “battles” had been won in theory, this did not yet mean that working life was organized according to the new insights. Deeply etched patterns of thinking/behaviour and the maintenance of “silos” of knowledge prevent the sharing of these insights and ultimately constrain organization. I began to acknowledge that the core challenge for the development practitioner, like the social scientist/researcher, is to consciously strive for a dialogic posture that enables at the very least an enhanced awareness of different knowledge systems, and at best the shift in activity that they might suggest.

### *The Cases*

I have profiled four different organization sets in these pages (apart from the enterprises established by the participants in the Organization Workshops): CORDE with its member enterprises, the Homeless People’s Federation with People’s Dialogue, Iso Lentuthuko with the Community Internship Development Centre, and the Gantsi NGO Consortium interacting with the San people in three communities. These have provided rich learning. We are able to observe the different ways that development professionals in NGOs relate to grassroots constituencies, and get some idea of helpful and unhelpful patterns of work. The differences in socio-cultural and political contexts are interesting both because this ensures that there is different emphasis in each case study, and because we also start to see how powerfully this influences the possibilities for PDO. A weakness in the selection of cases in Chapter 6 is that in only one of them (the HPF/PD) was there a clearly defined methodology in use, though of

course the Gantsi farms case also allowed exposure to the integrated process approach. Given our explicit interest in mediational means or cultural tools it might have been useful to focus attention on another organization that was working with a clearly defined method; this might have allowed comparison of their effects. One potential direction for further research is then a comparative analysis of different participatory methods, from the perspective of activity theory.

### ***Concluding remark***

I defined PDO as a normative concept, encapsulating the best imagination guiding most micro-development “projects”. As it turns out this concept of PDO proves helpful. It fosters consistent appreciation of the core conditions for societal scale development, assists in retrospective analysis of actual development interventions and brings new insights about their design and management. Considering organization as process rather than entity turns our attention to interconnections across the activity ecosystem rather than limiting our gaze to individual organizations. It then becomes possible for actions by individuals or their organizations to find an alignment with a greater societal enterprise. We are able to achieve continuity in attention and commitment from the individual through the organizational to the societal scale of enterprise. Rather than working within different “realms of governance” we may seek to apply the same principles and methods of governance across an unbounded domain. The remarks in Chapter 1 about civil society, the assertions about “civil governance” in Chapter 2, and the comments about unbounded governance earlier in this chapter then acquire a deeper meaning: across government, business and the civil domain individuals and groupings can actively engage in what was referred to in our first chapter as the “discovery, elaboration and defense of the meaning and values of society”. Once humanity’s ingenuity is mustered in this way there is surely prospect for an unprecedented scale and impact of developmental organization.